The Aesthetics of Perception

in

Modernist Women's Poetry



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Abstract

This thesis considers how five modernist women writers (Gertrude Stein, H.D., Mina Loy, Hope Mirrlees, and Marianne Moore) used poetry to engage in scientific, philosophical, and aesthetic debates regarding the nature of perception. Archival research reveals that all five of the poets featured in this thesis studied perceptual processes either formally or informally during the formative years of their poetic development. Yet little has been written about their poetic portrayal of perceptual processes despite the fact that these processes were at the heart of aesthetic culture, technological advancement, and scientific debate at the turn of the twentieth century. Historically grounded in a period of significant developments in the study of perception, this thesis explores how modernist women poets encountered, critiqued, and created new technological, philosophical, and formal approaches to perception and perceptibility. Thanks to their elite educational backgrounds, Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore encountered and even participated in a range of interdisciplinary debates regarding the nature of perceptual processes—many of which were only just emerging into recognition—before they turned from scientific prose and painting to the medium of poetry. What, I ask, distinguishes modernist poetry as a medium for portraying the processes of perception compared to scientific prose and visual art as parallel systems of portrayal? How did modernist women poets use poetic form to reconfigure the boundaries of perception and expression? And finally, how can reading modernist women's poetry deepen our understanding of the nature of perception, past and present? With close attention to five key collections of poetry—Stein's *Tender Buttons* (1914), H.D.'s *Sea Garden* (1916), Loy's *Songs to Joannes* (1917), Mirrlees' *Paris: A Poem* (1920), and Moore's *Observations* (1924)—this thesis seeks to answer these questions before concluding with an account of the phenomenological affordances of modernist women's poetry.

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E.J. Pratt Library, Victoria University

Houghton Library, Harvard University

Marianne Moore Digital Archive <https://www.moorearchive.org/>

Newnham College Library, University of Cambridge

Poetry Collection, University at Buffalo Libraries

Rosenbach Museum and Library (RML)

Yale Collection of American Literature (YCAL), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

Introduction

Writing in *The Gender of Modernity* (1995), Rita Felski began by asking 'what *difference'* it would make to the 'analysis of the culture of modernity' if scholars began to give 'central importance' to 'feminine phenomena'.[1] Over the past three decades, Felski's approach has been adopted by a number of feminist scholars including Tamar Garb, Angela Smith, Ann L. Ardis, Elisabeth A. Frost, Amelia Jones, Cristanne Miller, Bonnie Kime Scott, Alex Goody, and Linda A. Kinnahan.[2] By focusing on women's varied experiences of (and responses to) modernity, their work has posed important challenges to the conclusions drawn from studying modernism primarily in relation to the 'Men of 1914' (James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Wyndham Lewis). From Felski's analysis of the 'late-nineteenth-century […] phenomenon of female commodification', to Miller's account of the 'modernist […] phenomenon of self-conscious costuming', however, little has been written about modernist women's poetic portrayal of perceptual processes despite the fact that these processes were at the heart of aesthetic culture, technological advancement, and scientific debate at the turn of the twentieth century.[3]

While modernist women's perception remains understudied, modernist men's perception has received a considerable amount of direct attention in recent years. Take, for example, *The Senses*

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[1] Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 10 [emphasis original].

[2] Tamar Garb, *Bodies of Modernity: Figure and Flesh in Fin-de-Siècle France* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998); Angela Smith, *The Second Battlefield: Women, Modernism and the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Ann L. Ardis, 'Introduction' to *Women's Experience of Modernity: 1875-1945,* ed. by Ardis and Leslie W. Lewis (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 1-10; Elisabeth A. Frost, *The Feminist Avant-Garde in American Poetry* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2003); Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); Cristanne Miller, *Cultures of Modernism: Marianne Moore, Mina Loy, and Else Lasker-Schüler* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005); Bonnie Kime Scott, 'Introduction' to *Gender in Modernism: New Geographies, Complex Intersections,* ed. by Scott (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), pp. 1-24; Alex Goody, *Modernist Articulations: A Cultural Study of Djuna Barnes, Mina Loy and Gertrude Stein* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Linda A. Kinnahan, 'The Category of the "Woman Poet"—An Introduction, by Way of Mapping', in *A History of Twentieth-Century American Women's Poetry,* ed. by Kinnahan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 3-25.

[3] Felski, p. 64; Miller, *Cultures of Modernism,* p. 219.

of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics (2002), where Sara Danius chose Thomas Mann, Marcel Proust, and James Joyce as 'exemplary' modernists navigating a 'technologically mediated crisis of the senses' between the years 1880 and 1930.[4] Building on Danius' research in *Novel Sensations: Modernist Fiction and the Problem of Qualia* (2020), Jon Day devoted the majority of his study to a similar demographic of writers—Samuel Beckett, James Joyce, and Wyndham Lewis—preceded by one chapter on Virginia Woolf.[5] Here, Day implicitly reproduced Lewis' dichotomy between 'feminine' writers and 'masculine' modernists by placing Woolf alongside Marcel Proust and Henry James in a 'fairly narrow strain of modernist literature' that tries to represent the mind as something 'knowable and introspective' while placing Joyce, Beckett, and Lewis in a comparatively praiseworthy 'strain' that envisions 'what the novel would look like "if it were mindless and had no access to mental states"'.[6] One year later, Woolf was similarly placed alongside an exclusively male demographic (D.H. Lawrence and T.S. Eliot) in Thalia Trigoni's *The Intelligent Unconscious in Modernist Literature and Science* (2021), where we are told that Woolf's 'androgynous state of mind' is made up of the same 'substance' that comprises the 'thoughts [and] dreams' of Proust's characters.[7] And while I agree with both Day and Trigoni that Woolf's work lends itself particularly well to questions of perception, many of Woolf's female peers shared her predilection for writing about perception but did not share her belief that 'it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex'.[8]

The tendency to isolate Woolf in studies of modernism and perception is just one manifestation of an underlying disregard for the perceptual aesthetics of other modernist women writers like Gertrude Stein, Hilda Doolittle (H.D.), Mina Loy, Hope Mirrlees, and Marianne

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[4] Sara Danius, *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 1-3.
[5] Jon Day, *Novel Sensations: Modernist Fiction and the Problem of Qualia* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020).
[6] Ibid., p. 172.
[7] Thalia Trigoni, *The Intelligent Unconscious in Modernist Literature and Science* (New York: Routledge, 2021), pp. 12, 122.
[8] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Hogarth Press, 1929), pp. 156-157.

Moore.[9] Such disregard might be attributed to the fact that these women wrote *as* women—a category that became subject to definition and redefinition as women discovered a plethora of new ways to articulate their individual femininity in the first few decades of the twentieth century.[10] Eager to find a unifying factor for the historical analysis of early twentieth-century women's writing, feminist scholars of literature rightly cite women writers' shared experiences of marginalisation, objectification, and discrimination.[11] And while their scholarship has contributed to a greater understanding of the cultural factors shaping and restricting the composition and circulation of modernist women's writing, I am less interested in retracing what Victoria Bazin has called the 'subtle and strategic negotiations women writers make with the dominant culture' and more interested in exploring how individual modernist women writers encountered, critiqued, and created new technological, philosophical, and formal approaches to perceptual processes.[12] In doing so, I highlight the distinctive and at times subversive ways in which women writers shaped discourses on perception, celebrating their creative contributions while also acknowledging the power struggles they faced in male-dominated spaces.

My choice of poets—Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore—might raise a few sceptical eyebrows, especially if we agree with Felski's contention that singling out high modernist women writers like Stein perpetuates the 'stigma attached both to representational art forms and to the regressive, sentimental texts of mass culture'.[13] And while I share Felski's concern, I also see these five poets as a good starting place for understanding the relationship between modernist women's poetry and early twentieth-century debates and developments in philosophy, science, and art. Despite their privileged position in avant-garde art circles, these five poets engaged with and responded to 'mass culture' in ways that Felski could not have anticipated before the likes of Susan

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[9] In addition to Day and Trigoni, examples of this tendency include Jesse Matz, *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) and Maud Ellmann, *The Nets of Modernism: Henry James, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and Sigmund Freud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[10] See Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 6.
[11] See Felski, p. 25; See also Frost, pp. xii-xiii.
[12] Victoria Bazin, *Marianne Moore and the Cultures of Modernity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 8.
[13] Felski, p. 28.

Rosenbaum and Elisabeth A. Frost published their research on the relationship between modernist women's writing and the 'everyday work of art'.[14] Moreover, thanks to their elite educational backgrounds, Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore encountered and even participated in a range of interdisciplinary debates regarding the processes of perception—many of which were only just emerging into recognition—before they turned to the medium of poetry. From this point of view, these five women are uniquely suited for an analysis of modernism, poetry, and perception. Historically grounded in a period of significant interdisciplinary developments in the study of perception, this thesis asks: What kinds of interests, questions, and debates are present in modernist women's poetic portrayals of perceptual processes? How did the authority of scientists interact and conflict with the authority of modernist women in their dual role as poets and perceivers? What distinguishes modernist poetry as a medium for portraying perceptual processes compared to scientific prose and visual art as parallel systems of portrayal? What happens to our understanding of modernism, poetry, and perception when the poet-perceiver is not a man but a woman? How did modernist women poets use poetic form to reconfigure the boundaries of perception and expression? And finally, how can reading modernist women's poetry deepen our understanding of the nature of perception, past and present?

The Aesthetics of Perception

Admittedly, the term 'aesthetics of perception' is a pleonasm, for the ancient Greek word from which aesthesis derives—*αἴσθησις*—means 'sense perception'. Under this definition, any study of aesthetics must take perception into account. But 'perception' can be broadly construed to mean anything from empirical observation to psycho-spiritual insight. In other words, not all perceptual processes are aesthetic because 'perceptual experience', as Bence Nanay notes, is not to be

[14] Susan Rosenbaum, 'The "do it yourself" Avant-Garde: American Women Poets and Experiment', in *A History of Twentieth-Century American Women's Poetry,* ed. by Kinnahan, pp. 323-338 (p. 334); Frost, pp. xxv-xxvi.

exclusively 'identified with the sensory stimulation of our sense organs'.[15] 'Much more', Nanay continues, 'goes into perception: categorization, conceptualization, and various top-down influences from non-perceptual processes'.[16] As we shall see, all of these non-sensory aspects of perception are discernible in the work of Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore. By nature, however, these non-sensory aspects weren't aesthetic until each poet made them so. By focusing on the *aesthetics* of perception, then, my intention is to register the materiality of poetry as a medium that pushes and plays with the boundaries of what can and cannot be made aesthetic (*i.e.,* empirically perceptible to the senses). If these five poets can be said to be 'aestheticising' perception, they do so not in the standard Kantian sense of the term (to make beautiful or ideal) but in the etymological sense of the term (to make sensible). Thus defined, the aesthetic acquires a gendered dimension that Terry Eagleton registered when he described it as 'the "sister" of logic, a kind of inferior feminine analogue of reason, at the level of material life'.[17] And while I share Eagleton's view that the aesthetic is bound up with 'all that arises from our most banal, biological insertion into the world', the particulars of sense preclude the existence of an 'eternal female' who is a 'slippery, tantalizing, elusive thing' in Eagleton's Nietzschean portrayal of woman as *femme fatale.*[18]

My use of the term 'aesthetics of perception' is inspired by the aforementioned *Senses of Modernism,* where Danius explored a 'specifically high modernist aesthetics of perception' to demonstrate how 'technologically mediated matrices of perception have become at one with *aisthesis'*.[19] Danius, however, only ever mentioned three women writers (Woolf, Djuna Barnes, and Katherine Mansfield) in passing—an issue that she acknowledged when she identified 'the

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[15] See Bence Nanay, 'Philosophy of Perception as a Guide to Aesthetics', in *Aesthetics and the Sciences of Mind,* ed. by Greg Currie and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 101-120 (p. 104).
[16] Ibid., p. 104.
[17] Terry Eagleton, 'The Ideology of the Aesthetic', *Poetics Today,* 9.2 (1988), 327-338 (p. 328) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1772692> [accessed 2 May 2022].
[18] Ibid., pp. 328, 336.
[19] Danius, pp. 193-194 [emphasis original].

question of gender' as the 'one notable omission in [her] book'.[20] And while the women featured in this thesis were more critical of man-machine metaphors than the men featured in Danius' book,[21] I would like to build on Danius' conclusion that modernist writers 'tend to locate the sublime, and hence also the aesthetic itself, not in the ideal realm but in the corporeal' by arguing that the modernist writings of early twentieth-century *women*—the 'embodied others', in Donna Haraway's words, those 'who are not allowed *not* to have a body, a finite point of view'—constitute an extreme manifestation of this tendency.[22] Indeed, if Danius is correct that men like Mann, Proust, and Joyce located the aesthetic in a 'particular body, concrete, singular, and finite', then the same is certainly true in the case of women like Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore.[23] And if the gender of aesthetics is as 'feminine' as Eagleton suggests, then we might even go so far as to hypothesise that these women had privileged access to the aesthetic particulars of perception—a conviction that carries dangerous implications when we consider how essentialist theories of gender and perception were leveraged by eugenicists and anti-feminists at the turn of the twentieth century.

The poets explored in this thesis wrote from within an essentialist culture that held, in the words of Max Scheler writing in c. 1913-1914, that 'the womanly concept, womanly judgment, and womanly feeling of value is built in a fundamentally different way'.[24] When it came to perception, philosophers and biologists accounted for this difference by emphasising women's aesthetic and epistemic proximity to the natural world. A prime example is Arabella Kenealy, the British biologist and anti-suffragist who proclaimed in 1894 that 'woman-sense is in touch with some of Nature's

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[20] Ibid., p. 11.
[21] See Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 114-115.
[22] Danius, p. 195; Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies,* 14.3 (Autumn 1988), 575-599 (p. 575 [emphasis original]) <doi:10.2307/3178066>.
[23] Danius, p. 195.
[24] Max Scheler, 'Zum Sinn der Frauenbewegung' (c. 1913-1914), quoted in English by Sara Heinämaa in 'Embodiment and Bodily Becoming', *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Phenomenology,* ed. by Dan Zahavi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 533-557 (p. 553).

subtlest secrets', including the eugenic 'secret' of how to 'perpetuate a race which will one day inherit the stars'.[25] In the first English translation of *Sex and Character* (1906), a book Stein claimed 'exactly embodied' her views, the Austrian philosopher Otto Weininger similarly remarked that 'the keenest sense woman has, and the only one she has more highly developed than man, is the sense of touch […] the eminently sordid sense [which is] suited to the physical requirements of an earth-bound being'.[26] Such views were rooted in a broader belief in the inherent differences between male and female perceptual faculties. These conceptions not only informed societal expectations but also shaped women's intellectual and creative expressions in the early twentieth century. To varying degrees, however, the poets explored in this thesis both cherished and challenged the notion that women are biologically predisposed to perceive differently from men.

While I am sceptical of the notion that women have privileged access to aesthetic experience by virtue of their biology, I am equally sceptical of Eagleton's conclusion that Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud were the 'two greatest aestheticians' because they were able to answer Friedrich Nietzche's question—'what if experience were a woman?'—by 'think[ing] everything through again in terms of the body'.[27] According to Eagleton, it was Marx and Freud who pushed the aesthetic to its 'logical next stage […] carr[ying] its earliest proto-materialist impulses to their logical conclusions'.[28] In concentrating respectively on labouring and desiring bodies, however, what kinds of bodies did Marx and Freud leave out? One answer is women's bodies. It is true that both men paid generous attention to sexual difference.[29] But their accounts of women's bodies were always necessarily second-hand. And while I share Day's contention that language cannot give us proxy access to the perceptual experience of another person, I see modernist women's

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[25] Arabella Kenealy quoted by William Thomas Stead in 'The Novel of the Modern Woman', *Review of Reviews,* July 1894, pp. 64-74 (p. 67).
[26] Otto Weininger*, Sex and Character* (London: William Heinemann, 1906), p. 293. Stein's remark was recorded by her friend Marian Walker Williams in a letter dated 11 June 1909 in *The Flowers of Friendship: Letters Written to Gertrude Stein,* ed. by Donald Gallup (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 45.
[27] Eagleton, pp. 336-337.
[28] Ibid., p. 337.
[29] See Heather A. Brown, *Marx on Gender and the Family: A Critical Study* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); See also Elisabeth Young-Bruehl (ed.), *Freud on Women: A Reader* (London: Vintage Books, 2013).

poetry as an underexplored opportunity to better understand the nexus between aesthetics, perception, and the body.[30] In many ways, then, this thesis starts where Danius' coda ends—with a 'historically specific discourse where the materiality of the body has become the privileged site of aesthetics and where perception is an aesthetically gratifying activity in its own right'.[31] Nowhere, I argue, does this 'materialist theory of the aesthetic' operate as energetically as it does in the work of Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore—five modernist women poets concerned with cultivating a perceptually rich aesthetic at a time when the relationship between aesthetics, perception, and the body was more unsettled than ever before. As we shall see, the body was much more than 'the residence of the five senses' for these women—it was the very locus of action and creation.[32] Which brings me to another defining quality of their perceptual aesthetic: agency.

Just as my emphasis on the body in modernist women's poetry poses a challenge to the traditional understanding of modernism as a predominantly cerebral movement, my emphasis on agency places me at odds with the ways in which modernist poetry itself has been conceptualised. In his introduction to *Reading Modernist Poetry* (2010), for example, Michael H. Whitworth identified the poet's 'loss of agency' and 'impersonality' as the two 'most important aspects of modern poetry'.[33] True, early twentieth-century women did not have full agency over the way their bodies were perceived as they were subjected to a predatory gaze that precluded them from inhabiting the Baudelairean ideal of the *flâneur* who anonymously wanders the streets of the metropolis.[34] Similar arguments have been made regarding women's lack of agency in a number of contexts ranging from modernist publishing culture to World War I.[35] But the turn of the twentieth century was also a liberating period—particularly for the modern woman who gained an unprecedented

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[30] Day, pp. 170-171.
[31] Danius, p. 196.
[32] Michael H. Whitworth, *Reading Modernist Poetry* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), p. 55.
[33] Ibid., p. 2.
[34] Janet Wolff, 'The Invisible *Flâneuse*: Women and the Literature of Modernity', *Theory, Culture & Society,* 2.3 (1985), 37-46 <doi:10.1177/026327648500200300 5>.
[35] See, for example, Sheila Kineke, 'T.S. Eliot, Marianne Moore, and the Gendered Operations of Literary Sponsorship', *Journal of Modern Literature,* 21.1 (1997), 121-136 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3831579> [accessed 11 May 2022]; See also Smith, 'Agents of Civilisation', in *The Second Battlefield,* pp. 134-160.

degree of autonomy over the places she went, the people she spent her time with, the educational opportunities she pursued, and the types of work she engaged in. Given that the early twentieth century was arguably more liberating for women than it was for men, however, it should come as no surprise that 'loss of agency' has been seen as one of the defining characteristics of both modernity and modern poetry. Still, scholars who work on modernist *women's* writing tend to place greater emphasis on agency.[36] Two years after Felski wrote that the myths of modernity are 'predicated on […] the erasure of feminine agency and desire',[37] for example, we find Susan Stanford Friedman emphasising the agency that modern and contemporary women display when they use 'self-authorizing strategies' to tear the 'long poem' genre from its patriarchal roots.[38] In a similar vein, Tamar Garb, Judith Paltin, and Kristina Marie Darling all stress the way in which modernist women writers and artists used their agency to play with the aesthetic traditions that they inherited from men.[39]

While writing poetry forces the poet to make constant choices regarding what and how to write, perception has often been understood as an unconscious activity divorced from the demands of agency. Indeed, a whole body of scholarship is devoted to making formal models of the unconscious cognitive mechanisms (or 'heuristics') that humans intuitively use to process their surroundings and make rational judgements.[40] Before cognitive scientists labelled these mechanisms as 'heuristics' in the 1970s, however, they were understood as the workings of an 'intelligent unconscious'—a phrase Trigoni recently borrowed from William James Sidis' 1914

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[36] One exception is Elisa New's interpretation of Moore in *The Line's Eye: Poetic Sight, American Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 141.
[37] Felski, p. 17.
[38] Susan Stanford Friedman, 'When a "Long" Poem is a "Big" Poem: Self-Authorizing Strategies in Women's Twentieth-Century "Long Poems"', *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory,* 2.1 (1990), 9-25 <doi:10.1080/10436929008580042>.
[39] Tamar Garb, *Sisters of the Brush: Women's Artistic Culture in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 101; Judith Paltin, 'Frustrated Energies in Modernism's Female Arrangements', in *Affective Materialities: Reorienting the Body in Modernist Literature*, ed. by Kara Watts and others (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2019), pp. 103-118 (p. 110); Kristina Marie Darling, *Stylistic Innovation, Conscious Experience and the Self in Modernist Women's Poetry: An Imagist Turned Philosopher* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), p. xii.
[40] See Gerd Gigerenzer and David J. Murray, *Cognition as Intuitive Statistics* (London: Psychology Press, 1987).

essay to describe an unconscious that is 'able to execute complex reasoning processes, often more effectively than deliberate thought, while operating outside conscious awareness'.[41] Writing in *The Grammar of Science* (1892), Karl Pearson similarly theorised the 'human perceptive faculty' as a 'great sorting-machine' that 'contributes the ordered sequence in time and space to our sense-impressions […] without our being conscious of it'.[42] Despite its popularity both in the nineteenth century and in the present day, the 'intelligent unconscious' model of perception was placed under increasing pressure by early twentieth-century philosophers, psychologists, and artists writing in anticipation of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) and other mid-century developments in phenomenology.[43] The problem with the 'intelligent unconscious', according to Sidis writing in an article entitled 'Unconscious Intelligence' (1914), is that it fails to take agency into account. Sidis' conclusion, inspired by his namesake William James, was that 'there is a consciousness causing *all* subconscious actions', including perception.[44] Across the Atlantic, Arthur Eddington similarly stressed the agency of a mind that actively 'filters out matter from the meaningless jumble of qualities […] picking out one particular quality as the permanent substance of the perceptual world'.[45] One year prior to Eddington, in the preface to her first novel *Madeleine* (1919), Mirrlees similarly stated that the 'ceaseless […] drip of circumstances' is 'meaningless' without the 'constructive force of a human consciousness'.[46] In other words, only a conscious perceiver can bring meaning and significance to the 'flux of life'—Loy's term for a 'sensory' world

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41 Trigoni, p. 2; Gigerenzer used a similar vocabulary in the title of *Gut Feelings: The Intelligence of the Unconscious* (London: Viking, 2007).
42 Karl Pearson, *The Grammar of Science* (London: Walter Scott, 1892), p. 128.
43 See William Carpenter, *Principles of Mental Physiology* (London: John Churchill, 1874), pp. 524-525; See also Eduard von Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious,* trans. by William Chatterton Coupland, 3 vols (London: Trubner, 1884), II, pp. 246-247.
44 William James Sidis, 'Appendix IV: Unconscious Intelligence', in Boris Sidis, *Symptomology, Psychognosis, and Diagnosis of Psychopathic Diseases* (Boston: Gorham Press, 1914), pp. 432-439 (p. 439 [emphasis added]). William James similarly remarked that 'consciousness is at all times primarily a *selecting agency'* in *The Principles of Psychology,* 2 vols (New York: Henry Holt, 1890)*,* I, p. 139 [emphasis original].
45 Arthur Eddington, *Space, Time, and Gravitation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), p. 180.
46 Hope Mirrlees, *Madeleine*, *One of Love's Jansenists* (London: Collins, 1919), p. vii.

that promises to '[pour] its aesthetic aspect into [the perceiver's] eyes [and] ears' as long as they choose not to 'ignore it'.[47]

The Extension of Consciousness

As modernist artists came to appreciate perception as an agential act, they began to use their agency to perceive that which is ordinarily beyond the scope of perception. Gertrude Stein and Pablo Picasso, for instance, 'create[d] perceptions, conditions, and states of being, never before quite consciously experienced' according to their mutual friend Mabel Dodge Luhan writing in 1913—the same year that the artist Max Weber predicted the emergence of 'new numbers, new weights, new colours, new forms, new odours, new sounds, new echoes, new rhythm[s] of energy', and a 'new and bigger range' of 'sense capacities'.[48] This, according to Pound, was the responsibility of 'the artist': to 'strengthen the perceptive faculties and free them from encumbrance'.[49] In 'Modern Fiction' (1925), Woolf similarly noted that 'it [is] the task of the novelist to convey' an 'uncircumscribed' consciousness.[50] From Stein's conviction that 'in every space there is a hint of more' to H.D.'s desire to perceive 'something behind something' to Loy's express feeling that she was 'lured to expansiveness', modernist women writers used poetry to expand their perceptual capabilities and so initiated the 'extension of human consciousness' long before Hugh MacDiarmid defined it as 'the function of art' in 1926.[51]

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[47] Mina Loy, 'Gertrude Stein', *transatlantic review*, September-October 1924, pp. 305-309, 427-430 (pp. 429-430).
[48] Mabel Dodge Luhan, 'Speculations, or Post-Impressionism in Prose', *Arts & Decoration,* March 1913, pp. 172-174 (p. 172); Max Weber, 'Preface' to *Exhibition of Paintings and Watercolors at the Modern School* (privately published in New York, April 1913), n.p.
[49] Ezra Pound, 'The Wisdom of Poetry', *Forum*, April 1912, pp. 497-501 (p. 500).
[50] Virginia Woolf, 'Modern Fiction', in *The Common Reader* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1925), pp. 207-218 (p. 213).
[51] Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons* (New York: Claire Marie, 1914), p. 72; H.D., 'Joan of Arc', *Close Up,* July 1928, pp. 15-23 (p. 22); Mina Loy to Carl Van Vechten, Carl Van Vechten Papers, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale Collection of American Literature (hereafter YCAL), MSS 1050, Box 76, Folder 1083, l. 60); C.M. Grieve [Hugh MacDiarmid], 'Art and the Unknown—I.', *New Age,* 20 May 1926, p. 23.

Yet it was not just avant-garde artists who sought to extend the scope of perception at the turn of the twentieth century, for this period also saw the dawn of dynamic psychology—a pre-Freudian discourse that emerged in the late 1880s through the work of William James, Henri Bergson, Pierre Janet, and Frederic Myers. In *The Energies of Men: A Study of the Fundamentals of Dynamic Psychology* (1932), William McDougall articulated the aims and inclinations of dynamic psychology like this:

> Of late years [psychology] has become increasingly concerned with the dynamic problems of human activity; every year it becomes clearer and more generally agreed that the essential task of psychology is to achieve such understanding of human activity as will make possible a more effective guidance and control of the energies of men.[52]

A brief survey of the works of Myers, James, and Bergson reveals that all three of these dynamic psychologists sought to 'guide' and 'control' their mental energy towards expansion. Myers, for instance, perceived 'the possibility of a vast extension of psychical powers' and even proclaimed that 'the business of the psychologist' is 'to look out for extensions of capacity'.[53] James seems to have been in the same business, for he voiced emphatic agreement with Myers' idea that 'each of us is in reality an abiding psychical entity far more extensive than he knows' in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902).[54] Five years later, Bergson similarly proclaimed that intuition 'brings about […] the expansion of our consciousness'.[55] Taken together, it is clear that dynamic psychologists and modernist artists were in harmony when it came to the expansive direction of their respective disciplines.

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[52] William McDougall, *The Energies of Men: A Study of the Fundamentals of Dynamic Psychology* (London: Methuen, 1932), p. 9.
[53] Frederic W.H. Myers, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death,* 2 vols (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903), II (1903), p. 85; Frederic W.H. Myers, 'The Subliminal Consciousness', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research,* 7 (1892), 298-327 (p. 315).
[54] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1902), p. 512. Here James is quoting from Myers' essay on 'The Subliminal Consciousness', p. 305.
[55] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* trans. by Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt, 1911), p. 178.

Borrowed from James' 1907 essay of that same name, the title of McDougall's study—*The Energies of Men*—accurately captures the gendered nature of psychology as it became distinguished from philosophy at the turn of the twentieth century. At this time, as the title of McDougall's book implies, the vast majority of psychologists—dynamic or not—were men. And while one might assume that women were either unfamiliar with or otherwise entirely resistant to such a gendered discipline, this was far from the case. Indeed, as my archival research reveals, women encountered the work of dynamic psychologists like James, Myers, and Bergson through a variety of channels including formal education, social networking, independent research, and even psychiatric treatment. With the exception of Mary Whiton Calkins, Christine Ladd-Franklin, Karin Stephen (née Costelloe), and Jane Harrison, however, female philosophers and psychologists are largely absent from this thesis. That's not to say, of course, that women were absent from scholarly circles in the early twentieth century; we need only look as far as Stein's published research papers to see that this was not the case. It's worth noting with Margaret W. Rossiter, however, that institutional policies made it difficult—if not impossible—for women to earn doctorate degrees, gain teaching experience, and publish their research in the early twentieth century.[56] It should come as no surprise, then, that highly educated women like Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore used *poetry* (rather than scholarly prose) to engage in philosophical and psychological debates regarding the nature of perception. Doing so not only allowed them to bypass the prejudiced policies of higher education institutions like Harvard, Bryn Mawr, and Cambridge, but also to pursue more esoteric forms of learning and knowing about perception.

While modernist women poets shared their esoteric epistemic tastes with the likes of Pound, Eliot, and W.B. Yeats,[57] recent research by Elizabeth Anderson, Andrew Radford, Heather Walton, and Lara Vetter reveals that modernist women writers were particularly drawn to 'heretical

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[56] Margaret W. Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 38.
[57] See Leon Surette, *The Birth of Modernism: Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, and the Occult* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).

epistemologies'.[58] When it comes to psychology, however, little has been written of women poets' attraction to the heresies of this burgeoning discipline despite the fact that one of the most heretical psychologists of the period, Henri Bergson, was so popular among women that his theories were dismissed as epistemically unsound.[59] In 1914, for instance, a writer for *The New Age* observed that 'Bergson was nearly suffocated by scent when women attended his lectures; but had Bergson really been a philosopher, no woman would have listened to him'.[60] Here and elsewhere, Bergson's philosophical authority was challenged due to his unique appeal among women. As a result of this appeal, Bergsonism became synonymous with traits traditionally associated with femininity—intuition, irrationality, sentimentality, corporeality—all of which can be discerned in the following quotation from *Matter and Memory* (1896):

> After having narrowed the universe to the surface of the living body, [the perceiver must] contract this body itself into a centre which he will end by supposing unextended. Then, from this centre will start unextended sensations, which will swell, so to speak, will grow into extensity, and will end by giving extension first to his body, and afterwards to all other material objects.[61]

H.D.—to cite just one example from this thesis—similarly described a 'jelly-fish state of consciousness' accompanied by a 'set of super-feelings' that 'extend out and about us; as the long, floating tentacles of the jelly-fish reach out and about him'.[62] Similar sentiments, as we shall see, can be found in the work of Loy and Mirrlees—both of whom engaged with Bergsonism during the formative years of their poetic development.

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[58] Elizabeth Anderson, Andrew Radford, and Heather Walton, 'Introduction' to *Modernist Women Writers and Spirituality: A Piercing Darkness,* ed. by Anderson, Radford, and Walton (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 1-20 (p. 8); See also Lara Vetter, *Modernist Writings and Religio-Scientific Discourse: H.D., Loy, and Toomer* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); See also Elizabeth Anderson, *Material Spirituality in Modernist Women's Writing* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

[59] Mark Antliff, *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 99; See also Jesse Matz, 'T.E. Hulme, Henri Bergson, and the Cultural Politics of Psychologism', in *The Mind of Modernism: Medicine, Psychology, and the Cultural Arts in Europe and America, 1880-1940*, ed. by Mark S. Micale (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 339-351 (p. 348).

[60] A.E. Randall, 'Views and Reviews', *New Age,* 27 August 1914, p. 399. T.E. Hulme and A.R. Orage similarly commented on the heavily perfumed air of Bergson's lectures.

[61] Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory,* trans. by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1911), p. 52.

[62] H.D., *Notes on Thought and Vision & The Wise Sappho* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1982), p. 19.

Outside of literary circles, Bergson also shaped the dynamic psychologies of James and Myers. Like Bergson, as Megan Craig notes in her chapter for *Feminist Interpretations of William James* (2015),[63] James was avowedly 'touched by the spell of this mysterious sensorial life, with its irrationality […] its vigilance and its supreme felicity'—especially after his 'Bergsonian conversion' in c. 1906.[64] As we shall see, this Bergsonian version of James appealed to women like Stein, Loy, and Moore despite the fact that James' 'scholarly work and personal life [were] steeped in forms of patriarchy and rugged individualism that embrace[d] manliness and men at the expense of women and possibilities for their lives'.[65] And while Myers' research was similarly steeped in patriarchal notions of will-power, both he and James advocated for women's educational rights (albeit to varying degrees).[66] Moreover, Myers' 'syntheses of psychical phenomena', as Roger Luckhurst notes, 'transvalued the "degeneracy" of women, reading them as systems of *progeneracy*'.[67] This transvaluation, coupled with the influence of Bergson, contributed to Myers' appeal to women like Luhan and Loy—both of whom attributed Bergsonian significance to the progenerative act of childbirth.[68]

Writing in the wake of Myers' death in 1901, James predicted that 'Myers will ere long distinctly figure in mental science as the radical leader in what [he] called the romantic

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[63] Megan Craig, 'Habit, Relaxation, and the Open Mind: James and the Increments of Ethical Freedom', in *Feminist Interpretations of William James,* ed. by Erin C. Tarver and Shannon Sullivan (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015), pp. 165-188 (p. 187).

[64] William James, *Talks to Teachers and Students* (New York: Henry Holt, 1900), p. 263; For details of James' 'Bergsonian conversion', see Jeremy Dunham, 'James and the Metaphysics of Intentionality: Royce, Bergson, and the Miller-Bode Objections', in *The Oxford Handbook of William James,* ed. by Alexander Klein (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), n.p. <doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199395699.013.32>.

[65] Tarver and Sullivan, 'Introduction' to *Feminist Interpretations of William James,* ed. by Tarver and Sullivan, pp. 1-12 (p. 2).

[66] See Mary Walker, 'Between Fiction and Madness: The Relationship of Women to the Supernatural in Late Victorian Britain', in *That Gentle Strength: Historical Perspectives on Women in Christianity,* ed. by Lynda L. Coon, Katherine J. Haldane, and Elisabeth W. Sommer (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), pp. 230-242 (p. 236); See also Erin McKenna, 'Women and William James', in *Feminist Interpretations of William James,* pp. 79-97 (p. 91).

[67] Roger Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy, 1870-1901* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 214 [emphasis original].

[68] Bergson's letters to Myers can be found in the Myers Papers, Trinity College, Cambridge, MYER/1/62-63. Myers commented on Bergson's work in 'On a Case of Alleged Hypnotic Hyperacuity of Vision', *Mind*, 12.45 (January 1887), 154-156 <doi:10.1093/mind/os-12.45.154>.

movement'.[69] By the 'romantic movement', James meant a movement away from 'clean pure lines and noble simplicity' towards 'a mass of mental phenomena […] where few outlines are pure and where uncouth forms lurk in the shadows'.[70] Dynamic psychology—a label that came into vogue soon after Myers' death—has been described in strikingly similar terms. In *Dynamic Psychology in Modernist British Fiction* (2005), for instance, George M. Johnson described dynamic psychology as a turn from mechanistic positivism towards spiritual idealism, noting that 'romantic philosophy' had 'the greatest impact' in shaping this movement.[71] Indeed, all three of the dynamic psychologists featured in this thesis (Myers, James, and Bergson) have been described as Romantic. Likewise, Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore cultivated a poetic that can be described as 'post-Romantic'—a term that Paul de Man used in 1960 to describe 'a persistence of certain themes and images extending from the Romantics to later, so-called symbolist poets' like Mallarmé and Yeats.[72] These two men, according to de Man, found themselves in a 'post-Romantic predicament' characterised by an inability 'to escape the totalising insistence of the Romantic inheritance'—especially when it came to 'the ordering of human experience within successive time'.[73] As we shall see, Mallarmé and Yeats' female peers found themselves in a similar predicament. Whereas these two men found that 'every fresh attempt of Modernism to go beyond Romanticism end[ed] in the gradual realization of the Romantics' continued priority', however, modernist women poets found a way through their post-Romantic predicament by utilising a unique combination of continuation and critique.[74]

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[69] William James, 'Frederic Myers' Services to Psychology', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research,* 17 (1901), 13-23 (p. 16).
[70] Ibid., p. 14.
[71] George M. Johnson, *Dynamic Psychology in Modernist British Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 3, 18.
[72] Paul de Man, *The Post-Romantic Predicament,* ed. by Martin McQuillan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 33.
[73] Martin McQuillan, '"No Country for Old Men": Paul de Man and the Post-Romantic Predicament', in *The Post-Romantic Predicament,* ed. by McQuillan, pp. 1-29 (p. 2); de Man, p. 34.
[74] Harold Bloom, *The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in Romantic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 17.

According to Stephen Spender writing in 1963, the Romantics and modernists shared an interest in 'dreams, […] fragmentariness, obscurity, mysteriousness, and the like'.[75] Instead of 'the like', Spender might have quoted the subtitle of Wordsworth's *Prelude* (1850): the 'Growth of a Poet's Mind'. Indeed, like their Romantic predecessors and post-Romantic peers, Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore did not resist mental growth, nor did they reject the Shelleyan 'shadow of some unseen Power' which 'visit[ed] with inconstant glance' in 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty' (1817).[76] Loy, for instance, sought 'momentary experience[s] of extended consciousness' while H.D. sought to perceive and portray 'the only just not-seen' and Moore was 'striving always for that wh[ich] is unseen'.[77] For these women, as for Wordsworth, Shelley, Coleridge, and Keats in W.J.T. Mitchell's interpretation of Romantic poetry, the ever-expanding scope of the poet's 'consciousness […] transcend[ed] mere visualization', resulting in a multisensory aesthetic involving much more than just the organs of vision.[78] Whereas 'the "I" demonstrably supplant[ed] the *eye* as the prime agent of perception in Romantic aesthetics' according to William H. Galperin's interpretation of Coleridge, however, modernist women poets never abandoned their eye (or any of their other perceptual organs for that matter).[79] Instead, as this thesis demonstrates, these women defined *the body* as the 'living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception'.[80]

While modernist women poets shared a thematic interest in 'the growth of the poet's mind' with their Romantic predecessors, they did not shy away from stressing the limited scope of embodied perceptual experience. It is here that post-Romantic women poets tend to differ from their male peers. Pound, for instance, claimed that the imagist poet can achieve 'freedom from

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[75] Stephen Spender, *The Struggle of the Modern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), p. 48.
[76] Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty', *Examiner,* 19 January 1817, p. 41.
[77] Mina Loy Papers, YCAL MSS 6, Box 7, Folder 187 [emphasis original]; H.D., *Palimpsest* (Paris: Contact Editions, 1926), p. 233; The Marianne Moore Collection, Rosenbach Museum and Library (hereafter RML), Religion Notebook 1252/25 (c. 1913-1915), VII:08:03.
[78] W.J.T. Mitchell, 'Visible Language: Blake's Wond'rous Art of Writing', in *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism,* ed. by Morris Eaves and Michael Fischer (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 46-95 (p. 49).
[79] William H. Galperin, *The Return of the Visible in British Romanticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 31 [emphasis original].
[80] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria,* 2 vols (London: Rest Fenner, 1817), I, p. 295.

time limits and space limits' while William Carlos Williams 'affirmed' his 'independence from time and space'.[81] Here we have two examples of what Louis Dupré has identified as Romanticism's 'relentless and obviously impossible drive to overcome the finitude of the human condition'.[82] Not only is this drive discernible in the poetry of Pound and Williams, but it is also present in the works of visual artists like Kazimir Severinovich Malevich (who nurtured his 'inclination to "reject the earthly globe"') and art theorists like Roger Fry (who thought it possible to 'abstract [the self] completely, and look upon the changing scene as a whole').[83] Alicia Ostriker put it well when she wrote:

> From Plato to St Paul, and from St Paul to Freud, civilization means vertical mobility: one transcends the body to achieve anything of spiritual or public worth. As to woman: woman in both our sacred and secular mythologies is the flesh [and yet] she has been discouraged from writing about the flesh herself.[84]

This discouragement did not disappear at the turn of the twentieth century even with the rise of 'physiological aesthetics'—a term that Robert Michael Brain has used to describe the work of fin-de-siècle European artists like Georges Seurat, Francis Picabia, and Filippo Marinetti.[85] For these men, as Brain's work makes clear, it was perfectly acceptable to 'ride the wave of the laboratory revolution in experimental physiology in the nineteenth century'.[86] Modernist women poets, by contrast, were met with discouragement as they cultivated a physiological aesthetic of perception. In 1918, for instance, Conrad Aiken urged readers to 'pass lightly over the […] tentacular quiverings of Mina Loy' in favour of the cerebral 'symmetry' of Eliot and Stevens' verse.[87] Eight

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[81] Ezra Pound, 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste', *Poetry*, 1.6 (March 1913), 200-206 (p. 200); William Carlos Williams, 'Vortex', 1915, in the William Carlos Williams Collection, University at Buffalo, C147b.
[82] Louis Dupré, *The Quest of the Absolute: Birth and Decline of European Romanticism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), p. 4.
[83] Kazimir Severinovich Malevich, 1916, quoted in English by Linda Dalrymple Henderson in *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art,* rev. edn (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), p. 420; Roger Fry, *Vision and Design* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1920), p. 13.
[84] Alicia Ostriker, *Stealing the Language: The Emergence of Women's Poetry in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), p. 92.
[85] Robert Michael Brain, *The Pulse of Modernism: Physiological Aesthetics in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015).
[86] Ibid., p. xv.
[87] Conrad Aiken, 'New Curiosity Shop—and a Poet', *Dial,* 31 January 1918, pp. 111-113 (p. 112).

years later, Charles Maurras similarly criticised Renée Vivien and Anna de Noailles for the 'poids matériel' (material weight), 'valeur physique' (physical value), and *'goût de chair'* (*fleshy taste*) of their words (my translation).[88] Despite this discouragement, Loy 'attached [her] leg to [her] locality' while H.D. reminded her readers that 'our minds are winged / though our feet are clay'.[89] Published in 1941, this couplet accurately captures the tension between H.D.'s Romantic impulse for mental expansion and her Moravian commitment to the grounding realities of mortal life.[90] Like H.D., Stein, Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore rejected the Romantic tendency to transcend their spatiotemporal limitations, opting instead to expand their field of perception by embracing the 'myriad phenomenality' of a perceiving body that remained firmly rooted in the terrestrial realm.

Of course, the idea that the finite body helps and does not hinder the extension of consciousness was not exclusively to be found among women in the early twentieth century. As we have already seen, Bergson used the body to 'grow into extensity'. Janet similarly argued that psychological expansion 'is not the work of pure mind, it is an activity of the whole organism that demands doubtless a considerable expenditure of force'.[91] Meanwhile, in non-dynamic circles, several scientists and philosophers literalised Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's idea that 'every new object, clearly seen, opens up a new organ of perception in us' by theorising the eventual evolution of new organs capable of sensing a greater scope of objects.[92] It would be mistaken, therefore, to assume that women were the only thinkers to embrace the body as an active participant in the expansion of consciousness. With that said, however, it will become clear over the course of this thesis that modernist women poets were at the forefront of efforts to more fully realise what Loy

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[88] Charles Maurras, *L'avenir de l'intelligence,* 2nd edn (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1918), p. 240 [emphasis original.

[89] Mina Loy, *Lost Writings: Two Novels by Mina Loy,* ed. by Karla Kelsey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2024), p. 76; H.D., 'R.A.F.', in *Collected Poems 1912-1944,* ed. by Louis L. Martz (New York: New Directions, 1983), pp. 485-492 (p. 489). May Swenson similarly reminded her reader that 'Earth will not let go our foot' in 'Earth Will Not Let Go', *Poetry,* December 1968, pp. 170-174 (p. 170).

[90] See Daniel 2.31-45.

[91] Pierre Janet, *Principles of Psychotherapy,* trans. by H.M. and E.R. Guthrie (London: G. Allen, 1925), p. 206.

[92] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 'Significant Help', trans. by Douglas Miller, quoted in *Goethe on Science: An Anthology of Goethe's Scientific Writings,* ed. by Jeremy Naydler (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1996), p. 116.

termed 'the harmony of physiological potentiality'.[93] Socially subordinated to the level of nature itself, the women featured in this thesis were uniquely positioned to embrace both the carnal and the cognitive capacities of the perceiving body.

The Educated Eye

Although there is no inherently sexed mode of perceiving or sensing, I focus on women poets in this thesis partly because men's and women's relations to institutional forms of learning and knowing about perception differed dramatically in the early twentieth century. It is true that women enjoyed increased access to educational institutions in the early twentieth century. Their educational experiences, however, often left them feeling disillusioned about the academic opportunities available to women after graduation. While all five of the women featured in this thesis pursued higher education, none of them pursued a career in academia. Notwithstanding her polemic against the value of college education for women, Stein was by far the most educated poet after she studied philosophy and psychology at Radcliffe College (formerly known as the Harvard Annex) followed by medicine at Johns Hopkins University (on William James' recommendation).[94] Like Stein, who left Johns Hopkins due to 'boredom' in 1902, H.D. left Bryn Mawr College after three semesters, much to the disappointment of her astronomer father Charles Leander Doolittle.[95] Moore, on the other hand, felt that 'Bryn Mawr was peculiarly adapted to [her] special requirements' and finished her undergraduate degree with a minor in biology and a major in history and politics.[96] Across the Atlantic, girls born and raised in late Victorian Britain were less exposed to science at school and therefore less likely to study scientific subjects at university.[97] Mirrlees, for

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[93] Mina Loy, 'Parturition', *Trend,* October 1914, pp. 93-94 (p. 93).
[94] Gertrude Stein, 'The Value of College Education for Women' (1899), Claribel and Etta Cone Papers, Baltimore Museum of Art Library and Archives, Box 5, Folder 20.
[95] Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1933), p. 100.
[96] Marianne Moore, *The Selected Letters of Marianne Moore*, ed. by Bonnie Costello (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), p. 178.
[97] See Joan Burstyn, *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), p. 164.

instance, studied classics at Newnham College, Cambridge, where she first became acquainted with a faculty member named Jane Harrison. Around the corner from Newnham, Mirrlees' parents hosted gatherings with Alfred North Whitehead, Lytton Strachey, Gertrude Stein, and Alice B. Toklas at their family home.[98] Loy, meanwhile, described her background as one of 'poverty' and indeed it is the case that her socioeconomic situation was the most precarious of the five poets featured in this thesis. Even so, it's worth noting with Carolyn Burke that Loy's father organised for his daughter to gain a higher education than her socioeconomic background typically afforded.[99] If it wasn't for her unique experiences at St. John's Wood Art School in London, the Society of Female Artists' School in Munich, and the Académie Colarossi in Paris, Loy might not have enjoyed such a privileged position in avant-garde art circles across the globe.

Thanks in part to their elite educational backgrounds, the women featured in this thesis were exposed to a plethora of new technologies (like the cinematograph, the wireless telegraph, the ultramicroscope, the zenith telescope, and the x-ray) designed to extend the spatiotemporal scope of the senses. These technologies, as Loy noted in her 1921 poem 'The Oil in the Machine?', caused 'an explosion / in consciousness' by calling attention to the existence of previously imperceptible phenomena.[100] Much like Loy, the men featured in Danius' *Senses of Modernism* and Brain's *Pulse of Modernism* saw great aesthetic potential in emergent technologies of perception. In addition to Danius and Brain, Tim Armstrong and Patrick Armstrong have similarly analysed modernism in light of new technologies designed to augment the senses.[101] And while women are not entirely absent from the Armstrongs' respective studies, it's worth noting that Stein, H.D., and Moore (the three American poets in this thesis) had more practical experience in laboratories and observatories than Woolf, Loy, and Barnes (the three women discussed by Tim and Patrick

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98 Rosalind Moad, '1914-16: Years of Innovation in Gertrude Stein's Writing' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of York, 1993), pp. 37-44.
99 Carolyn Burke, *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), p. 35.
100 Mina Loy, 'The Oil in the Machine?', YCAL MSS 6, Box 6, Folder 168.
101 Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology, and the Body*; Patrick Armstrong, *Microscopy, Magnification and Modernist Fiction: Micro-Modernism from Hardy to Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024).

Armstrong). Indeed, Stein, H.D., and Moore spent many hours with their eyes glued to microscopes and telescopes at Radcliffe, Johns Hopkins, the University of Pennsylvania, and Bryn Mawr. Meanwhile, British-born women like Loy and Mirrlees had fewer opportunities to gain practical experience in laboratories and observatories.[102] As a result, these two women resorted to the imaginative invention of instruments that would satisfy their craving for perceptual novelty. From thermoplastic lampshades to aural kaleidoscopes, Loy and Mirrlees made both concrete and chimerical contributions to modern technological culture despite their lack of formal scientific education.

In addition to technology, visual art also contributed to an 'explosion in consciousness' for Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore—all of whom were deeply imbricated in avant-garde art circles. Stein, for starters, famously hosted the likes of Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Robert Delaunay at her salon in Paris. It was Picasso, she later recounted, who taught her that 'each thing [is] as important as any other thing'.[103] Loy similarly learned from Picasso that 'the newspaper has […] an aesthetic quality' while Constantin Brâncuși taught her that there is 'an evangelistic import to eggs'.[104] Making art and writing poetry in London, Munich, Paris, Florence, and New York City, Loy accumulated a large range of artistic friends including Italian futurists like Filippo Marinetti and French language poets like Jean Cocteau. Mirrlees moved in similar (albeit slightly smaller) circles in Paris, where she socialised with Cocteau, Blaise Cendrars, Paul Reverdy, and Alexey Mikhailovich Remizov—all of whom shared her conviction that 'planes and lines' are 'startlingly significant'.[105] Across the Atlantic, Loy and Moore met in Manhattan, where they connected with visual artists like Marcel Duchamp and Alfred Stieglitz. Unlike Loy, Moore's experiences with visual art were coloured by a lifelong love of natural history and naturalism. Not only did H.D. share Moore's admiration for John Ruskin, an art theorist who revered nature, but she also shared

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[102] For an in-depth comparison, see Mary R.S. Creese and Thomas M. Creese, *Ladies in the Laboratory? American and British Women in Science* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1998).
[103] Gertrude Stein, *Picasso* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1938), p. 12.
[104] Loy, 'Stein', p. 298.
[105] Hope Mirrlees, *The Counterplot* (London: Collins, 1923), p. 86.

her interest in natural history thanks to the influence of her maternal grandfather, Reverend Francis Wolle, who studied and illustrated fresh-water algae. Wolle died when H.D. was only six years of age, but his influence lasted throughout her life. In one of her many accounts of sitting on her grandfather's knee during his studies, H.D. recalled being taught that 'where there is nothing, there is something'.[106] H.D.'s perceptual training, then, closely resembled Moore's in the sense that both poets became alive to the Jamesian 'reality of the unseen' from a young age.[107] Thanks to their analogous experiences with visual art, Stein, Loy, and Mirrlees also cultivated educated eyes (and ears) with the capacity to search for significance in seemingly insignificant spaces located both inside and outside the home.

Taken together, modernist women poets' early encounters with visual art, science, and technology had a perceptual priming effect insofar as these encounters served as sources of mental imagery. And 'mental imagery', as Nanay notes, 'influences our perceptual experience'.[108] This idea, of course, is not new, though it has received a considerable amount of attention from experimental psychologists in recent years.[109] Thanks to their experiments, Ernst Gombrich's view that 'the innocent eye is a myth' is now widely accepted, as is the idea that mental imagery can prime a perceiver to notice seemingly inconspicuous shapes, patterns, colours, and sounds.[110] When it comes to the perceptual effects of an aesthetic education, Nicholas Gaskill and Kate Stanley reject a passive (or 'Schillerian') aesthetic education in favour of a 'more hands-on version' that actively trains attention and equips students with 'new perceptual skills' akin to the skills that Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore acquired via their painterly peers.[111] In *The Question of the Aesthetic* (2022), George Levine similarly emphasised the value of an aesthetic education, noting that 'art does things

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[106] H.D., *The Gift*, ed. by Griselda Ohanessian (London: Virago, 1984), p. 11.
[107] James, *Varieties,* p. 53.
[108] Bence Nanay, *Aesthetics as Philosophy of Perception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 57.
[109] For precursors, see Nanay, *Aesthetics as Philosophy of Perception,* pp. 131-132; For an overview of psychological experiments, see Stephen M. Kosslyn, *Image and Brain: The Resolution of the Imagery Debate* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), pp. 287-289.
[110] Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 298.
[111] Nicholas Gaskill and Kate Stanley, 'Aesthetic Education without Guarantees: An Introduction', *PMLA,* 138.1 (2023), 127-136 (p. 127) <doi:10.1632/S0030812923000044>.

that other modes of expression can't do; it opens up, explores, reveals, and creates new angles of perception'.[112] As for the perceptual effects of a scientific education, Stephen M. Kosslyn, William L. Thompson, and Giorgio Ganis argue that 'one's expectations prime one during perception'—a 'situation [that] is common in science' as 'different theorists and experimenters operationalize imagery in different ways'.[113] Across the coming chapters, this much will be clear as we trace the various methodologies employed by scientists and artists alike: that they 'are not passive perceivers but instead actively seek information to help confirm or disconfirm hypotheses about what [they] are seeing'.[114] Without discounting the role of agency, then, this thesis approaches each poet as a perceiver who has been primed to 'pleasureably [sic] realize', in the words of Mina Loy, 'the thousand odds and ends which make up [her] sensery [sic] every day life'.[115]

Here it's worth briefly noting that the educated eye we encounter in the works of modernist women poets marks a significant departure from the appropriating eye we encounter in Romantic poetry. The Romantic 'world', as Galperin notes, is one which is '*no sooner seen* than imaginatively appropriated'.[116] Even in this definition, imaginative appropriation occurs post-perception. Perceptual priming, by contrast, is a pre-perceptual process (*i.e.,* it happens in advance of perception). According to William C. Edinger, Romantic poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge avoided perceptual priming at all costs, seeking instead to cultivate a '"natural" or direct perception, free of mediating cultural influence'.[117] As Edinger notes, Wordsworth and Coleridge held that 'genius' and 'genial perception' are 'inborn, spontaneous, autonomous, and wholly "natural", *i.e.* independent of culture, history, tradition'.[118] And while traces of this notion of genius

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[112] George Levine, 'Introduction' to *The Question of the Aesthetic,* ed. by Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 1-24 (p. 3).
[113] Stephen M. Kosslyn, William L. Thompson, and Giorgio Ganis, *The Case for Mental Imagery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 143, 49.
[114] Ibid., p. 139.
[115] Loy, 'Stein', p. 297.
[116] Galperin, p. 3 [emphasis original].
[117] William C. Edinger, 'Abstract' to *"Genial" Perception: Wordsworth, Coleridge and the Myth of Genius in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Liverpool: Clemson University Press, 2022), n.p.
[118] Ibid.

linger in Loy's Dadaist writings, it came under mounting scrutiny from a range of scientists, artists, and poets including Charles Darwin, Robert Browning, Abbott Handerson Thayer, and Pablo Picasso—all of whom modelled the genius that can result from an educated eye.[119] Thanks to the influence of these thinkers, Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore were well-equipped to reject an Emersonian 'transparent eyeball' or Ruskinian 'innocent eye' in favour of an embodied and experienced eyeball complete with its own idiosyncratic set of memories, biases, hypotheses, and tendencies. Genius, for these women, was not to annihilate or transcend idiosyncrasy, but to augment its perceptual value. Ultimately, as both self-proclaimed and secret geniuses, Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore cultivated a perceptual aesthetic that was highly mediated by their knowledge of art, philosophy, science, technology, and tradition.

The Affordances of Form

Not only did painting serve as a source of mental imagery for Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore, but it also served as a point of comparison for these five poets. As parallel systems for portraying perceptual processes, poetry and painting have a long and strong relationship harking all the way back to Aristotle's *Poetics*.[120] Like Aristotle, Stein and Moore emphasised the similarities between poetry and painting when they respectively claimed to be 'expressing the same thing [as Picasso] in literature' and to have an 'exaggerated tendency to visualize'.[121] Mirrlees, meanwhile, voiced approval of Leigh Hunt's proclamation that 'poetry is greatly superior to both painting and music' because it 'includes whatsoever of painting can be made visible to his mind's eye, and whatsoever of music can be conveyed by sound and proportion'.[122] In like manner, H.D. noted

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[119] See Mina Loy, 'In . . . Formation', *Blindman,* 10 April 1917, p. 7.
[120] For an account of this relationship in modernity, see James H. Rubin and Olivia Mattis (eds), *Rival Sisters, Art and Music at the Birth of Modernism, 1815-1915* (London: Ashgate, 2014).
[121] Stein, *Picasso,* p. 16; Marianne Moore, 'Answers to an Enquiry', in *The Complete Prose of Marianne Moore,* ed. by Patricia C. Willis (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), pp. 672-674 (p. 674).
[122] Hope Mirrlees Papers, Newnham College, Cambridge, 6/4/1.

that the pencil has more 'power' than 'the violin, the chisel, and the brush' because it can 'combine [their] qualities' and 'add still another quality to these three […] the fragrance of the flowers'.[123] Loy's definition of poetry as 'prose bewitched, a music made of visual thoughts, the sound of an idea' similarly registers this sense of poetry as a superior medium that partakes of the affordances of music, prose, and painting.[124] And yet 'we remember', in the words of Susan Stewart, 'that Herder, Hegel, and others held that, in distinction to the musical, visual, and plastic arts with their respective reliance on hearing, seeing, and touch, poetry works by no sense at all, through an immediacy of the soul or an energy emanating from a shaping spirit'.[125] Poetry, in other words, is not solely reliant on any one of the senses. Instead, it encompasses and evokes a Wordsworthian 'atmosphere of sensation'.[126]

Of course, the idea that poetry affords a more holistic approach to embodied feeling is not a new one. In 'A Defence of Poetry' (1821), for example, Shelley maintained that '[the poet] is more delicately organised than other men, and sensible to pain and pleasure, both his own and that of others, in a degree unknown to them'.[127] More recently, Muriel Rukeyser defined poetry as 'an approach to the truth of feeling' while Audre Lorde defined it as 'the revelation or distillation of experience'.[128] Here we are not far from Simon Jarvis' idea that the thinking of poets 'was not something which naturally first of all happened in prose, and which then had somehow to be put into verse. It was instead something which could happen in verse too, and would happen differently if it did'.[129] This, according to Jarvis, is 'thinking in verse' and it involves different patterns of thought than nonverse thinking. As an independent account of these differences,

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123 H.D., *Paint It Today,* ed. by Cassandra Laity (New York: New York University Press, 1992), p. 17.
124 Mina Loy, 'Modern Poetry', *Charm,* April 1925, pp. 16-17 (p. 16).
125 Susan Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 42.
126 William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads,* 3rd edn, 2 vols (London: Longman and Rees, 1802), I, p. xxxvii.
127 Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry', in *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments,* 2 vols (London: Edward Moxon, 1840), I (1840), pp. 1-57 (p. 54).
128 Muriel Rukeyser, *The Life of Poetry* (New York: Current Books, 1949), p. 4; Audre Lorde, 'Poems Are Not Luxuries', *Chrysalis,* 1977, pp. 7-9 (p. 8).
129 Simon Jarvis, 'Thinking in verse', in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romantic Poetry,* ed. by James Chandler and Maureen N. McLane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 98-116 (p. 98-99).

Caroline Levine's 2015 chapter on the 'affordances of form' has greatly influenced my understanding of poetry as a form that affords a unique kind of perceptual experience for both poet and reader alike. According to Levine, 'each form lays claim to different affordances'—'potential uses or actions latent in materials and designs'.[130] The sonnet, for example, 'best affords a single idea or experience, […] while the triple-decker novel affords elaborate processes of character development in multiplot social contexts'.[131] When it comes to the aesthetic affordances of lyric poetry, Stewart's appraisal is worth quoting at length:

> Poetic metaphor is at the center of form-giving activity in any aesthetic practice; it enables us to mediate and entertain at once our capacities for sense impressions and abstraction and to imagine, through both memory and projection, forms beyond the contingent circumstances of our immediate experience […] Lyric poetry in particular as impression and record of the image of the first-person speaker across and through historical and cultural contexts provides us with a form on the boundary among sense impressions, somatic memory, individuation of agency, and social context […] the form has served as a means for working through the body's ongoing mutuality of relations between nature and exterior objects and the ego's necessary articulation of itself as both separate from the world and transformed by the world.[132]

Lyric poetry, in other words, affords an aesthetic expression of embodied experiences that would otherwise fade into formlessness. 'It is through poetry', as Lorde notes, 'that we give name to those ideas which are, until the poem, nameless and formless—about to be birthed, *but already felt'*.[133] The 'individuation of agency' comes into play here not only in the poet's decision to experience the world *as poetry* (à la Viktor Shklovsky), to 'think in verse', but also in the choices she makes regarding how to express that experience using the materiality of language.[134] Indeed, if Lorde is correct that poetry is 'the revelation or distillation of experience', that experience and its revelation are just one among many possible kinds of experiences and revelations. The perceptual and formal

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[130] Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 6.
[131] Ibid., p. 6.
[132] Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses,* pp. 41-42.
[133] Lorde, p. 7 [emphasis added].
[134] Viktor Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose,* trans. by Benjamin Sher (Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press, 2015), p. 2.

choices that each poet makes as she explores what can and cannot be perceived and expressed, therefore, are of the utmost importance to this thesis.

Of course, not all of the poems featured in this thesis may be described as 'lyrical'—that ancient category that has been defined and redefined on countless occasions. Instead, the chapters that follow will reveal a variety of formal and generic innovations within the broad category of 'verse'. To be more specific, Stein's *Tender Buttons* (1914) is a collection of prose poems, H.D.'s *Sea Garden* (1916) is a collection of imagist poems, Loy's *Songs to Joannes* (1917) is a series of epistolary poems, Mirrlees' *Paris: A Poem* (1920) is a long poem, and, finally, Moore's *Observations* (1924) is a collection of highly stylised poems that have been described as 'anti-lyrical'.[135] As we shall see over the course of the coming chapters, each one of these verse forms carries different affordances that converge with and diverge from one another in important ways. By attending to these forms in their specificity, this thesis provides a more intimate discussion of the perceptual and aesthetic affordances of verse than Stewart was able to provide with her broad focus on 'lyric poetry' in the passage above. And yet my discussion will not be limited to verse, for non-verse forms like prose and painting carry converging and diverging affordances, too. Modernist women poets were acutely aware of this, and often alluded to these parallel systems of portrayal in an effort to articulate the affordances of their chosen form. Their poetry thus offers an apt opportunity to answer the following question: what are the aesthetic affordances of (modernist) poetry compared to painting and prose as parallel systems of portrayal?

Before we encounter such a diverse range of forms, it's worth noting with Jarvis that 'works of art are records of a historical process of thinking-through-making' and thus 'the (historical) truth-content of works of art is to be sought precisely in their technical organization, which, far from being a transhistorical frame for the work of art, is instead its most intimately historical aspect'.[136] It is for this reason that I fall somewhere between historicism and formalism

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[135] See Miller, *Cultures of Modernism,* p. 90.
[136] Simon Jarvis, 'What Is Historical Poetics?', in *Theory Aside,* ed. by Jason Potts and Daniel Stout (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 97-116 (pp. 100-101).

in my approach to *Tender Buttons, Sea Garden, Songs to Joannes, Paris,* and *Observations*—their formal organisation is inseparable from their historical significance (and vice versa). Like Toril Moi, however, I resist the tendency to treat literary approaches (like historicism and formalism) as equivalent to the systematic methods of the natural and social sciences, which follow 'a clearly defined series of steps' to 'produce replicable results'.[137] Instead of laying claim to a 'method' of analysis, I read. And 'to read', as Moi notes, 'is to pay attention to the particular text, to look and think in response to particular questions'.[138] In *The Poverty of Historicism* (1957), Karl Popper similarly called attention to the fact that 'historical "approaches" or "points of view" cannot be tested' like scientific hypotheses.[139] His solution—to 'consciously […] introduce a preconceived selective point of view into one's history; that is, to write that history which interests us'—anticipates Moi's solution, and it is one that I adopt throughout this thesis.[140]

Summary of Chapters

As I have already intimated, the focus of this thesis is confined to five poetic works published between 1914 and 1924: *Tender Buttons, Sea Garden, Songs to Joannes, Paris: A Poem,* and *Observations.* And while I aim to maintain focus on these five works, I draw upon several other poems and prose pieces—many of which have not yet been published but are integral to our understanding of the biographical, intellectual, and historical events that preceded and produced the poems in question. The temporal scope of this thesis, therefore, is not strictly confined to the decade between the publication of *Tender Buttons* (1914) and *Observations* (1924). Instead, it extends back in time to include the intellectual tradition and education of each poet. Much of this material is archival and thus requires significant biographical and historical contextualisation to draw out its full

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137 Toril Moi, *Revolution of the Ordinary: Literary Studies after Wittgenstein, Austin, and Cavell* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), p. 192.
138 Ibid., p. 178.
139 Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 139 [emphasis excised].
140 Ibid., p. 139 [emphasis excised].

significance. Without undue detail, I offer contextual accounts of archival materials and provide full citations in each instance.

The progression of chapters is chronological, beginning with the publication of Stein's *Tender Buttons* in 1914. In this chapter, I read Stein's prose poems in light of her formal study of philosophy and psychology at Harvard. By contrasting Stein's poetic portraits of perception with contemporary models of perception, the chapter highlights her rejection of deterministic frameworks in favour of a subjective and creative model that prioritises attention, action, intention, and agency. Many of the aesthetic dimensions of *Tender Buttons*—including its skilful fusion of sight, sound, and sense—were not only inspired by Stein's acquaintance with avant-garde artists, but also by her encounters with psychologists and philosophers whose influence on Stein has been neglected due to a heavy emphasis on the poet's familiarity with William James and Hugo Münsterberg. *Tender Buttons,* I argue, demands to be read as both a scientific and artistic effort to widen the field of perception; the simultaneously playful and profound result of Stein's 1908 realisation—'aesthetic has become the whole of me'.[141]

My second chapter shifts the focus away from synaesthetic perception to consider the unsettled boundary between the seen and the unseen in H.D.'s *Sea Garden.* Here I examine how H.D. gestures to 'the whole world of vision'—a world that was expanded through the lens of her father's telescope and grandfather's microscope—without transcending the spatiotemporal limits of the perceiving body and the imagist poem. I consider the poems of *Sea Garden* in relation to the scientific research of H.D.'s astronomer father and botanist grandfather, both of whom contributed to H.D.'s awareness of the Jamesian 'reality of the unseen'. In addition to science, art and religion also feature prominently in this chapter as two kindred contexts that played integral roles in shaping H.D.'s approach to vision and revelation in *Sea Garden*. To this end, this chapter considers H.D.'s intertextual engagement with the Bible, Hermetic writings by G.R.S. Mead and

[141] Leon Katz, transcription of Stein's notes for *The Making of Americans*, Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Collection, YCAL MSS 77, Box 17, Folder 285.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, poems by Emily Dickinson and Percy Bysshe Shelley, and art criticism by John Ruskin.

Chapter three brings us back to the domestic sphere that we left behind with Stein. Here I place Loy's *Songs to Joannes* in conversation with the work of dynamic psychologists like James, Bergson, Myers, and Roberto Assagioli. I identify a productive tension between Loy's dynamic desire to expand her 'prescribed psychic area' and her feminist rejection of the futurist idea that expansion is only available to a disembodied, all-seeing 'Uomo-Dio' (Man-God). I discuss the various strategies Loy employed as she sought to navigate this tension—such as her revisionist deployment of scientific diction, her embrace of the body's spatiotemporal limitations and liberties, and her poetic portrayal of parallax—as well as the philosophical implications of *Songs to Joannes* as a collection that upholds, subverts, and revises early twentieth-century theories of psychological expansion emerging from futurism, pragmatism, and dynamic psychology. This chapter also introduces the concept of 'a new dimension' as an idea that appealed to both Loy and Mirrlees as they used the ear to access spatiotemporal dimensions that are unavailable to the eye.

In chapter four, I consider the aural aspects of Mirrlees' long poem *Paris* in light of the denigration of vision and glorification of audition in twentieth-century French and Russian thought. I foreground Mirrlees' familiarity with Stein and identify a continuity between the kind of play we find in *Tender Buttons* and the playful typography of *Paris.* I return to chapter two's question about the boundary between the seen and the unseen and do so with reference to Mirrlees' religious, philosophical, and artistic interests. Despite the aural richness of *Paris,* the importance of vision and visuality becomes increasingly apparent as the long poem progresses.

In keeping with the theme of ocularcentrism, my fifth and final chapter examines Moore's *Observations* in relation to her conceptual study of observation at Bryn Mawr College. Here, Moore encountered the work of early twentieth-century scientists and artists seeking to observe the seemingly unobservable with educated eyes. Like H.D. in chapter two and Loy in chapter three, Moore sought to extend the scope of her senses with reference to new perceptual technologies

and scientific methodologies. Placing *Observations* in conversation with these technologies and methodologies, I demonstrate how Moore used her educated eye to observe the unobservable with the same 'piercing glances' that she associated with her favourite artists and scientists.

By placing *Tender Buttons, Sea Garden, Songs to Joannes, Paris,* and *Observations* within their broader biographical, intellectual, and historical contexts, this thesis illuminates the profound philosophical, scientific, and aesthetic implications of modernist women's poetry. The interweaving of sight, sound, and sense that we will encounter over the course of the coming chapters underscores the impact that early twentieth-century debates in philosophy, science, and art had on the development of modernist poetry. At the same time, this thesis calls for a reappreciation of modernist women poets' unique approach to perception. Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore did much more than simply reflect contemporary developments in the study of perception—they served as a source for new interventions, contributions, and innovations that challenged both long-established and newly-emerging models of perception and perceptibility. A related claim on the periphery of this thesis is that those women poets who thought and wrote about perception in the modernist period did so in anticipation of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Simone de Beauvoir's philosophical and feminist interventions. My conclusion provides an account of these interventions before connecting them to the phenomenological affordances of poetry as a form that modernist women writers used to push and probe the boundaries of perception and expression.

CHAPTER ONE

Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons*: New Form and Expression

Writing to Gertrude Stein in 1911, Mabel Dodge Luhan predicted the emergence of 'a whole epoch of new form & expression'.[1] Approximately one year later, Stein decided to start making 'portraits of rooms and food and everything'—not with paint, but with basic words repeated to form new patterns and express new experiences.[2] *Tender Buttons* (1914) was the result of that decision. But it is as much a portrait of the processes of perception as it is comprised of 99 individual portraits of objects, food, and rooms. For the uninitiated reader, here is just one brief example entitled 'RED ROSES':

> A cool red rose and a pink cut pink, a collapse and a sold hole, a little less hot.[3]

We will return to 'RED ROSES' in the final section of this chapter, but for now it suffices to note that 'when this was printed [Stein] did not understand this creation' (according to her 1946 interview with William S. Sutton and Robert B. Haas).[4] Indeed it appears that Stein struggled to understand *Tender Buttons* for a period of approximately twenty years, during which she refrained from commenting on the intentions behind her famously unintelligible prose poems. There is, however, one exception: *transition*'s 1928 reprint of *Tender Buttons.*

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1 Mabel Dodge Luhan to Gertrude Stein, 1911, in *The Flowers of Friendship,* ed. by Gallup, p. 52.
2 Gertrude Stein, 'Portraits and Repetition', in *Lectures in America* (New York: Random House, 1935), pp. 165-206 (p. 188).
3 Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons* (New York: Claire Marie, 1914), p. 24. All further references to this edition will be given after quotations in the text of this chapter.
4 Gertrude Stein, 'A Transatlantic Interview', in *A Primer for the Gradual Understanding of Gertrude Stein,* ed. by Robert Bartlett Haas (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1973), pp. 11-35 (p. 30).

Breaking her fourteen-year silence on this one occasion, Stein described *Tender Buttons* as her 'first conscious struggle with the problem of correlating sight, sound and sense, and eliminating rhythm'.[5] Perceptual in nature, Stein's 'problem' bears stark resemblance to the problems that her professors, teachers, and peers were grappling with during her formal study of philosophy at the Harvard Annex (a private institution for women to be taught by faculty members of Harvard College) from 1893 to 1897. At this point in Harvard's history, majoring in philosophy was the only option for students who wished to study psychology—an emerging discipline that was taught in the Department of Philosophy until it became an independent department in 1934. After matriculating as an undergraduate at the Annex, Stein quickly became involved in Harvard's Psychological Laboratory, where she participated in interdisciplinary debates regarding the nature of perceptual processes ranging from attention, detection, and recognition to suggestion, salience, and synaesthesia. Thanks to the work of Steven Meyer, Maria Farland, and Randall Knoper, Stein scholars are highly familiar with the names of Harvard psychologists like William James and Hugo Münsterberg.[6] Stein's archival papers from her time at the Psychological Laboratory, however, reveal that her personal and intellectual atmosphere included a number of other experimental psychologists such as Edmund Burke Delabarre, Boris Sidis, Mary Whiton Calkins, and John Perham Hylan—all of whom made major contributions to the study of perception at the turn of the twentieth century.[7]

Majoring in philosophy during the development of psychology as a discipline, Stein found herself surrounded by debates regarding the epistemological validity of psychophysics—the oldest branch of experimental psychology, concerned with quantifying the relationship between the

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[5] Gertrude Stein, 'Tender Buttons', reprinted in *transition,* Fall 1928, pp. 13-55 (p. 13).
[6] Steven Meyer, *Irresistible Dictation: Gertrude Stein and the Correlations of Writing and Science* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Maria Farland, 'Gertrude Stein's Brain Work', *American Literature,* 76.1 (2004), 117-148 <doi:10.1215/00029831-76-1-117>; Randall Knoper, 'Psychophysics to Literary Experiments: Gertrude Stein and Neural Composition', in *Literary Neurophysiology: Memory, Race, Sex, and Representation in U.S. Writing, 1860-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 156-192.
[7] See Stein's correspondence with Leon M. Solomons in the Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Papers, YCAL MSS 76, Box 124, Folder 2699.

psychological magnitude of sensations and the physical intensity of stimuli.[8] Psychophysicists like Ernst Heinrich Weber and Gustav Theodor Fechner devised physical laws to delineate the limits of perception and perceptibility. We will soon discuss the precise nature of these laws, but for now it suffices to note that they were often met with scepticism outside of their birthplace in Germany. Walking in the footsteps of Joseph Jastrow and Henri Bergson—both of whom published scathing critiques of psychophysics in the late 1880s—James disparaged psychophysics as the science of 'representing sensations by numbers' and 'reducing [mental life] to quantitative scales' in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890).[9] 'In James' view', as Erica Fretwell notes, 'to measure the minutiae of mental life is to sap introspection of its romance, thereby reducing consciousness to something decidedly less than the sum of its vibrant parts'.[10] James' position was shared by many at Harvard. Münsterberg, for example, became increasingly sceptical of the psychophysical schools that he had once embraced in Leipzig and Freiburg after he succeeded James as Director of Harvard's Psychological Laboratory in 1892 (the year before Stein's matriculation). Finally dissatisfied with 'the famous psycho-physical system of Fechner' due to its failure to quantify the relationship between physical stimuli and psychic sensations, Münsterberg and his Harvard colleagues qualitatively approached a 'percept' as something that 'has a unity of its own and is no mere aggregate of sensations'.[11]

Contrary to Knoper's account of Harvard's Psychological Laboratory during Stein's studies, the psychological research that Stein and her professors conducted was not 'free of metaphysics', nor did it adhere to the mechanistic principles of German psychophysics.[12] Instead,

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[8] See Andrew M. Colman, 'psychophysics', in *A Dictionary of Psychology,* 4th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), n.p. <doi:10.1093/acref/9780199657681.001.0001>.
[9] Joseph Jastrow, 'A Critique of Psycho-Physic Methods', *The American Journal of Psychology,* 1.2 (1888), 271-309 <doi:10.2307/1411321>; Henri Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (Paris: Alcan, 1889), pp. 1-55; James, *Principles,* I, pp. 537, 192.
[10] Erica Fretwell, *Sensory Experiments: Psychophysics, Race, and the Aesthetics of Feeling* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), p. 8.
[11] Hugo Münsterberg, 'The Danger from Experimental Psychology', *Atlantic Monthly,* February 1898, pp. 159-167 (p. 162).
[12] Knoper, p. 159.

as we shall see, Stein actively participated in experiments to disprove the laws of psychophysics during her time at Harvard. And while *Tender Buttons* was neither purposefully nor expressly formulated as a response to psychophysics, its author was clearly invested in exploring and portraying the same perceptual processes investigated by psychophysicists—detection, attention, awareness, salience, and sensation. As this chapter makes clear, Stein's poetic portrayal of these processes differs dramatically from a psychophysical model of perception, where salience is solely attributable to the statistical properties of stimuli (size, weight, movement, colour, etc.) and not to the perceiver's questions, interests, expectations, and desires. If *Tender Buttons* does not operate according to a psychophysical model of perception, then what alternative model does Stein propose? What are the defining features of Stein's perceptual framework? How does Stein's model of perception reject or resemble the perceptual models she encountered in her study of psychology, philosophy, and art? And finally, how does *Tender Buttons* place pressure on the psychophysical boundary between the perceptible and the imperceptible?

Given that psychology was both pedagogically and epistemologically linked to philosophy in America at the turn of the twentieth century, this chapter also places *Tender Buttons* in conversation with philosophers like George Santayana and Otto Weininger—both of whom were well-known to Stein.[13] Santayana and Weininger were very different philosophers, yet they both placed emphasis on the perceiver's power to pay attention, generate value, and make meaning in ways that defy the laws of psychophysics. This power belongs to all perceivers in Santayana's and Weininger's respective philosophies, yet it finds its fullest expression in the figure of the artist who harnesses her knowledge, skills, and desires to perceive phenomena that are statistically imperceptible by psychophysical standards yet are nevertheless real and meaningful. It was this model of the artist—as an extraordinary perceiver with the ability to 'create', in the words of Luhan,

[13] Santyana taught and corresponded with Stein when she served as secretary of the Philosophy Club at Radcliffe College (formerly known as the Harvard Annex) in the academic year 1895-1896. Stein began reading the first English translation of Weininger's *Sex and Character* (1906) in late 1907 and remained a fan of Weininger's for many years according to Leon Katz, 'Weininger and *The Making of Americans*', *Twentieth Century Literature,* 24.1 (1978), 8-26 (p. 17) <doi:10.2307/441062>.

'perceptions, conditions, and states of being, never before quite consciously experienced'—that Stein inhabited as she composed her 'portraits of things and enclosures that is rooms and places'.[14] Stein's portraits were not painted on a canvas, but the rectangular shape of her prose poems invites us to consider each as a portrait (albeit a puzzling one) of its titular object. And yet the volume as a whole—with its chapter abstracts, capitalised titles, and flowing prose—has a scientific quality to it, as if Stein never left the laboratories of Harvard and Johns Hopkins to pursue a more poetic means of portraying perceptual processes. Unfettered by generic expectations, Stein straddled poetry and prose, with the former affording play and the latter affording profundity. *Tender Buttons* is the playful yet profound result of this dialectic approach, an experiment in form and expression written in the wake of Stein's 1908 realisation—'aesthetic has become the whole of me'.[15]

Exceptional Perception

As outlined in the Introduction, modernist women poets worked within a post-Romantic tradition that emphasised the exceptional perceptual sensitivity of the artist. In *Tender Buttons*, Stein did not seek to portray 'an ordinary mind on an ordinary day' as Virginia Woolf aspired to do, but instead showcased the exceptionality of her own 'genius' mind.[16] According to Barbara Will writing in *Gertrude Stein, Modernism, and the Problem of 'Genius'* (2000), Stein considered herself to be a genius 'from about 1908 on'.[17] Will's chronology is certainly consistent with Stein's own account of her life in *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937), yet Stein's understanding of 'genius' appears to have been shaped during her time at Harvard, where Calkins, James, Santayana, and Sidis conducted research

[14] Luhan, 'Speculations', p. 172; Stein, 'Portraits and Repetition', p. 189.
[15] Leon Katz, transcription of Stein's notes for *The Making of Americans*, Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Collection, YCAL MSS 77, Box 17, Folder 285.
[16] Woolf, 'Modern Fiction', p. 212.
[17] Barbara Will, *Gertrude Stein, Modernism, and the Problem of 'Genius'* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 1.

on genius alongside many other psychological abnormalities.[18] By addressing perceptual differences, Harvard psychologists sought to reveal aspects of perception previously obscured by psychophysics' sole focus on what Fechner called the 'ordinary mental life'.[19] 'The investigation of the abnormal', wrote Sidis, 'is one of the most potent instruments for new discoveries'.[20] Harvard's prioritisation of abnormal psychology marked a significant departure from the psychophysical emphasis on normative sensory processes, statistical averages, and absolute thresholds, which were applied uniformly to all individuals regardless of their perceptual skills or limitations. James was critical of this approach long before it was discredited in the 1950s, and even went so far as to question the existence of a 'normal sensibility' in his 1890 critique of Fechner.[21] Elsewhere in James' *Principles*, as in Stein's published research papers, however, we find a sharp distinction between 'normal' perceivers and those exhibiting abnormalities like hysteria and genius.[22] In Stein's research, hysteria (typically diagnosed in women) is defined as an inability to attend to sensation.[23] On the other end of the spectrum of abnormality, genius (typically attributed to male artists) was understood as a hyper-sensitivity to sensation made manifest through the voluntary performance of concentration, association, recognition, and suggestion. In the first English translation of *Sex and Character* (1906), a book Stein claimed 'exactly embodied' her views, Weininger put it like this: 'the genius is he who is conscious of most, and of that most acutely'.[24] Thus equipped, the genius perceives beyond the statistical limits of psychophysics.

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[18] Stein 'slowly' came to know that she was a 'genius' after getting 'settled in Paris' and sitting for Picasso's *Portrait of Gertrude Stein* (1906) according to *Everybody's Autobiography* (London: Virago, 1985), pp. 57-60.
[19] Gustav Fechner, *Elements of Psychophysics,* trans. by Helmut E. Adler, ed. by Davis H. Howes and Edwin G. Boring (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 10.
[20] Boris Sidis, *The Foundations of Normal and Abnormal Psychology* (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1914), p. 45.
[21] James, *Principles,* I, p. 540. As Colman notes in his *Dictionary of Psychology* definition of an 'absolute threshold', 'the original concept of a sharply defined limit below which nothing can be perceived was discredited and largely abandoned after the development of signal detection theory' (n.p.).
[22] See James, *Principles,* I, p. 202; See also Leon M. Solomons and Gertrude Stein, 'Normal Motor Automatism', *Psychological Review,* 3.5 (1896), 492-512 <doi:10.1037/h0066163>.
[23] Solomons and Stein, p. 511.
[24] Weininger, p. 111. Stein's remark was recorded by her friend Marian Walker Williams in a letter dated 11 June 1909 in *The Flowers of Friendship,* ed. by Gallup, p. 45.

Although Stein herself was not explicitly involved in defining the nature of genius at Harvard, *Tender Buttons* closely aligns with definitions advanced by Calkins, James, Santayana, and Sidis. Writing in 1892, for example, Calkins defined genius as the performance of 'association through the concentration of thought upon the subtlest and remotest elements of its objects and then the successive recognition of these elements in ever widening circles of life'.[25] According to Calkins, 'this is the sort of association which is at the root of all figurative language and is illustrated in poetry of every form'.[26] Teetering on the cusp of poetry and prose, *Tender Buttons* is no exception. Indeed, Calkins' definition of genius serves as an apt description of the speaker's tendency to concentrate upon 'subtle' and 'remote' elements—such as 'a piece of coffee' (12), 'a little bit of tumbler' (23), or 'a centre in a table' (58)—before finally positioning these elements in relation to 'the ocean being encircling' (78). In 'A RED HAT', for example, Stein places the titular object in a 'place that has so much stretched out' (17) before reminding us that 'a wideness makes an active center' in 'ROOMS' (77). By Calkins' standard, it is a mark of genius to be able to make the 'center' (a red hat in this case) so 'active' that the surrounding space becomes 'stretched'. In other words, as Stein follows her own advice from 'ROASTBEEF'—to 'make the resonance accounted' (38)—she showcases her genius. As a result, the space surrounding the hat becomes 'monstrous', 'better', and 'use[ful]' (17). Similarly, in Matisse's *Woman with a Hat* (Figure 1.A), a 1905 portrait that lived on the wall of the Steins' apartment in Paris,[27] the woman's hat possesses 'a power of expansion'—Matisse's term for a perceived object with the capacity to 'bring to life the space which surrounds it'.[28] Neither flat nor fixed, the space surrounding the woman's hat departs from traditional portraiture conventions where the background maintains a high degree of independence from the

[25] Mary Whiton Calkins, 'A Suggested Classification of Cases of Association', *The Philosophical Review*, 1.4 (July 1892), 389-402 (p. 402) <doi:10.2307/2175939>.
[26] Ibid., p. 401.
[27] See *The Steins Collect: Matisse, Picasso, and the Parisian Avant-Garde,* ed. by Cécile Debray and others (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 363, 370.
[28] Henri Matisse, 'Notes of a Painter', in Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *Matisse: His Art and His Public* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1951), pp. 119-122 (p. 120).

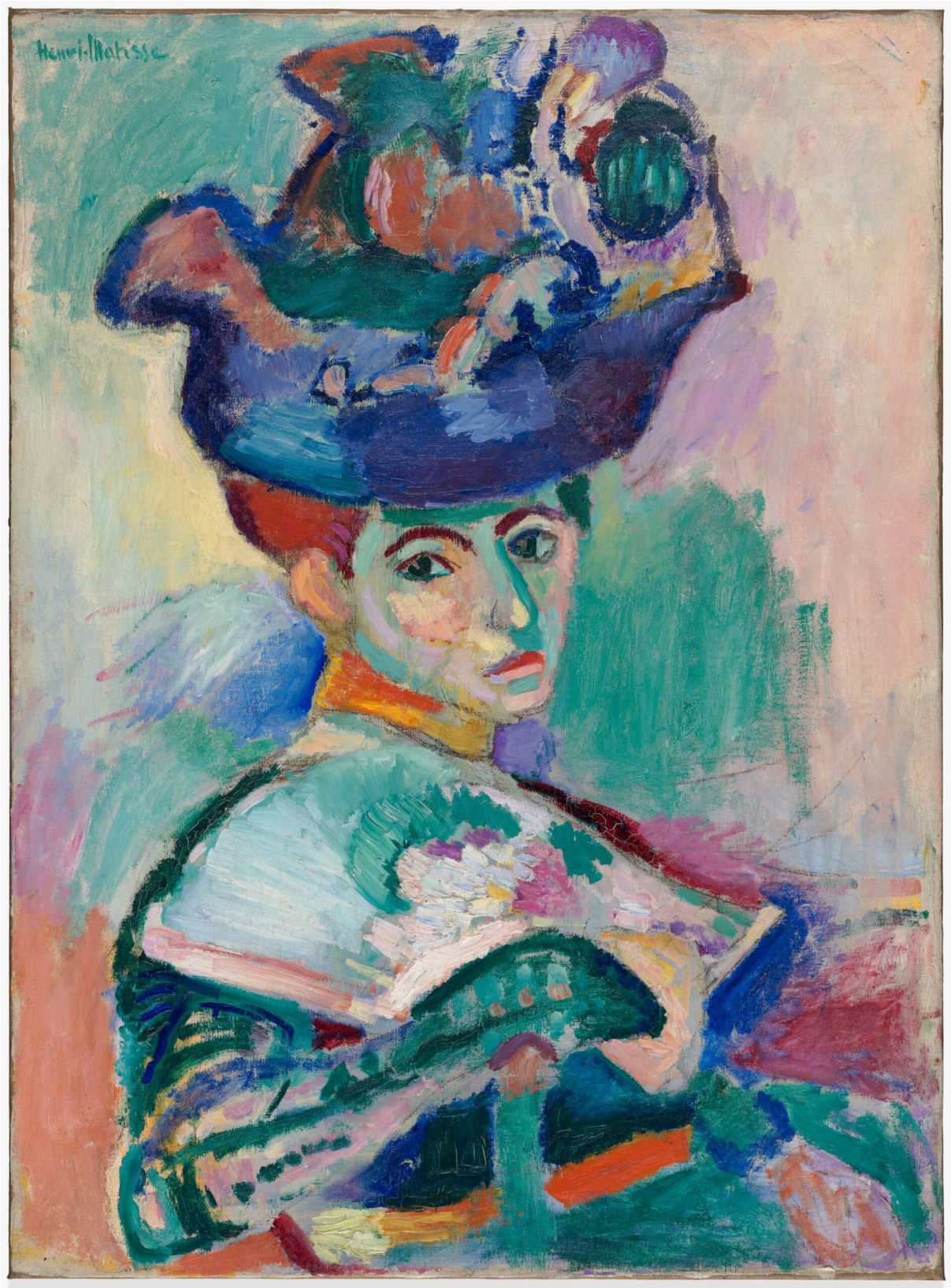

Figure 1.A. Henri Matisse, *Woman with a Hat,* 1905, oil on canvas,
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

figure in the foreground. By contrast, the background of *Woman with a Hat* emerges in dialogue with the hatted woman, suggesting a meaningful and dynamic relationship between centre and periphery—a quality that is present both in *Tender Buttons* and in Calkins' definition of genius.

Like Calkins, James associated genius with 'a native talent for perceiving analogies' between the intimate and the remote.[29] The genius, according to James, is 'far more sensitive to resemblances, and far more ready to point out wherein they consist, than others are'.[30] This definition of genius, as James points out, is nothing special. What is important for the sake of understanding Stein, however, is James' distinctive conviction that the more remote the resemblance, the greater the measure of genius. For James, as for Calkins, the 'man of genius' can be distinguished from the 'prosaic creature of habit and routine thinking' through his use of 'abrupt epithets', as 'when the color pale-blue is said to have feminine and blood-red masculine affinities'.[31] *Tender Buttons* is full of such abrupt epithets. 'Only a white and red are black', according to 'A LONG DRESS', 'only a yellow and green are blue a pink is scarlet, a bow is every color' (17). Similarly, in 'A PIECE OF COFFEE', we are told that 'a piece of coffee is not a detainer. The resemblance to yellow is dirtier and distincter' (12). Here and throughout *Tender Buttons*, the ability to perceive 'a very strange likeness' (40), to borrow a phrase from 'MUTTON', is a mark of genius—a word that 'mean[t] little more than the faculty of perceiving in an unhabitual way' for James.[32] It should come as no surprise, then, that Stein sought to 'see a fine substance strangely' (11), thereby anticipating Viktor Shklovsky's 1917 theory of defamiliarization and ultimately fulfilling the demands of genius as defined by James.

While early psychophysicists like Fechner relied on habit to 'introduce a certain uniformity' and 'even out' differences between individual perceivers, the Jamesian genius rejects perceptual habitude.[33] The pinnacle of this kind of genius, according to Stein's philosophy professor

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[29] James, *Principles,* I, p. 530.
[30] Ibid., p. 530.
[31] Ibid., pp. 582-583. Calkins quotes this passage from James in 'A Suggested Classification', p. 401.
[32] James, *Principles,* II, p. 110.
[33] Fechner, p. 74.

Santayana, is the poet.[34] Santayana saw it as the special function of the poet to place emphasis upon those 'particular qualities' that would otherwise remain 'neglected' by the 'habit[s]' of 'prosaic association':

> Out of the neglected riches of [waking life] the poet fetches his wares. He dips into the chaos that underlies the rational shell of the world and brings up some superfluous image, some emotion dropped by the way, and reattaches it to the present object; he reinstates things unnecessary, he emphasizes things ignored, he paints in again into the landscape the tints which the intellect has allowed to fade from it.[35]

Here, the poet asserts agency in the act of perception and thus departs from the psychophysical model of a passive perceiver whose ability to notice any given aspect of the environment is entirely dependent upon the statistical properties of that aspect. To perceive aspects that are statistically unlikely to catch the eye—to emphasise things ignored—is thus to transgress the laws of psychophysics. As the quotation above makes clear, this transgression was understood by Santayana as a precondition for the existence of poetry, where emphasis falls upon things normally 'neglected', 'superfluous', 'unnecessary', and 'ignored'. A late interview with Stein suggests that she shared Santayana's approach insofar as she sought to suppress that which is 'obviously and clearly seen' in favour of the 'great many other aspects and qualities' that go unnoticed due to the 'habitual practical purposes' of normal perception.[36] To cite just a couple of examples from *Tender Buttons,* the speaker observes a colour that is 'hardly seen' by others and even spots 'A MOUNTED UMBRELLA' despite the fact that there was ostensibly 'no chance of ever seeing it' (19-20).

From the 'eye glass' that 'is water' in 'MUTTON' (40) to the 'water' that 'is a mountain' in 'SUGAR' (44), the speaker's rejection of perceptual habitude can be discerned throughout the entirety of *Tender Buttons.* It's worth making a distinction, however, between the unhabitual eye that the speaker of *Tender Buttons* espouses and the unknowing eye that I outlined in my introduction.

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[34] Santayana repeatedly collocates the words 'genius' and 'poetry' across his published works.
[35] George Santayana, *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), pp. 260-261.
[36] Gertrude Stein quoted by Donald Sutherland in *Gertrude Stein: A Biography of Her Work* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), p. 181.

There I claimed that Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore 'reject an Emersonian "transparent eyeball" or Ruskinian "innocent eye" in favour of an embodied and experienced eyeball complete with its own idiosyncratic set of memories, biases, hypotheses, and tendencies'.[37] And while this is certainly true for the speaker of *Tender Buttons*,[38] Stein went on to identify her memories as a hindrance to her ability to 'look' in the following passage from 'Portraits and Repetition' (1935):

> The trouble with including looking […] was that in regard to human beings looking inevitably carried in its train realizing movements and expressions and as such forced me into recognizing resemblances, and so forced remembering and in forcing remembering caused confusion of present with past and future time.[39]

Here, Stein acknowledges that the genius act of 'recognizing resemblances' inevitably involves memory. Yet 'memory', according to Stein writing in 1938, has 'nothing to do' with the art of a genius like Picasso, who ostensibly saw 'as one can see when one has not the habit of knowing what one is looking at'.[40] 'Picasso when he saw an eye', according to Stein, 'the other one did not exist for him and only the one he saw did exist for him'.[41] As is so often the case with Stein, however, this statement simply is not accurate, for by this point Picasso was insistently painting every portrait with both eyes on the same side of a profile nose (see Figure 1.B) while reminding his photographer friend Brassaï that 'our knowledge influences our vision'.[42] We should proceed with caution, therefore, when confronted with Stein's claim that she wrote *Tender Buttons* with an innocent eye and thus managed to 'avoid' the 'difficulty of suggesting remembering'—especially given that this claim was made in the immediate aftermath of B.F. Skinner's behaviourist attack on the collection.[43]

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[37] See p. 36 of this thesis.
[38] For an opposing account, see Christopher J. Knight's study of Stein's 'innocent eye aesthetic' in *The Patient Particulars: American Modernism and the Technique of Originality* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1995), p. 82.
[39] Stein, 'Portraits and Repetition', p. 188.
[40] Stein, *Picasso*, p. 18.
[41] Ibid., p. 15.
[42] Pablo Picasso quoted by Brassaï in *Conversations with Picasso,* trans. by Jane Marie Todd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 273.
[43] Stein, 'Portraits and Repetition', p. 188; B.F. Skinner, 'Has Gertrude Stein a Secret?', *Atlantic Monthly*, January 1934, pp. 50-57.



Figure 1.B. Pablo Picasso, *Bust of a Woman (Dora Maar),* 1938, oil on canvas,
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC

Contrary to Stein's belated insistence that she did not allow 'looking' to 'mix itself up with remembering' in *Tender Buttons*, her prose poems include much more than 'only the really visible things' that happened to be in her room during composition.[44] Indeed, the collection contains more than its titular objects, food, and rooms suggest: it includes 'oceans' (20), 'monkey[s]' (26), 'donkey[s]' (26), 'whole lakes' (51), 'soldier[s]' (75), and even 'Asia' (78)—all of which couldn't possibly have been visible to Stein during composition. In this sense, *Tender Buttons* harmonises with Santayana's notion of 'genius' as 'that topographical sense by which we always live in the consciousness that there is a sea, that there are mountains, [and] that the sky is above us, even when we do not see it'.[45] The 'highest' poems, according to Santayana, 'awaken' this topographical sense 'at the right moment, so that the object that occupies the centre of vision may be seen in its true lights, coloured by its wider associations, and dignified by its felt affinities to things permanent and great'.[46] As I have already intimated, *Tender Buttons* is replete with moments in which 'the centre of vision' is actively expanded to reveal an object's 'wider associations' and 'felt affinities'. But sometimes, as in Stein's portrait of 'A LITTLE BIT OF TUMBLER', the 'moment' simply isn't 'right':

> A shining indication of yellow consists in there having been more of the same color than could have been expected when all four were bought. This was the hope which made the six and seven have no use for any more places and this necessarily spread into nothing. Spread into nothing (23).

Here, pragmatic use-value serves as a precondition for the awakening of Stein's topographical sense, which 'spread[s]' to 'the ends of the centre' elsewhere in *Tender Buttons* (63). In buying 'all four' tumblers together, the speaker expected the set to be chromatically diverse so that she could 'use' the tumblers in 'more places'.[47] What she finds instead, however, is 'more of the same color' (yellow). Thus lacking the perceptual properties that the speaker 'hope[d]' to find, the tumblers 'necessarily spread into nothing' due to their perceived uselessness.

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[44] Stein, 'Portraits and Repetition', p. 189.
[45] Santayana, *Interpretations,* p. 274.
[46] Ibid., p. 274.
[47] Stein's interpretation of 'A LITTLE BIT OF TUMBLER' in 'Transatlantic Interview' (p. 25) is similar to mine.

Reflecting on the composition of 'A LITTLE BIT OF TUMBLER' in 1946, Stein claimed she 'want[ed] to indicate [the tumbler] without calling in other things'—a method that recalls Boris Sidis' *Psychology of Suggestion* (1898).[48] According to Sidis (the father of William James Sidis and a psychologist who 'was interested in studying sub-conscious reactions' according to Stein writing in *Everybody's Autobiography*),[49] the 'conditions of normal suggestibility' include 'fixation of attention', 'limitation of voluntary movements', 'limitation of the field of consciousness', and 'inhibition'.[50] When it came to composing 'A LITTLE BIT OF TUMBLER', Stein wrote under all of the conditions outlined in Sidis' *Psychology of Suggestion*:

> I used to take objects on a table, like a tumbler or any kind of object and try to get the picture of it clear and separate in my mind and create a word relationship between the word and the things seen […] This is difficult and takes a lot of work and concentration to do it.[51]

Here, Stein follows Sidis' advice to 'contract' the 'field of consciousness' by 'fixing' the attention 'to only a certain point'—'a little bit of tumbler'.[52] And while Stein clearly found this kind of attention 'difficult' to sustain, she had substantial practice with the 'intentional variation of attention' owing to her participation in John Perham Hylan's 1896 experiments with 'fluctuations of the attention'.[53] As one of Hylan's 11 subjects at Harvard's Psychological Laboratory, Stein 'learned to alter the attention without moving the eyes'—a different perceptual skill from that in the passage above, but one which required a great deal of perceptual mastery.[54] Having mastered her attention to such a high degree, Stein was able to satisfying Sidis' conditions of suggestibility

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48 Stein, 'Transatlantic Interview', p. 25.
49 Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography,* p. 230; For more insight into Stein's familiarity with Sidis, see Solomons' April 1897 letter to Stein in YCAL MSS 76, Box 124, Folder 2699.
50 Boris Sidis, *The Psychology of Suggestion: A Research into the Subconscious Nature of Man and Society* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1898), p. 49. Sidis also includes 'distraction of attention' (p. 46), but this is itself a form of fixation.
51 Stein, 'Transatlantic Interview', p. 25.
52 Sidis, *Psychology of Suggestion,* p. 47.
53 J.B. [sic] Hylan, 'Fluctuations of the Attention (I.)', *Psychological Review,* 3.1 (1896), 56-63 (p. 58).
54 Ibid., p. 58.

by rejecting any potential 'fluctuations of attention' that might distract her from the task at hand: 'to call to the eye the way [the tumbler] appears by suggestion'.

In Sidisian psychology, it doesn't take a genius to achieve suggestibility—'that peculiar state of mind which is favourable to suggestion'.[55] Unlike James and Calkins, Sidis did not measure genius by an individual's ability to perceive resemblances, recognise associations, and make connections. Instead, genius corresponded to the *variability* and *abundance* of these resemblances, associations, and connections. Applying evolutionary principles to perception, Sidis wrote that 'the dull mind has but few [spontaneous or accidental] variations, while the man of genius […] has a mass of accidental variations from which to select in the adaptation to the purpose of the thought'.[56] And while women were thought by many biologists to have evolved into the less variable sex—a controversial theory known as the variability hypothesis—that did not stop Stein from displaying what Mina Loy described as 'the variety of her mental processes'.[57] In 'ROOMS', for example, we learn that 'in every space there is a hint of more, all this causes the decision' (72). The idea that 'a hint of more' can be found 'in every space' will become particularly important in the next chapter of this thesis. For the purposes of this chapter, however, it suffices to note that the existence of 'a hint of more' requires 'decision'-making, and that the act of deciding to focus on one variation over another was considered by Sidis to be an act of genius. Like Sidis, who instructed his participants to 'inhibit all ideas, all images that come up before [the] mind', Stein noted that 'you have to refuse so much and so much intrudes itself upon you that you do not want it, it is exhausting work'.[58] Here, Stein's 'creative overflow'—a phrase that Mabel Dodge Luhan used in her discussion of 'the modern definition of genius'—is on full display.[59] And yet it is the exercise of control over copiousness, the 'rigidly selective process of attention', that mattered for

[55] Sidis, *Psychology of Suggestion,* p. 15.
[56] Sidis, *Foundations,* p. 98.
[57] Loy, 'Gertrude Stein', p. 307; See Farland for an in-depth discussion of Stein's encounters with the variability hypothesis at Harvard and Hopkins.
[58] Sidis, *Psychology of Suggestion,* p. 61; Stein, 'Transatlantic Interview', p. 29.
[59] Luhan, 'Speculations', p. 172.

Stein and Sidis alike.[60] Meanwhile, Calkins, James, and Santayana provided the following criteria for selection: abruptness, remoteness, idiosyncrasy, suggestibility, and variability. And while Stein appears to have accepted these criteria, she still faced the following accusation, written by Henri-Pierre Roché in response to an unnamed manuscript in 1912: 'Quantity! Quantity! Is thy name woman?'.[61]

To Search a Neglect

For all the excess that readers like Roché have recognised in Stein's writing style, there is also 'a passionate expression and realization of certain parts at the expense of others'—a quality that Matisse associated with 'the moderns' according to notes written by Stein's sister-in-law, Sarah Stein (née Samuels), during her time at the Académie Matisse.[62] Matisse identified this quality as a 'weakness', but it is one of the greatest strengths of *Tender Buttons*.[63] In 'A LITTLE BIT OF TUMBLER', for example, Stein takes just one part of a tumbler—an 'indication of yellow'—and makes it 'shine' so that what was once remote becomes relevant in the context of the poem. The speaker fails to describe the rest of the object, including its most obvious properties (its shape, texture, and dominant colour). Rather than satisfying the reader's expectations of description, then, Stein instead decides which aspects of her environment are worth describing: 'a very little difference' (9), 'dust' (14), 'dirt' (14), 'pieces' (15), 'particles' (16), 'accents' (19), 'a constant increase' (47), and 'silent resemblance[s]' (77). Note that these are hardly statistically salient aspects—even 'a constant increase' can be difficult to discern according to Weber's psychophysical law of just-noticeable differences: 'the smallest detectable difference in the magnitude of a stimulus is proportional to

[60] Sidis, *Foundations,* p. 99.
[61] Henri-Pierre Roché to Gertrude Stein, 6 February 1912, in *The Flowers of Friendship,* ed. by Gallup, p. 56.
[62] 'Matisse Speaks to His Students, 1908: Notes by Sarah Stein', in *Matisse: His Art and His Public,* pp. 550-552 (p. 550).
[63] Ibid., p. 550.

the magnitude of the lesser stimulus'.[64] Equipped with her own sense of scale, however, for Stein it was 'so easy to see the difference' (33) between seemingly similar qualities and quantities.

Stein's top-down approach to perception in *Tender Buttons* marks a significant departure from the psychophysical standard that became popular at the turn of the twentieth century. While Harvard's Psychological Laboratory was predominantly opposed to psychophysics, fringe members like Calkins embraced psychophysical principles.[65] According to Calkins writing in an 1896 article for Harvard's *Psychological Review*—a journal that Stein contributed to on multiple occasions—'the factors of [perceptual] interest' are 'frequency, recency, vividness or impressiveness, and primacy'.[66] Meanwhile, in 'A LITTLE BIT OF TUMBLER' and other poems, Stein suggests that 'interest' depends not upon the statistical properties of stimuli but rather upon the perceiver's hopes, desires, and expectations. A little bit of tumbler, for example, is not 'interesting' according to Calkins' standards and the psychophysics from which they derive. But therein lies Stein's 'genius'—rather than passively waiting for 'readily associated objects' to impinge upon her, Stein actively 'call[ed]' aspects that are statistically unlikely to be noticed (such as a mere 'indication of yellow') 'to the eye'.[67] And 'out of an eye', according to 'A BOX', 'comes research' (11)—research that bears very little resemblance to the kind that psychophysicists like Weber and Fechner pursued in the mid-nineteenth century. Influenced by Johann Friedrich Herbart's analytic philosophy of the mind, both Weber and Fechner described the relationship between the psychic and the physical as one of deterministic dependence in which psychic sensation can be directly measured by the statistical properties of physical stimuli. According to Weininger writing in *Sex and Character,* however, psychophysics 'fail[ed] to recognise that only the external and not the internal world can be reconstructed from sensation'.[68] Across the Atlantic, Münsterberg similarly proclaimed that the

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[64] Colman, 'Weber's Law', in *Dictionary of Psychology,* n.p.
[65] Calkins worked alongside James, Münsterberg, and Josiah Royce while technically occupying a position at the nearby Wellesley College for women.
[66] Mary Whiton Calkins, 'Association (II.)', *The Psychological Review: Studies from the Harvard Psychological Laboratory,* 3.1 (1896), 32-49 (p. 32) <doi:10.1037/h0068098>.
[67] Ibid., p. 32.
[68] Weininger, p. 82.

psychophysical idea of 'psychical measurement was an illusion' because it 'confus[ed]' mathematically measurable stimuli with psychic sensations, which Münsterberg saw as 'unmeasurable' due to their qualitative nature.[69] For Münsterberg, as for Stein, 'the only reality to which our daily life' belongs is 'a world of will, of action, of appreciation, of values […] a world of qualities' that cannot be reduced to their statistical properties.[70]

Contrary to psychophysicists like Herbart, Weber, and Fechner, the most salient aspects of any given perceptual environment are not pre-determined by its statistical properties but rather by the hopes, desires, and expectations that the perceiver brings to her encounter with the world. 'Search a neglect', wrote Stein in 'ROASTBEEF', thereby highlighting her reader's capacity to 'search' for salience in previously 'neglected' places (37). Such neglect often stems from social biases that condition which aspects of the environment are deemed 'interesting'. The environment of *Tender Buttons* is predominantly (albeit not purely) domestic and therefore at risk of neglect on the part of those who fail to perceive the home as a realm worthy of philosophical interest. According to Joseph Jastrow writing in an 1896 article for Harvard's *Psychological Review,* women are more interested in domestic matters than men due to 'the strong preference of the feminine mind for certain concrete and familiar classes of words, in particular for articles of dress, interior furnishings, foods, etc., and the absence of abstract words'.[71] Calkins challenged Jastrow's findings by replicating his experiments with fifty women from Wellesley College. According to Calkins' results, women were less likely to list 'objects of ardent feminine interest' (such as 'wearing apparel and fabrics') when prompted to write a random list of 100 words 'as rapidly as possible'.[72] Moreover,

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[69] Münsterberg, 'The Danger from Experimental Psychology', pp. 162-163. James McKeen Cattell, Münsterberg's friend who reviewed Stein's study of 'Cultivated Motor Automatism' in 1898, made similar arguments against psychophysics in 'On Errors of Observation', *The American Journal of Psychology,* 5.3 (1893), 285-293 <doi:10.2307/1410994>.

[70] Münsterberg, 'The Danger from Experimental Psychology', p. 164. Weininger similarly critiqued Herbart and Fechner for rejecting the idea of men as 'free intelligible agent[s]' in *Sex and Character,* pp. 209-212.

[71] Joseph Jastrow, 'Community of Ideas of Men and Women', *Psychological Review,* 3.1 (1896), 68-71 (p. 69).

[72] Mary Whiton Calkins, 'Community of Ideas of Men and Women', *Psychological Review,* 3.4 (1896), 426-430 (pp. 427-428).

given the 'differences in the training and tradition of men and women', Calkins found it difficult (if not impossible) to 'establish characteristic differences in the interests of men and women'.[73]

Whereas Calkins attributed sexual difference to social conditions, Stein shared Jastrow's commitment to maintaining traditional differences between men and women in early essays such as 'The Value of College Education for Women' (1899) and 'Degeneration in American Women' (1902) as well as her fictional episode, *Fernhurst* (1904). 'A great mass of the world's women', wrote Stein, 'should content themselves with attaining to womanhood' because 'the ideal of maternity is the only worthy one for [a woman] to hold' in a public society where 'the male code is the only possible one'.[74] And while it is important to note that Stein considered herself to be one of the 'rare […] exceptions to this rule', she still held that the 'only serious business of life in which [other women] cannot be entirely outclassed by the male is that of child bearing'—a 'normal and legitimate function' that 'should' be fulfilled by women who are 'secluded, supported, and economically useless'.[75] Stein never embraced the conventional 'ideal' of matrimony and maternity for herself. But that did not stop her from cultivating what one anonymous reviewer identified as a 'warm domesticity' in *Tender Buttons,* a collection that focuses primarily upon the 'articles of dress, interior furnishings, [and] foods' that Jastrow associated with the 'feminine mind'.[76]

Within the 'warm domesticity' of *Tender Buttons*, the list of neglected objects includes 'a seltzer bottle' (16), 'beer' (42), and 'a cup' (49)—all of which become 'use[ful]', 'necessary', and 'of consequence' in the perceptual encounter between this 'hearty' poet and her domiciliary surroundings (16-17).[77] Given the seemingly insignificant nature of these objects, however, it is

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[73] Ibid., p. 430.
[74] Gertrude Stein, *Fernhurst, Q.E.D., and Other Early Writings* (New York: Liveright, 1971), pp. 4-5; Gertrude Stein, 'Degeneration in American Women', in Brenda Wineapple, *Sister Brother: Gertrude and Leo Stein* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), pp. 411-414 (pp. 413-414).
[75] Stein, 'Degeneration', p. 413; Gertrude Stein, 'The Value of College Education for Women' (1899), Claribel and Etta Cone Papers, Baltimore Museum of Art Library and Archives, Box 5, Folder 20.
[76] Anon., 'Gertrude Stein', *New York City Call,* 7 June 1914, in *The Critical Response to Gertrude Stein,* ed. by Kirk Curnutt (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2000), 15-16 (p. 15).
[77] 'Gertrude was hearty' according to Mabel Dodge Luhan writing in *Intimate Memories,* 4 vols (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1933-1937), II (1935), p. 324.

tempting to follow Stein's early critics in labelling her prose poems as disingenuous—especially if we observe the same standards set out by Santayana in the following passage from *The Sense of Beauty* (1896):

> A people with genuine aesthetic perceptions creates traditional forms and expresses the simple pathos of its life, in unchanging but significant themes, repeated by generation after generation. When sincerity is lost, and a snobbish ambition is substituted[,] bad taste comes in.[78]

The 'forms' and 'themes' of *Tender Buttons* are thoroughly untraditional and therefore insignificant in relation to the 'unchanging' ideals that Santayana championed. It should come as no surprise, then, that Stein has often been accused of having a 'snobbish ambition' that is 'deliberately unintelligible in the hope of being thought elusively wise'.[79] As Santayana notes elsewhere in *The Sense of Beauty,* however, 'the greatest evidence of aesthetic sincerity' is 'a splendid confidence in [one's] own intuitions [and] a proud assertion of [one's] own taste'—two qualities that Stein flaunted for the entirety of her life.[80] In this respect, Stein is exempt from the standards outlined above, an 'ambitious' genius whose aesthetic is 'genuine' no matter how insignificant it might have seemed to those in male-dominated circles.

Here it's worth noting that Stein's understanding of perceptual value is inseparable from her critique of 'patriarchal poetry'—a phrase she used to designate a patrilineal literary tradition dominated by 'many many many many men men men' in a 1927 manuscript by that same name.[81] Fifteen years separate the composition of *Tender Buttons* from the composition of *Patriarchal Poetry*, but the poems speak to one another in important ways. In 'A SUBSTANCE IN A CUSHION', for example, we learn that 'it is very likely [that] little things'—such as a little bit of tumbler—'could be dearer' to us 'if there is a genuine interest in there being present as many girls as men' (10).

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[78] George Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896), p. 79.
[79] Anon., 'Futurist Essays', *Los Angeles Times*, 9 August 1914, in *The Critical Response,* ed. by Curnutt, p. 22.
[80] Santayana, *Sense of Beauty,* p. 44.
[81] Gertrude Stein, 'Patriarchal Poetry', in *Writings 1903-1932,* ed. by Catherine R. Stimpson and Harriet Chessman (New York: Library of America, 1998), pp. 567-607 (p. 593).

Almost as if she were responding on behalf of these men, Stein makes an ambivalent case for the bigger 'considerations' that are 'value[d]' over 'little things' in the following passage from *Patriarchal Poetry:*

> Patriarchal poetry makes no mistake makes no mistake in estimating the value to be placed upon the best and most arranged of considerations […] Patriarchal poetry may be mistaken […] Patriarchal poetry makes mistakes.[82]

In the 'Sonnet' that immediately precedes this passage, we learn that patriarchal poetry's 'mistake' has something to do with the way it 'estimat[es]' value so that 'transcendent virtues' such as 'beauty' and 'reason' are given prominence as 'the best and most arranged of considerations' while the 'little things' that feature throughout *Tender Buttons* go completely unmentioned.[83] Such a mistake can be easily discerned in Santayana's aforementioned conviction from *The Sense of Beauty*—that the most 'genuine' (and therefore most valuable) insights are those that are 'repeated by generation after generation' of the 'father[s]' and 'grandfather[s]' that Stein used to define patriarchy in *Patriarchal Poetry* as well as *The Geographical History of America* (1936).[84] Despite these men 'having an advantage all the time', however, Stein still felt that 'patriarchal poetry might be withstood' by the 'perfectly unprecedented arrangement[s]' that we find modelled in *Tender Buttons* (24).[85]

Whereas the likes of Santayana were busy 'looking for [their] canons of beauty in some sort of frame or glass case of tradition', 'the flux of life [was] pouring its aesthetic aspect into [Stein's] eyes [and] ears'—or at least this is how Mina Loy described Stein's perceptual aesthetic in a 1924 essay entitled 'Gertrude Stein' for Ford Madox Ford's *Transatlantic Review*.[86] Stein's method of perception wasn't as passive as Loy's sentence suggests, but Loy is certainly correct that her manner of perceiving the 'aesthetic aspect[s]' of 'life' was fresh because unframed. In an essay entitled 'Pictures' (1935), for example, Stein observed how the 'modern picture' makes a 'very

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[82] Ibid., pp. 585, 593.
[83] Ibid., pp. 585, 606.
[84] Ibid., p. 584; Gertrude Stein, *The Geographical History of America* (New York: Random House, 1936), p. 65.
[85] 'Patriarchal Poetry', pp. 567, 594.
[86] Loy, 'Gertrude Stein', pp. 429-430.

definite effort to leave [its] frame' because 'it must have its own life'.[87] 'The framing of life', she continued in *Picasso* (1938), 'was over' with the advent of cubism—a movement comprised of painters who 's[aw] the earth as no one ha[d] ever seen it': with 'ecstasy', 'intensity', and 'splendor'.[88] Seeking to 'express the same thing' as Picasso, Stein composed portraits of seemingly irrelevant percepts in poetry.[89] In this sense, *Tender Buttons* harmonises with Elisa Tamarkin's description of 'a painting' that 'is the result of a changed attention, and [which] tries to change our attention in turn'.[90] Indeed, much like a painting, *Tender Buttons* 'has the quality of bringing out some aspect of the world as prominent so that we become aware of it'.[91] Such was the effect that Stein's work had upon Loy, who characterised Stein's 'modernism' as asking: 'why not each one of us, scholar or bricklayer, pleasureably [sic] realize all that is impressing itself upon our subconscious, the thousand odds and ends which make up [our] sensery [sic] every day life?'.[92] Ultimately, as poems like 'A LITTLE BIT OF TUMBLER' and 'A SUBSTANCE IN A CUSHION' make clear, Stein never tired of perceiving 'a violent kind of delightfulness' in 'the thousand odds and ends' of her sensory life (10).

I Spy

In 'Poetry and Grammar' (1935), Stein declared that 'language as a real thing is not imitation either of sounds or colors or emotions it is an intellectual recreation and there is no possible doubt about it'.[93] The word 'recreation', of course, has a dual meaning. Most obviously, this word works to

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87 Gertrude Stein, 'Pictures', in *Lectures in America*, pp. 59-92 (p. 87).
88 Stein, *Picasso*, pp. 12-13, 23, 49.
89 Ibid., p. 16.
90 Elisa Tamarkin, *Apropos of Something: A History of Irrelevance and Relevance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022), p. 150.
91 Ibid., p. 150; Ada Smailbegović similarly reads *Tender Buttons* as a 'poetic mode' of 'paying attention to minute processes of transformation occurring within different material worlds' in *Poetics of Liveliness: Molecules, Fibers, Tissues, Clouds* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), p. 61.
92 Loy, 'Gertrude Stein', p. 298.
93 Gertrude Stein, 'Poetry and Grammar', in *Lectures in America*, pp. 209-246 (p. 238).

establish language as a new creation free from the burden of imitation. Not only can Stein's language be understood as a re-creation, however, but it can also be read as a product of *recreation*—'an activity or pastime which is pursued for the pleasure or interest it provides'.[94] Such an approach dates back to Lisa Ruddick's 1990 study of Stein's tendency to 'play with the written medium' in *Tender Buttons*.[95] Since then, critics like Ellen E. Berry and Ulla E. Dydo have similarly read Stein's work as the product of linguistic play—an approach that Stein herself endorsed when she described her middle period as an attempt to 'play with words'.[96] According to biographers, Stein possessed a child-like playfulness that Luhan registered when she wrote that 'Gertrude was hearty. She used to roar with laughter, out loud. She had a laugh like a beefsteak'.[97] Arnold Rönnebeck similarly recounted: 'Gertrude herself was always giggling an intellectual silver giggle over her own stuff'.[98] Given Stein's playful attitude, it should come as no surprise that the reader of *Tender Buttons* encounters 'many many lead games' and 'a puzzle, a monster puzzle' in poems like 'BOOK' and 'SUGAR' (28). What *is* surprising, however, is that critics like Ruddick have only ever described 'the transgressive games [that Stein] plays with her own pencil lead' as instances of sexual and/or verbal play, thereby obscuring the ways in which *Tender Buttons* plays with perception in addition to traditional notions of sex and language.[99]

Treating *Tender Buttons* as a work of perceptual play helps to elucidate Stein's tendency to describe games in visual and haptic terms, as in the following passage from 'ROOMS': 'the best game is that which is shiny and scratching' (77). As Jane F. Thrailkill notes in *Philosophical Siblings: Varieties of Playful Experience in Alice, William, and Henry James* (2022): 'play leads us to the nature of perception; it straddles the disciplines of aesthetics, science, and philosophy, taking up the question

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[94] Oxford English Dictionary Online, 're-creation, *n.*'; 'recreation, *n.*'
[95] Lisa Ruddick, *Reading Gertrude Stein: Body, Text, Gnosis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 245.
[96] Ellen E. Berry, *Curved Thought and Textual Wandering: Gertrude Stein's Postmodernism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992); Ulla E. Dydo, *Gertrude Stein: The Language that Rises, 1923-1934* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003); Stein, 'Transatlantic Interview', p. 17.
[97] Luhan, *Intimate Memories,* p. 324.
[98] Arnold Rönnebeck Papers, YCAL MSS 692, Box 3.
[99] Ruddick, p. 213.

of agency and free choice while also attending to human beings in their sociality'.[100] In *Tender Buttons,* the best example of this kind of play can be found in the apostrophic poem 'BUTTER', where a block of butter is repeatedly told to 'boom in' and 'show it[self]' while the speaker plays a game of 'I spy':

> Boom in boom in, butter. Leave a grain and show it, show it. I spy.
> It is a need it is a need that a flower a state flower. It is a need that a state rubber.
> It is a need that a state rubber is sweet and sight and a swelled stretch. It is a need.
> It is a need that state rubber.
> Wood a supply. Clean little keep a strange, estrange on it.
> Make a little white, no and not with pit, pit on in within (52).

Given the historical context of this prose poem, 'I spy' could refer to two different children's games: 'I spy with my little eye' (a late nineteenth-century game in which one child selects a visible object for the others to guess) or 'hy-spy' (an eighteenth-century game that is now widely known as 'hide-and-seek'). Discussing the latter form of the game—hy-spy—in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), James noted that 'the breath-holding stillness of the boy playing "I spy"' saves him 'from being *noticed at all*' by the seeker because 'movement is the quality by which animals most easily attract each other's attention'.[101] No wonder, then, that the speaker of 'BUTTER' repeatedly implores her addressee to move (or 'boom in') so that she can notice it more easily before crying 'hy spy!' to signify that the search is over—the hider ('butter', in this case) has been found.

In addition to serving as an explicit instance of play, the phrase 'I spy' also stands out as the only moment in which the reader gets a direct (albeit fleeting) glimpse of the first-person speaker behind the seemingly anonymous questions, imperatives, and observations that otherwise comprise *Tender Buttons*. Indeed, up until this point in the collection, the reader only ever intuits a speaker with the capacity to perceive, interrogate, command, reason, feel, and play. 'I spy' thus serves as a bold declaration of selfhood, agency, and perceptual ability that extends far beyond

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[100] Jane F. Thrailkill, *Philosophical Siblings: Varieties of Playful Experience in Alice, William, and Henry James* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), p. 3.
[101] James, *Principles,* II, pp. 173-174 [emphasis original].

Ruddick's rather restrictive reading of the passage as one that portrays 'a "spy" in the alien territory of male dominance'.[102] Spying is not just 'a way of seeing through patriarchal structures' as Ruddick contends; it is also a type of play—'a curiosity-based phenomenon that explores outer reality through playful interaction with the environment' in such a way that 'the rules or the tools of mastery are fashioned'.[103] When it comes to hy-spy, one of the most important tools needed for success is a *Suchbild*—a German word for the 'search image' that organisms use in order to find 'a certain object with a unique perception image' in Jakob von Uexküll's philosophy of biology.[104] And while Uexküll's concept postdates *Tender Buttons* by 20 years, it finds its equivalent in *The Principles of Psychology*, where James noted that 'in looking for any object in a room […] we detect it the more readily if, in addition to merely knowing its name, etc., we carry in our mind a distinct image of its appearance'.[105] Without such a *Suchbild,* seekers would ultimately fail to notice the silent and stationary hider because 'attention', as James notes, 'involves inward reproduction'.[106]

While the seekers of hy-spy use a *Suchbild* (search image) to find a familiar friend with a specific appearance, smell, voice, and body language, the players of 'I spy with my little eye' use a more flexible *Suchton* (search tone) to guide their search for a class of objects with a certain colour, first letter, use-value, etc. In 'I spy with my little eye', it is the spy (rather than the seeker) that determines this *Suchton* before communicating it through language. And language, as the following passage from James' article 'On the Function of Cognition' (1885) makes clear, has the ability to point to objects:

> The subject, or topic, of the words is usually something towards which I mentally seem to pitch them in a backward way, almost as I might jerk my thumb over my shoulder to point at something, without looking round, if I were only entirely sure that it was there.[107]

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[102] Ruddick, p. 3.
[103] Ibid., p. 218; Mara Reilly, *Play as Exploratory Learning: Studies in Curiosity Behavior* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1974), p. 16.
[104] Jakob von Uexküll, *Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans,* trans. by Joseph D. O'Neil (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 117.
[105] James, *Principles,* I, p. 504.
[106] Ibid., p. 504.
[107] William James, 'On the Functions of Cognition', *Mind,* 10.37 (January 1885), 27-44 (p. 40)

Tender Buttons registers this Jamesian affordance of language in the first sentence of the opening poem, 'A CARAFE, THAT IS A BLIND GLASS', where we find 'an arrangement in a system to pointing' (9). Contrary to Michael Edward Kaufmann's claim that Stein saw language not as an 'instrument of perception' but as 'an instrument of culture that obscures perception', Stein's language enables and enhances perceptual novelty by virtue of its ability to point to that which is otherwise obscured.[108] Thanks to Stein's pointing 'system', previously imperceptible or unnoticed objects become perceptible—not because they move (although they almost always do), but because language points to them, just as an impatient spy might point to the spied object before it is found. This is precisely what takes place in 'BUTTER': too impatient to wait for the players' guesses, the spy-speaker uses language to point to the spied object. 'State flower […] state rubber', she instructs, thereby 'swell[ing]' and 'stretch[ing]' what was once 'little' into something that can be seen by the 'sight' of seekers who place themselves in the perceptual position of the spy.

In addition to James, Stein shared her interest in detection with her brother, Leo Stein. According to Leo writing in *Appreciation: Painting, Poetry and Prose* (1947), the work of 'a detective studying a man's character' is akin to the work of 'a painter beginning on a portrait'.[109] Both are 'act[s] of appreciation', but the former is 'prosaic' while the latter is 'poetical'.[110] As a collection of prose poems, *Tender Buttons* combines the act of a detective with the act of a portrait artist who possesses the capacity to 'communicate' her 'appreciation' so that 'anyone who looks at the portrait understandingly will share immediately the painter's experience'.[111] Regardless of whether Stein is playing 'I spy with my little eye' or hy-spy in 'BUTTER', she is inviting us to perceive as a genius perceives, to play an unpredictable perceptual game akin to the game that she posed to herself in

[108] Michael Edward Kaufmann, 'Gertrude Stein's Re-Vision of Language and Print in "Tender Buttons"', *Journal of Modern Literature,* 15.4 (1989), 447-460 (p. 448) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3831601> [accessed 11 January 2023].
[109] Leo Stein, *Appreciation: Painting, Poetry and Prose* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1947), p. 28.
[110] Ibid., pp. 28-29.
[111] Ibid., p. 30.

the following passage from *Everybody's Autobiography:* 'It always has been a game with me to think if something is going to happen just all the possible ways a thing is going to happen […] That is why I like detective stories, I never know ever how they are going to happen'.[112] From Harriet Scott Chessman to Matthew Levay, numerous critics have discussed the detective elements of Stein's later works such as *Blood on the Dining-Room Floor* (1933) and 'Three Sisters Who Are Not Sisters' (1944).[113] Yet Stein's interest in detection can also be discerned in her early work, even if that work takes a more playful approach to the matter. Like *Blood on the Dining-Room Floor, Tender Buttons* invites its readers to be perceptual detectives—to 'search a neglect' or 'search in between' (45)—because, in Stein's words, 'there are so many things to detect'.[114] In doing so, she assumes her full perceptual potential—active, pragmatic, intentional, and embodied—the complete antithesis of the passive perceiver that psychophysicists posited at the turn of the twentieth century.

A Very Little Difference

In *Tender Buttons*, not only does the agency of the perceiver condition *which* aspects of any given environment can be perceived, but also *how* those aspects are perceived. 'Why is it so seen' (49) and 'why is it beautiful' (73) are just two of the many questions that the speaker of *Tender Buttons* asks as she explores the difference between 'the things seen as every one sees them' and 'the thing as [s]he was seeing it'.[115] Take, for example, the 'ROOMS' section, where the 'end' of an 'established […] arrangement […] suggest[s] that there can be a different whiteness to a wall' (64). Numerous

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[112] Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography,* p. 28.
[113] Harriet Scott Chessman, *The Public is Invited to Dance: Representation, the Body, and Dialogue in Gertrude Stein* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 137; Matthew Levay, 'Remaining a Mystery: Gertrude Stein, Crime Fiction, and Popular Modernism', *Journal of Modern Literature,* 36.4 (2013), 1-22 <doi:10.2979/jmodelite.36.4.1>.
[114] Gertrude Stein, 'Why I Like Detective Stories', in *How Writing is Written,* ed. by Robert Bartlett Haas (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1974), pp. 146-150 (p. 147).
[115] Stein, *Picasso,* p. 17.

critics have commented on the unconventional colour combinations of *Tender Buttons* ranging from the 'yellow and green' that 'are blue' in 'A LONG DRESS' (17) to the 'very dark grey' of 'A RED HAT' (17).[116] Apart from the word 'color' itself, however, no colour is mentioned as frequently in *Tender Buttons* as white—which also happens to be the most significant colour in Leon M. Solomons' experiments with saturation, conducted in partnership with Stein at Harvard's Psychological Laboratory in 1895. By this point, the laboratory had amassed an impressive collection of 'apparatus for studying the sensations' including several instruments designed 'for the study of aesthetic combinations of color'.[117] And while Solomons did not explicitly state which instruments were used in his experiments, it is highly likely that he used a Milton Bradley Color Wheel and/or one of the laboratory's numerous 'color-mixers' in order to manipulate the intensity and saturation of various coloured disk combinations.[118] '[O]wing to the training required' to 'compare two mixtures of very different intensity with regard to their saturation', however, Solomons' experiments were only performed on two subjects—'Miss Stein and the writer'.[119] In conducting his experiments with Stein, Solomons initially sought to 'determine whether least perceptible differences of color saturation obeyed Weber's law' (that 'the smallest detectable difference in the magnitude of a stimulus is proportional to the magnitude of the lesser stimulus').[120] This question, however, did not take long to answer following Solomons' initial observation that two colour wheels with equal amounts of red but differing amounts of white will exhibit large differences in saturation. Contrary to Weber's law, Solomons concluded, the ability to detect differences in

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116 See Nicholas Gaskill, *Chromographia: American Literature and the Modernization of Color* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), p. 191; See also Harryette Mullen, *The Cracks Between What We Are and What We Are Supposed to Be: Essays and Interviews* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012), pp. 20-28; See also William H. Gass, *On Being Blue: A Philosophical Inquiry* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1976), pp. 35-37.
117 Hugo Münsterberg, *Psychological Laboratory of Harvard University* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1893), pp. 9-10, 15.
118 Gaskill, *Chromographia,* p. 195.
119 Leon M. Solomons, 'The Saturation of Colors', *Psychological Review,* 3.1 (1896), 50-56 (p. 51) <doi:10.1037/h0068948>.
120 Ibid., p. 50.

saturation depends not only on the amount of colour added to a colour wheel but also on the amount of white.[121]

Having concluded that saturation 'fail[s] to obey Weber's law' due to the relational nature of colour perception, Solomons and Stein began to experiment with 'the general relation between intensity and color quality' by 'varying the proportion of black and white' in two coloured disks placed under different light conditions.[122] As a participant in these experiments, Stein was required to 'isolat[e] the black element in a color presentation'—a difficult task due to the fact that black 'is an organic part of the percept bound up with the rest' and therefore 'must be regarded as an element added to every presentation by some reflex process, and giving the relation of the object to its immediate field of view'.[123] Modifying the usual three-fold approach to colour perception that Hermann von Helmholtz and Arthur König pioneered in the mid-nineteenth century, Solomons regarded 'blackness' as an additional fourth factor in the 'psychological classification' of coloured objects along with tone, saturation, and intensity.[124] Taken together, these four factors contribute to 'the different subjective effects which a colored object produces', making the 'different whiteness to a wall' that we find in 'ROOMS' not just possible but inevitable.[125] As Stein notes in 'A SUBSTANCE IN A CUSHION': 'the change of color is likely and a difference a very little difference is prepared' (9). Colour, both in *Tender Buttons* and in Solomons' experiments, thus serves as a reminder of the 'change' that is 'likely' to occur in a perceptual environment that looks a 'little' different to every perceiver. Ultimately, as Solomons' article concludes, 'the subjective aspect of colour theory' cannot be ignored by those seeking to understand the discrepancy between the quantitative properties of a colour stimulus and the subjective experience of colour.[126]

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121 Ibid., p. 50.
122 Ibid., pp. 50, 53.
123 Ibid., pp. 54-55.
124 Ibid., pp. 54-55.
125 Ibid., p. 55.
126 Ibid., p. 55.

Given Stein's familiarity with Weber's law of least perceptible differences, it's worth noting that the word 'difference' features prominently throughout *Tender Buttons*. In addition to 'A SUBSTANCE IN A CUSHION', the word can also be found in 'A CARAFE, THAT IS A BLIND GLASS', 'ROASTBEEF', and 'ROOMS'. In all four of these prose poems, Stein showcases her ability to detect the same 'very little differences' that concerned Weber in early psychophysical experiments designed to test a perceiver's ability to discern between slightly different sizes, weights, and colours. Acting as though she were taking part in Weber's experiments, the speaker of *Tender Buttons* continually compares the statistical properties of objects. Normally, the comparison remains implicit in Stein's use of adjectives like 'smaller', 'littler', 'bigger', 'darker', 'greater', 'whiter', and 'slighter' (to name just a few). In the following passage from 'ROOMS', however, Stein calls explicit attention to the act of comparison:

> If comparing a piece that is a size that is recognised as not a size but a piece, comparing a piece with what is not recognised but what is used as it is held by holding, comparing these two comes to be repeated. Suppose they are put together, suppose that there is an interruption, supposing that beginning again they are not changed as to position, suppose all this and suppose that any five two of whom are not separating suppose that the five are not consumed. Is there an exchange, is there a resemblance to the sky which is admitted to be there and the stars which can be seen. Is there. That was a question. There was no certainty (67).

Here, Stein stages and subverts a classic psychophysical experiment in which a subject holds two objects of different weights and is asked to determine whether one is heavier than the other. Stein's critique consists in her awareness that objects are not 'recognised' solely through measurable properties like weight but through their qualitative use-value. 'A piece', we learn, is recognised 'as it is held by holding' in the hands of an embodied subject with the ability to discern and generate value. After one repetition of the experiment, Stein envisions a series of 'interruptions' that work to disrupt ideal experimental conditions. The greatest interruption occurs in the third sentence, when the speaker departs from the psychophysical norm of a passive perceiver by posing questions regarding the existence of things seen (stars) and unseen (the sky). Her conclusion—'there was no

certainty'—closely recalls Solomons' conclusion to 'The Saturation of Colors' (1896): that the variability of human perception undermines Weber's law of least perceptible differences.[127] Ultimately, for Stein and Solomons, psychophysics is incapable of fixing the threshold of perception with any degree of certainty.

Of course, it wasn't just Stein and Solomons who had reservations regarding psychophysics' capacity to capture how objects are perceived in the real world of lived experience. Writing in 'The Danger from Experimental Psychology' (1898), for example, Münsterberg critiqued E.W. Scripture's *The New Psychology* (1897) and its psychophysical theory of colour perception. The perception of colour, according to Scripture drawing on the work of Helmholtz and Fechner, is equivalent to 'all our sensations of light', which can be arranged into a three-dimensional coordinate system with the X, Y, and Z axes corresponding respectively to red, green, and blue.[128] While Münsterberg agreed with Scripture that 'white sunlight contains the red and green and violet sun-rays', he felt that 'it is absurd if the psychologist pretends that therefore the white sensation contains the sensation red and the sensation green'.[129] 'Nothing of that kind is in our consciousness', concluded Münsterberg, 'white and red are psychologically two different qualities'—a conviction he shared with a number of American colour theorists including Edmund Burke Delabarre, Christine Ladd-Franklin, and Edmund Clark Sanford.[130]

Like Münsterberg, Stein acknowledged that a 'white bow' theoretically contains 'blue [and] green' light rays in 'A LITTLE CALLED PAULINE' (25). Unlike Münsterberg, however, Stein was

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[127] See Solomons, pp. 55-56.
[128] E.W. Scripture, *The New Psychology* (London: W. Scott, 1897), p. 330; pp. 344-345.
[129] Münsterberg, 'The Danger from Experimental Psychology', p. 162; Münsterberg appears to have been influenced by Christine Ladd-Franklin's critique of Helmholtz's colour theory—that 'the *sensation* white is nothing but an even mixture of red-green-blue *sensations*—as something that 'is strongly contradicted by consciousness' in 'A New Theory of Light Sensation', *Science,* 22.545 (1893), 18-19 (p. 18 [emphasis original]) <doi:10.1126/science.ns-22.545.18>.
[130] Münsterberg, 'The Danger from Experimental Psychology', p. 162; Edmund B. Delabarre, 'The Influence of Muscular States on Consciousness', *Mind,* 1.3 (July 1892), 379-396 (p. 380) <doi:10.1093/mind/1.3.379>; Christine Ladd-Franklin and Edmund C. Sanford, 'The Perception of Light and Color', *Psychological Review,* 1.1 (1894), 96-99 (pp. 97-98) <doi:10.1037/h0069212>.

willing to imagine the theoretical colour of an *a priori* landscape in the following passage from 'ROOMS':

> A plain hill, one is not that which is not white and red and green, a plain hill makes no sunshine, it shows that without a disturber. So the shape is there and the color and the outline and the miserable centre, it is not very likely that there is a centre, a hill is a hill and no hill is contained in a pink tender descender (68).

Here, 'white and red and green' can only coexist in a state of 'plain'-ness—an adjective that Stein uses pejoratively throughout *Tender Buttons* to describe that which lacks the 'outward recognition' of a perceiver with the capacity to interrupt the Stevensian plain sense of things (14). Given that Stein's 'plain hill' is 'not contained in the nervous current flowing through the organism', as Allegra Stewart notes in her interpretation of the beginning of 'ROOMS' as a 'colorless enclosure' devoid of a perceiver, it should come as no surprise that its 'centre' is not only 'miserable' but also 'not very likely' to exist.[131] Ultimately, Stein struggles to ascertain the ontological existence of an *a priori* hill because it originates in abstract conceptualisation rather than direct sensory experience.

Devoid of sensation as an *a priori* mixture of 'red and green', Stein's 'plain hill' closely resembles the 'plain, ordinary hills […] of all colors' that she encountered in 1913 while reading samples from Kandinsky's 1912 collection of prose poems, *Klänge*.[132] With Alexander S. Kaun's 1914 *Little Review* article as the only exception, *Tender Buttons* has not yet been considered in relation to *Klänge* despite the close formal and thematic resonances between the two collections of prose poems.[133] In the following passage from 'Hills', for example, Kandinsky anticipates 'ROOMS' by 'imagin[ing]' a theoretical (rather than empirical) landscape that is strikingly similar to Stein's:

> A mass of hills of all colors you can imagine or want to imagine. All different sizes, but the shapes are always alike, i.e. just one: Fat at the bottom, puffed out around

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131 Allegra Stewart, *Gertrude Stein and the Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 130.
132 Arnold Rönnebeck sent unspecified 'samples' of *Klänge* to Stein in a letter dated 1 April 1913 and reproduced in *The Flowers of Friendship,* ed. by Gallup, p. 77.
133 Ibn Gabirol [Alexander S. Kaun], 'My Friend the Incurable', *Little Review,* November 1914, pp. 42-44 (p. 44).

> the sides, flatround just above. Just plain, ordinary hills, like the kind you always imagine and never see.[134]

Here, Kandinsky's 'plain, ordinary hills' loosely resemble the imagined hills made visible in his 1910 oil painting entitled *Landscape with Rolling Hills* (Figure 1.C). In this painting, as in his earlier *Landscape with Hills* (1908), Kandinsky's hills are not as uniform in shape as those in 'Hills'. At the bottom of the canvas, for example, the hills are long and flat while those at the top of the canvas are short and steep with multiple peaks and jagged edges. Even so, much like the 'hills of all colors' in the passage above, Kandinsky's painted hills are coloured shades of blue, green, purple, red, yellow, and orange—colours that stand out from one another thanks to their hard, unblended edges. Prismatically dispersed and disintegrated, these colours appear to have been 'imagined in an abstract sense', a phrase Kandinsky used in 1911 to designate that which is 'visualized' in the mind rather than 'seen materially'.[135] Likewise, Stein's 'plain hill' is theoretically 'white and red and green' despite the fact that these colours are never seen by a 'disturber' with the capacity to transform an *a priori* hill into an *a posteriori* one. Without this disturber, the hill in 'ROOMS' is as 'miserable' as the conclusion of Kandinsky's 'Hills', where we find an 'utterly exhausted man […] stretched out' on a path that is 'simply white, i.e. neither bluish, nor yellowish, neither turning into blue, nor into yellow'.[136] According to Kandinsky writing in *On the Spiritual in Art* (1912), white simply cannot be perceived as 'bluish' or 'yellowish' because it is 'a symbol of a world from which all colour, as a material quality and substance, has disappeared'.[137] Instead, like the 'pink' colour of the 'tender' being that 'descend[s]' Stein's hill, Kandinsky's white is a perceived quality of the kind described by Münsterberg—psychologically different from blue and yellow despite the crucial part that blue and yellow play in producing the physical phenomenon of white.

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134 Wassily Kandinsky, *Sounds,* trans. by Elizabeth R. Napier, 2nd edn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), p. 19.
135 Wassily Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual in Art*, trans. by Hilla Rebay (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1946), p. 45.
136 Kandinsky, *Sounds,* p. 20.
137 Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual,* pp. 68, 62.



Figure 1.C. Wassily Kandinsky, *Landscape with Rolling Hills,* 1910, oil on board, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City

While Stein shared Kandinsky's pejorative sense of the word 'plain', she used the word 'tender' to describe that which is 'simple' (34), 'joyful' (35), 'fresh' (38), 'disturbed' (39), 'splendid' (40), 'thoughtful' (45), 'chang[ing]' (47), 'meaning[ful]' (47), 'true' (63), and, perhaps most important of all, 'perfect' (39).[138] And 'perfect' things—such as the 'steady cake' from 'BREAKFAST'—are 'not plain' (43). Instead, much like the 'perfectly unprecedented arrangement' from 'IN BETWEEN' (24), 'perfect' things are the result of 'a strange mixture' that produces 'an ordinary color' (43). Here, Stein shares her appreciation for the strange multiplicity underlying ordinary colours with Delabarre, the psychologist who 'communicated' (*i.e.*, edited) Stein's article 'Cultivated Motor Automatism' (1898) for the *Psychological Review* while 'tak[ing] temporary charge of the Psychological Laboratory in Professor Münsterberg's place'.[139] Writing in the following passage from an article entitled 'The Influence of Muscular States on Consciousness' (1892), Delabarre distinguished between the physical interaction of stimuli and the psychological production of sensation like this:

> A red-stimulus causes one sensation, a blue-stimulus another, the two combined a third. But the sensation of red does not combine with the sensation of blue to produce the sensation of purple. The two stimuli do, however, so act together as to produce a brain-process of a third kind, whose accompaniment is the sensation of purple […] Yet we can easily obtain separate sensations of red and of blue, and detect the resemblance of purple to both of its constituents.[140]

Delabarre's observation here anticipates Ladd-Franklin's 1901 critique of Scripture's hypothesis that only 'those persons who have seen pictures produced by mixtures of blue or violet and red'

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[138] This reading runs counter to Sianne Ngai's reading of 'tenderness' as that which is 'vulnerable to [violent] deformation and transformation' in *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp. 88-89. Contrary to Ngai, I share Chessman's conviction that Stein's 'buttons', her words, are 'small gifts offered "tenderly" and to be handled with tenderness by the receiver' from *The Public is Invited to Dance,* p. 91. For more on Stein and literary gift exchange, see Rebecca Colesworthy's chapter on 'Gertrude Stein and the Politics of Literary Genius' in *Returning the Gift: Modernism and the Thought of Exchange* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 157-197.

[139] Gertrude Stein, 'Cultivated Motor Automatism; A Study of Character in its Relation to Attention', *Psychological Review,* 5.3 (1898), 295-306 (p. 295) <doi:10.1037/h0073997>; Josiah Royce, 'Philosophy', *Harvard Graduate's Magazine,* 1896, pp. 228-232 (p. 228).

[140] Delabarre, p. 380.

will 'mentally decompose the color [purple] into its constituent parts'.[141] In response, Ladd-Franklin cited a new study of colour nomenclature among Labrador natives, who called purple *aupaluktak-tungajuangaijuk* (bluish red) and violet *tungajuktak-aupalangaijuk* (reddish blue).[142] According to the scientist who conducted the study, these observations prove that even individuals who are unfamiliar with the concepts of purple and violet have the capacity to recognise that both colours contain red and blue in various quantities.[143] Contrary to psychophysicists like Scripture, then, Delabarre was correct to conclude that anyone 'can easily […] detect the resemblance of purple to both of its constituents' despite the fact that 'the sensation of purple' is psychologically distinct from the sensations of red and blue.

Whereas Scripture shared Helmholtz's struggle to 'distinguish between color in the physical sense and color in the psychological sense',[144] Stein shared Delabarre's capacity to recognise how stimuli might undergo a perceptual process of 'change' in the following passage from 'A SUBSTANCE IN A CUSHION':

> Light blue and the same red with purple makes a change. It shows that there is no mistake. Any pink shows that and very likely it is reasonable. Very likely there should not be a finer fancy present. Some increase means a calamity and this is the best preparation for three and more being together. A little calm is so ordinary and in any case there is sweetness and some of that (10-11).

Here, as Ada Smailbegović notes, blue and red do not simply mix to make purple, for the 'presence of the proposition "with"' suggests 'that the color purple is on the same temporal plane as the colors blue and red, appearing at the same time to coincidentally produce the change that occurs'.[145] Notably, the result of these three colours 'being together' is anticlimactic, for the

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141 E.W. Scripture, 'Review of *Sight* by Joseph LeConte', *Psychological Review,* 4.5 (1897), 543-544 (p. 544) <doi:10.1037/h0068409>; Michael Rossi, *The Republic of Color: Science, Perception, and the Making of Modern America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), p. 161.
142 Christine Ladd-Franklin, 'Color-Introspection on the Part of the Eskimo', *Psychological Review,* 8.4 (1901), 396-402 (p. 399).
143 William Halse Rivers, 'The Colour Vision of the Eskimo', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philosophical Society*, 11.2 (1901), 143-149 (p. 145).
144 Ladd-Franklin, 'Color-Introspection', p. 400.
145 Smailbegović, p. 61.

combination of blue, red, and purple simply yields more purple, or 'some increase' of red and blue. Even so, Stein goes on to describe the scene as 'a calamity', thereby calling attention to the physical complexity inherent in the seemingly simple psychological sensation of purple. By juxtaposing *a priori* colours with *a posteriori* ones, Stein highlights the gap between the theoretical conceptualisation of perception and actual perceptual experience. The difference between the two, in *Tender Buttons,* is not 'very little' but insurmountable.

The Cadence of Colour

Given Stein's commitment to colour experimentation, one might be inclined to agree with Christopher J. Knight's claim that 'sight itself is […] the privileged faculty of *Tender Buttons*'.[146] As numerous studies devoted to aurality and tactility in *Tender Buttons* suggest, however, Stein drew simultaneously upon the five senses despite her conviction that 'there is no use there is no use at all in smell, in taste, in teeth' (35).[147] Stein's dismissal of smell and taste here might have been partially inspired by her acquaintance with Robert Delaunay, the co-founder of Orphic cubism who wrote 'Light'—an ocularcentric manifesto proclaiming that 'the Eye is our highest sense, the one which communicates most closely with our brain and consciousness'.[148] Whereas Delaunay maintained that 'auditory perception is insufficient for our knowledge of the Universe [because] it lacks depth',[149] Stein added depth to *Tender Buttons* by mingling the visual with the aural in the following passage from 'ROOMS':

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146 Christopher J. Knight, 'Gertrude Stein, "Tender Buttons", and the Premises of Classicism', *Modern Language Studies,* 21.3 (1991), 35-47 (p. 36) <doi:10.2307/3195086>.
147 See Rebecca Scherr, 'Tactile Erotics: Gertrude Stein and the Aesthetics of Touch', *Literature Interpretation Theory*, 18.3 (2007), 193-212 (p. 196) <doi:10.1080/10436920701525570>; See also Chessman, pp. 88-100; See also Chad Bennett, 'Scratching the Surface: *Tender Buttons* and the Texture of Modernism', *Arizona Quarterly,* 73.1 (2017), 21-49 <doi:10.1353/arq.2017.0001>; See also Smailbegović, pp. 61-71.
148 Robert Delaunay, 'Light', in *The New Art of Painting: The Writings of Robert and Sonia Delaunay,* ed. by Arthur A. Cohen, trans. by David Shapiro and Arthur A. Cohen (New York: The Viking Press, 1978), pp. 81-86 (p. 82). For Stein's correspondence with the Delaunays, see YCAL MSS 76, Box 104, Folder 2027.
149 Delaunay, p. 82.

> Cadences, real cadences, real cadences and a quiet color. Careful and curved, cake and sober, all accounts and mixture, a guess at anything is righteous, should there be a call there would be a voice (71).

The first sentence of this passage is typical of Stein's tendency to state the name of an object or concept only to repeat that name with the word 'real' in front of it, as if the reality of that object or concept required immediate verification.[150] Indeed, one might struggle to believe that 'cadence'—'the rhythmical flow of such nonmetrical prosodies as found in […] the prose poem'—is a 'real' element of *Tender Buttons* given Stein's aforementioned desire to 'eliminat[e] rhythm' in her prose poems.[151] According to *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), however, Stein 'first felt a desire to express the rhythm of the visible world' during her trip to Spain in the summer of 1912.[152] And while many of Stein's prose poems lack conventional cadence, the passage above is certainly an exception owing to its special use of commas that work to slow down the speed of a reader who arrives breathless after reading the preceding paragraph. The trochaic cadence of Stein's sentences is enhanced by the alliteration of 'c' and 'q' sounds coupled with the consonance of 's' sounds down to the last word ('voice'), which recalls Stein's claim to 'hear tones of voice and rhythms' rather than 'words and sentences' spoken in French.[153]

In 'ROOMS' and beyond, Stein 'correlates sight, sound, and sense' by attending to the synaesthetic qualities of colours—their accompanying sounds, smells, and temperatures. Stein shared her interest in recording synaesthetic sensation with those American scholars who pursued questions posed by the European psychologists that pioneered the study of synaesthesia in the 1880s.[154] One such scholar was Calkins, who published two major studies of synaesthesia during

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[150] Other examples include 'a soldier a real soldier' (27), 'a winding a real winding' (43), and 'mellow real mellow' (51).
[151] T.V.F. Brogan and J.M. Cocola, 'Cadence', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics,* ed. by Roland Greene and others, 4th edn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 173-174 (p. 173).
[152] Stein, *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, p. 145.
[153] Ibid., p. 86.
[154] For more details, see Jörg Jewanski, 'Synesthesia in the Nineteenth Century: Scientific Origins', in *The Oxford Handbook of Synesthesia,* ed. by Julia Simner and Edward Hubbard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 369-398.

Stein's time at Harvard. The first of these studies was entitled 'A Statistical Study of Pseudo-Chromesthesia and of Mental-Forms' (1893) and was closely related to William O. Krohn's 1892 article on 'Pseudo-Chromesthesia, or the Association of Colors with Words, Letters and Sounds'. Here, Krohn defined pseudo-chromesthesia as 'that peculiar faculty of association of the sensorial perceptions, by means of which any primary sensation, or even a purely psychical process can evoke, in the case of certain persons, a false visual sensation of color'.[155] While Krohn's coinage didn't last long (the more general term 'synaesthesia' quickly gained favour in 1892),[156] Calkins initially used his term in a series of experiments devoted to measuring the prevalence and persistence of various types of pseudo-chromesthesia ranging from 'musical color-association' to 'word-color' associations.[157] According to Calkins' findings, 'at least' five 'of every ten persons' experience synaesthesia, with two of these five experiencing some form of pseudo-chromesthesia.[158] Given the prevalence of synaesthesia as a perceptual phenomenon, Calkins concluded, synaesthetic experiences of colour are 'not illusions' but 'vividly associated images' originating from a perceiver with the capacity to create an 'imaged arrangement of serial terms'.[159]

While Stein was certainly interested in exploring how an achromatic object or concept can evoke a particular colour sensation in *Tender Buttons* ('out of kindness comes redness' according to 'A BOX' [11]), she was arguably more interested in understanding how the perception of a physical colour stimulus can evoke the perceptual experience of odours, tastes, and touches, as when the colour 'yellow' is said to have been 'smelled' in 'CRANBERRIES' (46). This latter form of synaesthesia was 'of less importance' to Calkins, but it clearly plays an important role in *Tender Buttons.*[160] In

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155 William O. Krohn, 'Pseudo-Chromesthesia, or the Association of Colors with Words, Letters and Sounds', *The American Journal of Psychology,* 5.1 (October 1892), 20-41 (p. 20) <doi:10.2307/1410812>.
156 See Jules Antoine Millet, *Audition colorée* (Paris: Octave Dion, 1892); See also Frederic W.H. Myers, 'The Subliminal Consciousness', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 8 (1892), pp. 333-404, 436-535; See also Théodore Flournoy's *Des phénomènes de synopsie* (Paris: Alcan, 1893).
157 Mary Whiton Calkins, 'A Statistical Study of Pseudo-Chromesthesia and of Mental-Forms', *The American Journal of Psychology,* 5.4 (July 1893), 439-464 (pp. 443-444) <doi:10.2307/1411912>. Calkins soon abandoned 'pseudo-chromesthesia' for the term 'photisms' in the article cited below.
158 Mary Whiton Calkins, 'Synaesthesia', *The American Journal of Psychology,* 7.1 (October 1895), 90-107 (p. 93) <doi:10.2307/1412040>.
159 Mary Whiton Calkins, *A First Book in Psychology* (New York: Macmillan, 1912), p. 391.
160 Calkins, 'Pseudo-Chromesthesia', p. 453.

'RED ROSES', for instance, Stein describes the colours red and pink as 'cool' and 'a little less hot' (24).[161] While critics like Lisa Ruddick have rightly observed that the 'progression' of colours and temperatures in 'RED ROSES' 'suggests [sexual] arousal and release', I am less concerned with the sexual dynamics of *Tender Buttons* and more concerned with Stein's synaesthetic combination of haptic and aural words with chromatic imagery—especially when the former emerges from the latter.[162] According to the following passage from 'Portraits and Repetition', Stein became preoccupied with the synaesthetic emergence of sound and its 'relation' to colour around the same time that she composed *Tender Buttons*:

> I began to wonder at at [sic] about this time [1912] just what one saw when one looked at anything really looked at anything. Did one see sound, and what was the relation between color and sound, did it make itself by description by a word that meant it or did it make itself by a word in itself.[163]

If Calkins did not serve as the inspiration behind Stein's 'wonder' at the relationship between colours, sounds, and words, then the artist Arnold Rönnebeck certainly did. Commenting on *Klänge* in an April 1913 letter to Stein, Rönnebeck called attention to 'Kandinsky's intentions in using the *word* itself as a pure interior sound (Klang)'.[164] In 1911, Kandinsky described Maurice Maeterlinck's poetry in strikingly similar terms: Maeterlinck's 'word', he wrote, 'constitutes an inner sound' akin to the 'sound' that Stein was able to 'see' when she 'really looked at anything'—no matter how silent it may have been.[165] This 'inner sound', according to Kandinsky, is 'the very life of colour' and it 'derives partly, or mostly, from the object's name', which 'creates a certain inner vibration' when it 'is repeated twice or three times, if not more frequently' so that the 'spiritual properties dwelling in the word itself' are brought 'to light'.[166]

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161 Ibid., p. 453.
162 Ruddick, pp. 205-206.
163 Stein, 'Portraits and Repetition', p. 191.
164 Rönnebeck to Stein, in *Flowers of Friendship,* ed. by Gallup, p. 77 [emphasis original].
165 Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual,* pp. 27-28.
166 Ibid., pp. 13, 28.

Taking Kandinsky's comments into consideration, one cannot help but think of Stein's famous line from 'Sacred Emily' (1913)—'Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose'—which similarly employs the repetition of a 'word in itself' in order to 'completely caress and address a noun'.[167] Commenting on 'Sacred Emily' over two decades after it was published, Stein remarked that 'the rose […] is red for the first time in English poetry for a hundred years'.[168] It's worth noting, however, that 'Sacred Emily' makes no mention of the word 'red'—an absence which suggests that Stein shared Kandinsky's conviction that non-chromatic words can evoke chromatic experiences. Thus omitting the word 'red', Stein's line from 'Sacred Emily' constitutes an attempt to 'bring back vitality to [a] noun' ('rose') by means of repetition.[169] Similarly, Stein used the repetitive phrase 'pink cut pink' in 'RED ROSES' in order to 'recapture the value of the individual word'—'pink' in this case—'find out what it mean[s] and act within it'.[170] In 'RED ROSES', the action that Stein performs is the act of 'cut[ting]' pink in two, thereby producing a new chromatic experience that feels 'a little less hot' than the experience of red. This is what Stein meant when she claimed that *Tender Buttons* 'broke the rigid form of the noun'.[171] Throughout the collection, colour words are used both as adjectives and as nouns, as in 'NOTHING ELEGANT' where the speaker proclaims that 'the red is rose' and thus effects a reversal of a noun and the adjective typically used to describe it (13). Once 'stale' (to borrow Stein's description of nineteenth-century literature), words like 'red', 'pink', and 'rose' re-emerge as living linguistic entities, coloured with indications of life.[172]

Stein's inclusion of synaesthetic experience in *Tender Buttons* constitutes yet another challenge to what Erica Fretwell has identified as the 'classificatory logic' of psychophysics.[173]

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[167] Gertrude Stein, 'Sacred Emily', in *Geography and Plays* (Boston: The Four Seas Company, 1922), pp. 178-188 (p. 187); Stein, 'Poetry and Grammar', p. 231.
[168] Gertrude Stein quoted by Thornton Wilder in his introduction to Stein's *Four in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947), p. vi.
[169] Stein quoted by Wilder in *Four in America,* p. vi.
[170] Stein, 'Transatlantic Interview', p. 18.
[171] Stein, 'Poetry and Grammar', p. 237.
[172] Stein quoted by Wilder in *Four in America,* p. vi.
[173] Fretwell, p. 34.

Operating on the premise that perception is predictable, stable, and quantifiable, psychophysics separated the senses into five separate faculties.[174] Synaesthesia, however, involves cross-wired sensory perceptions that are subjective, unpredictable, and resistant to measurement. In defiance of the psychophysical claim that there is a one-to-one correspondence between sensory stimuli and perceptual effects, synaesthetic experiences reveal that a single stimulus can evoke multiple sensations in any given perceiver. This instability is heightened by the fact that different perceivers rarely make the same synaesthetic connections—an observation that Calkins made in her 1895 study of synaesthesia. As Fretwell notes, 'synaesthesia runs the risk of aesthetic formlessness' insofar as it 'interrupt[s] perceptual order'.[175] The same, of course, could be said of *Tender Buttons*—that Stein's prose poems are prone to aesthetic formlessness. And while it is true that Stein actively sought 'the distortion of form', it is also true that she conceived of *Tender Buttons* as participating in 'a whole epoch of new form & expression'.[176] Distorted but still discernible, Stein's new form rejects rigidity in favour of flexibility, classification in favour of ambiguation, and singularity in favour of suggestibility. In Stein's perceptual aesthetic, seemingly simple words have the power to express multi-sensory perceptual experiences that defy the rigid laws and equations of psychophysics, resist the formal conventions of patriarchal poetry, and gesture to phenomena beyond the limits of ordinary perception.

Conclusion

In 'Poetry and Grammar', Stein identified the question mark as a 'positively revolting' piece of punctuation.[177] 'Anybody can know that a question is a question', wrote Stein, 'and so why add to it the question mark when it is already there'.[178] In keeping with this belief, *Tender Buttons* contains

[174] Ibid., pp. 80-81.
[175] Fretwell, p. 34.
[176] Stein, 'Pictures', p. 243.
[177] Stein, 'Poetry and Grammar', p. 215.
[178] Ibid., p. 215.

no question marks. And yet many of Stein's sentences and clauses begin with interrogative words like 'why', 'what', and 'where'. The prevalence of such words points to a key aspect of Stein's model of perception—that perceivers possess the ability to generate questions, to cause 'research' to come 'out of [the] eye' (to repeat Stein's rather strange formulation from 'A BOX'). In *Tender Buttons*, Stein's model of perception is one in which the perceiver actively uses her knowledge, skills, and desires to perceive that which is statistically imperceptible by psychophysical standards. Contrary to the psychophysical model of a passive perceiver who receives impressions without the intervention of desire, memory, curiosity, knowledge, or skill, the Steinian perceiver actively determines what is perceptible. With the perceptual skills of a self-proclaimed genius, Stein saw subtle differences with ease, searched for salience in neglected places, and revalued the 'little things' that go unnoticed due to the perceptual habits perpetuated by patriarchal poetry.

Stein's model of perception closely resembles the models she encountered as an undergraduate researcher at Harvard's Psychological Laboratory. Working under the 'lasting' influence of William James, Stein avowedly 'liked making sport of question asking and she liked equally answering them'.[179] The questions Stein learned to ask and answer at Harvard were not dissimilar to the questions posed by psychophysicists like Weber and Fechner. Indeed, both Stein and her psychophysical predecessors were interested in studying the nature of detection, attention, awareness, salience, and sensation. Whereas psychophysicists grounded their theories in 'ordinary mental life', however, Stein and her professors performed research on mental abnormalities like hysteria and genius. This research resulted in a deep scepticism towards German psychophysics, leading to the emergence of new models of perception that reconfigured the boundary between the perceptible and the imperceptible.

While Stein's psychological research holds considerable importance for her poetry, many of the questions raised by the speaker of *Tender Buttons* transgress the limits of psychological inquiry

[179] Stein, *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas,* p. 96.

by virtue of their investment in the potency of poetic expression. One such question is 'what does it express' (40). Given Stein's interest in the expressive power of words, it is likely that the 'it' she has in mind here is language itself. Language, in *Tender Buttons,* has a singularly expressive function. As an 'arrangement in a system to pointing', language not only gives expression to sensory experiences but also to the questions, hopes, expectations, intentions, and desires that shape what is perceptible and portrayable. Such a reading is not at odds with the vast body of research on Stein and sexuality, for a perceiver's desires may also include sexual desires. Like synaesthesia, which was used as an analogy for Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds' theory of 'sexual inversion' (homosexuality) in 1897, sexual desire is one of many factors contributing to the unpredictability and multiplicity of perceptual experience.[180] And while lesbian desire is indeed integral to our understanding of *Tender Buttons*, other desires—like the desire to 'see a fine substance strangely' (11), to 'search a neglect' (37), to 'wake a question' (52), and to 'see all the signs of [an] expression' (71)—had a profound effect on the formation of Stein's aesthetic.

[180] 'We may compare inversion to such a phenomenon as coloured-hearing in which there is not so much defect, as an abnormality of nervous tracks producing new and involuntary combinations' according to Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds writing in *Sexual Inversion* (London: Wilson and Macmillan, 1897), p. 134.

CHAPTER TWO

H.D.'s *Sea Garden*:

The Whole World of Vision

In April 1915, one year after Ezra Pound published *Des Imagistes* (1914), Hilda Doolittle (H.D.) and her husband Richard Aldington joined forces with Amy Lowell to edit and publish the first volume of *Some Imagist Poets: An Anthology* (1915).[1] 'In this new book', they wrote, 'we have followed a slightly different arrangement to that of [*Des Imagistes*]. Instead of an arbitrary selection by an editor [*i.e.,* Pound], each poet has been permitted to represent himself by the work he considers his best'.[2] One of the seven poems that H.D. chose to publish in this volume was 'The Garden'—a two-part apostrophic lyric that also appears in *Sea Garden* (1916). The penultimate stanza of the poem reads:

> Fruit cannot drop
> Through […] thick air—
> fruit cannot fall into heat
> that presses up and blunts
> the points of pears
> and rounds the grapes.[3]

Here, H.D. departs from the second principle of imagism—'to use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation [of the image]'—by spelling out the reason for the fruit's inability to fall ('heat / that presses up') rather than simply presenting fruit dangling from a branch.[4]

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[1] For more details, see A. David Moody, *Ezra Pound, Poet: A Portrait of the Man and His Work,* 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007-2015), I (2007), pp. 223-224.
[2] H.D., Amy Lowell, and Richard Aldington (eds), *Some Imagist Poets: An Anthology* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1915), p. v.
[3] H.D., *Sea Garden* (London: Constable, 1916), pp. 22-23. All further references to this edition will be given after quotations in the text of this chapter.
[4] The three principles of imagism were first published by Ezra Pound in 'A Retrospect', *Pavannes and Divisions* (New York: Knopf, 1918), 95-111 (p. 95).

Yet 'The Garden' (or 'Garden', as the poem was titled upon its re-publication in *Sea Garden*) is an exception, for the speaker of *Sea Garden* normally remains reticent regarding the natural forces that slowly and silently shape the waves, fruits, and flowers of coastal New England. Indeed, as we shall see, much is left to implication in *Sea Garden*—particularly in pared-down poems like 'Hermes of the Ways', 'Orchard', 'Evening', and 'Sea Iris'.

Taking each of these four poems in turn, this chapter examines how *Sea Garden* gestures to 'the only just not-seen'—H.D.'s term for that which lies beyond the scope of the naked eye—a gesture that H.D. was familiar with thanks to her encounters with Hermeticism, transcendentalism, and Romanticism.[5] Whereas writers in these traditions straightforwardly articulated that which is 'unseen, unheard, [and] unwatched', as an imagist H.D. refrained from doing so.[6] In contrast to nineteenth-century predecessors like G.R.S. Mead, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Emily Dickinson, and Percy Bysshe Shelley, H.D. did not seek to transcend her spatiotemporal limitations in order to perceive that which is beyond the scope of the perceiving body. Instead, in true imagist fashion, H.D. remained reticent regarding the invisible phenomena that produce or otherwise impact the visible world. With 'Garden' as a rare exception, invisible phenomena appear only in the form of 'absent image[s]'—Susan Stewart's term for the images we 'cannot see' in *Sea Garden* but can still discern by virtue of the epiphenomenal consequences that appear in H.D.'s positive images.[7] With close attention to these consequences, I read H.D.'s positive images as epiphenomenal forms that indirectly afford aesthetic access to 'the reality of the unseen'—William James' 1902 term for that which stands outside of 'ordinary perception'.[8]

Unlike Stein, Loy, and Moore, H.D. did not explicitly engage with James' philosophy, though it is likely that she encountered it during the three semesters she spent at Bryn Mawr College. There, as Linda Leavell notes, James' name was 'famous on campus', in part because his

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[5] H.D., *Palimpsest,* p. 233.
[6] William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads, with a Few Other Poems* (London: J. & A. Arch, 1798), p. 76.
[7] Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*, p. 36.
[8] James, *Varieties,* p. 59.

Psychology, Briefer Course (1892) was required reading for all Bryn Mawr students.[9] And while H.D.'s time at Bryn Mawr was cut short by illness and bad grades, the poet was alive to the Jamesian 'reality of the unseen' from a young age thanks to Professor Charles Leander Doolittle (her astronomer father) and Reverend Francis Wolle (her botanist grandfather). Equipped with her father's telescope and her grandfather's microscope, H.D. perceived celestial and cellular phenomena as a child despite the fact that many of these phenomena are invisible to the naked eye. Take, for example, the following passage from H.D.'s memoir, *The Gift* (c. 1943): 'When Papalie [Rev. Wolle] lifted us, one by one in turn, to kneel on the chair by his work table, we saw that it was true what he said, we saw that where there is nothing, there is something'.[10] To see something where there seems to be nothing—this is the kind of perceptual aesthetic that H.D. aspired to achieve both in *Sea Garden* and in *Notes on Thought and Vision* (c. 1919), where she wrote of the 'over-mind' as a 'lens' that 'opens' the 'whole world of vision'.[11] As this chapter reveals—a matter previously unnoticed by H.D. critics—the poet's elusive yet alluring concept of an 'over-mind' likely owes its origins to the Hermetic writings and translations of G.R.S. Mead, who loosely defined the over-mind as a 'pan-monistic [or "universal"] point of view'.[12] Thus equipped, the perceiver is able to fulfil not only the demands of poetry as Pound conceived them (to 'free [the perceptive faculties] from encumbrance'), but also the demands of science as Professor Doolittle conceived them (to 'connect together […] the detached facts of observation').[13]

Yet H.D. scholars, as Christina Walter notes, 'hesitate to elaborate her sustained investment in science and to consider the link between [science and imagism]'.[14] Adalaide Morris,

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[9] Linda Leavell, 'Marianne Moore, the James Family, and the Politics of Celibacy', *Twentieth Century Literature,* 49.2 (2003), 219-245 (p. 224) <doi:10.2307/3176002>; *Bryn Mawr College Program, 1905-1906* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston, 1905), p. 120.
[10] H.D., *Gift,* ed. by Ohanessian, p. 11.
[11] H.D., *Notes,* p. 23 [emphasis added].
[12] G.R.S. Mead, 'The Over-Mind', *Theosophical Review,* October 1903, pp. 133-142 (p. 141).
[13] Pound, 'The Wisdom of Poetry', p. 500; C.L. Doolittle, 'Scientific Research', *Science,* 15.387 (May 1902), 841-848 (p. 846) <doi:10.1126/science.15.387.841>.
[14] Christina Walter, *Optical Impersonality: Science, Images, and Literary Modernism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), p. 81.

for instance, placed H.D. in complete opposition to her father's so-called 'dry clarity of mind, his distance from the objects of his scrutiny, the rigor of his mathematics, and the austerity of his work'.[15] It is true that H.D. went on to disparage her father's work in *HERmione* (c. 1927) and *The Gift*—both of which were written after his death. It is also true, however, that H.D.'s father was of the opinion that 'it would greatly benefit many or all [scientists] if we could spare more time from our pressing duties for the enjoyment of poetry, of literature and the fine arts'.[16] Given Professor Doolittle's faith in the stimulating power of art—in its ability to make the reality of the unseen perceptible in new and unexpected ways—it should come as no surprise that his daughter went on to write poetry that encompasses the epiphenomenal effects of natural phenomena like thermal radiation, planetary motion, and gravitational attraction. All three of these phenomena (and more) loom on the perceptual periphery of *Sea Garden,* a collection complete with both absent and present images of the celestial, cellular, and spiritual realities that H.D.'s father and grandfather observed and illustrated.

While the epiphenomenal consequences of natural phenomena are significant to our understanding of *Sea Garden*, the covert impact of cultural forces also cannot be ignored if we wish to better understand the formation of H.D.'s poetic approach to vision and revelation. *Sea Garden* is replete with allusions to biblical stories, classical texts, cultural developments, and historical events. These allusions, however, are not as readily discernible as the allusions of Mirrlees' *Paris* or T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Instead, like their natural counterparts, H.D.'s literary allusions are only present insofar as they are symbolically implicated by the poems they shape. However covert, the 'latent presence' (to borrow a term from Eileen Gregory) of cultural icons ranging from Adam and Eve to Sappho points to a perceptual aesthetic mediated by a 'mythopoeic mind'—a phrase

[15] Adalaide Morris, 'Science and the Mythopoeic Mind: The Case of H.D.', in *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science,* ed. by N. Katherine Hayles (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 195-220 (p. 201).
[16] Doolittle, 'Scientific Research', p. 842.

that H.D. used to describe her self-inspired protagonist, Her Gart, in *HERmione*.[17] Throughout *Sea Garden,* this mythopoeic mind contributes to the collection's many mythic and mystic implications. And while the former have been thoroughly discussed by critics of *Sea Garden*, the latter have been largely overlooked by H.D. scholars despite John Gould Fletcher's reminder that *Sea Garden* is not about 'Greek myths' but 'about the soul […] or whatever we choose to call that link that binds us to the unseen and uncreated'.[18] Indeed, we 'must remember', as H.D. reminded John Cournos in c. 1920, 'that writing poetry require[s] a clarity, a clairvoyance almost'.[19] And while clairvoyance appears to be foreign to H.D.'s naked eye aesthetic, it will become clear throughout the course of this chapter that *Sea Garden*'s motions and transformations are the epiphenomenal products of a clairvoyant sensitivity to forces left unspoken.

Revolvings and Concealments

In September 1912, just a few months after H.D., Aldington, and Pound agreed upon the three principles of imagism, H.D. shared a small number of imagist poems with Pound in the tea rooms of the British Museum.[20] A few months later, two of those poems—'PRIAPUS / Keeper-of-Orchards' and 'Hermes of the Ways'—appeared in the fourth issue of Harriet Monroe's *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse,* where they bore the signature 'H.D., "Imagiste"'.[21] The former poem begins with an image of falling fruit while the latter poem begins with these four words: 'the hard sand breaks' (41). From the first lines of her first imagist poems, then, H.D.'s sensitivity to motion and

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[17] Eileen Gregory, 'Rose Cut in Rock: Sappho and H.D.'s *Sea Garden',* in *Signets: Reading H.D.*, ed. by Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Susan Stanford Friedman (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), pp. 129-154 (p. 132); H.D., *HERmione* (New York: New Directions, 1981), p. 76.
[18] John Gould Fletcher, 'H.D.'s Vision', *Poetry,* February 1917, pp. 266-269 (p. 267). One notable exception is Elizabeth Anderson's *H.D. and Modernist Religious Imagination: Mysticism and Writing* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).
[19] H.D. to John Cournos, c. 1920, in the John Cournos Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University, MS Eng 998.1, Box 1. Reproduced by Donna Krolik Hollenberg in 'Art and Ardor in World War One: Selected Letters from H.D. to John Cournos', *The Iowa Review,* 16.3 (1986), 126-155 (p. 148) <doi:10.17077/0021-065X.3429>.
[20] H.D., *End to Torment: A Memoir of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1979), p. 18.
[21] H.D., 'Three Poems', *Poetry,* January 1913, pp. 118-122.

transformation is readily apparent. Of course, this is what Diana Collecott meant when she described H.D.'s poetic as 'transformative'—sand, in the first line of 'Hermes of the Ways', is caught in the act of breaking just before the line-break and the eventual break of 'the great waves' (41).[22] Here and throughout *Sea Garden*, H.D.'s 'transformative poetic' can not only be understood as a manifestation of 'inner and outer worlds meet[ing] and transform[ing] one another' as Collecott contends, but can also be traced to a Hermetic tradition that defines 'the activity of life' as 'motion'.[23] Often, however, this motion is unseen—a point that the character Tat makes in the following passage from Mead's translation of Book 12 of the *Corpus Hermeticum,* a collection of 17 ancient Greek writings attributed to the Thrice-Greatest Hermes:

> TAT. Doth not earth, even, father, seem to thee to have no motion?
> HERMES. Nay, son; but rather that it is the only thing which, though in very rapid motion, is also stable.[24]

First published in the *Theosophical Review* in 1903, this passage from Book 12 ('The Over-Mind') of the *Corpus Hermeticum* is best understood in light of the conclusion to Book 11, 'The Mind to Hermes'. Here, 'the Mind' teaches Hermes that 'revolvings and concealments […] are the passions of the cosmos'.[25] Yet in many respects, 'revolvings and concealments' are also the 'passions' of *Sea Garden*—a collection of 28 poems each poised at a singular moment of transformation, when 'the light passes / from ridge to ridge' (17), 'the tide slackens' (6), 'and the great waves / break' (41) thanks to the 'very rapid motion' of an earth that oscillates in tandem with other celestial bodies. According to Mead's annotations to 'The Over-Mind', these 'invisible cosmic spheres' are 'bodies which the mind alone perceives'.[26] This brings us to one of the defining attributes of the *Corpus Hermeticum*: the idea that 'naught's *unseen,* even […] things that are without a body'.[27] In other

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[22] Diana Collecott, 'H.D.'s Transformative Poetics', in *The Cambridge Companion to H.D.,* ed. by Nephie J. Christodoulides and Polina Mackay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 95-111 (pp. 98-99).
[23] Ibid., p. 98; Mead, 'Over-Mind', p. 138.
[24] Mead, 'Over-Mind', p. 138.
[25] G.R.S. Mead, 'The Mind to Hermes', *Theosophical Review*, September 1903, pp. 46-54 (p. 52).
[26] Mead, 'Over-Mind', p. 135.
[27] Mead, 'Mind to Hermes', p. 54 [emphasis original].

words, the realm of the 'super-cosmic', or that which is 'beyond the world-order', is never beyond the powers of perception.[28] Or at least this is how the Thrice-Greatest Hermes, or Hermes Trismegistus—a Graeco-Egyptian god that can be found 'facing three ways' (41) in 'Hermes of the Ways'—put the matter in Mead's translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum.*

That H.D. was familiar with Mead's translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* is clear not only from the shadowy presence of Hermes Trismegistus (a relatively obscure figure even in theosophical circles) in 'Hermes of the Ways', but also from the fact that both H.D. and Mead frequently attended Yeats' Monday evening gatherings at 18 Woburn Buildings in London from 1911 to 1914.[29] It was here that H.D. likely encountered the *Corpus Hermeticum.* And while she was clearly inspired by Mead's 'over-mind'—a term that is unique to his translation—her development of the concept in *Notes on Thought and Vision* should not be read as an endorsement of the whole *Corpus Hermeticum* and the Cartesian dualism found therein:

> Make, then, thyself to grow to the same stature as the greatness which transcends all measures; leap forth from every body; transcend all times; become eternity; and thus shalt thou know God. Conceiving in thyself that naught's impossible, think thyself deathless and able to know all,—all arts, all sciences, the way of every life. Become more lofty than all height, and lower than all depth. Collect into thyself all senses of all creatures,—of fire, and water, dry and moist. Think that thou art at the same time in every place,—in earth, in sea, in sky; not yet begotten, in the womb, young, old and dead, in after-death conditions. And if thou knowest all these things at once,—times, places, doings, qualities, and quantities; thou canst know God.[30]

Given the denial of bodily finitude at work in this translation, it should come as no surprise that the translator himself, as Leon Surette notes, 'was hostile to all varieties of eroticism […] insisting that the eroticism of occult and mystical literature is symbolic and is not to be taken literally'.[31] As the passage above makes clear, however, it was not just eroticism that repulsed Mead, but the

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[28] Mead, 'Over-Mind', p. 137.
[29] See Aaron Santesso, 'Responsibilities: H.D. and Yeats', *Paideuma: Modern and Contemporary Poetry and Poetics,* 33.2/3 (2004), 203-221 (p. 207) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24726788> [accessed 2 October 2023].
[30] Mead, 'Mind to Hermes', pp. 53-54.
[31] Leon Surette, *The Birth of Modernism: Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, and the Occult* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), p. 144.

entire corporeal condition of the body. 'Leap forth from every body', is the Mind's advice to Hermes, who ultimately goes on to persuade his son Tat that man must '[free] himself from body' before he is able to perceive super-cosmic phenomena.[32]

The idea that perception is restricted by the body, the very instrument that makes it possible, can be found in various iterations throughout the history of Western philosophy. Take, for example, the Emersonian promise that 'a transparent eye-ball' can 'see all' and become 'part or particle of God'.[33] Five years after Ralph Waldo Emerson made this promise in *Nature* (1836), we find him coining the concept of an 'over-soul' in an 1841 essay of that same name. Here, Emerson defined the over-soul as a 'Unity […] within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other'.[34] He continued:

> We see the world piece by piece, as the sun, the moon, the animal, the tree; but the whole, of which these are the shining parts, is the soul. Only by the vision of that Wisdom can the horoscope of the ages be read, and by falling back on our better thoughts, by yielding to the spirit of prophecy which is innate in every man, we can know what it saith.[35]

Here and throughout 'The Over-Soul', Emerson appears to be drawing on the same text that Mead used to define 'the doctrine of the "over-mind"': Book 12 of the *Corpus Hermeticum*.[36] Like John Everard and Mead—both of whom emphasised the soul's capacity to transcend the bounded nature of embodied perception in their respective translations of the *Corpus Hermeticum*—Emerson claimed transcendental powers for the over-soul. Emerson's over-soul, for instance, does not 'see the world piece by piece' as 'we' do. Instead, much like Mead's over-mind, the over-soul has access to 'the whole earth and the whole atmosphere'.[37]

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[32] Mead, 'Over-Mind', p. 136.
[33] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (Boston: James Munroe, 1836), p. 13.
[34] Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'The Over-Soul', in *Essays* (London: James Fraser, 1841), pp. 267-300 (p. 271).
[35] Ibid., pp. 271-272.
[36] Mead, 'Over-Mind', p. 141; It's worth noting that just three years after 'The Over-Soul' was published, Emerson edited the fourth volume of *The Dial,* where we find 'a few extracts from the old English translation (by *Doctor Everard,* London, 1650) of the Divine Pymander of Hermes Trismegistus' included in an editorial article entitled 'Ethnical Scriptures', *Dial,* January 1844, pp. 402-404 (p. 402).
[37] Emerson, 'Over-Soul', p. 293.

Whether H.D.'s c. 1919 theory of the over-mind was inspired by Mead's over-mind, Emerson's over-soul, or both at the same time, it marks a dramatic departure from the Hermetic tradition that Mead and Emerson shared.[38] Whereas Hermes proclaimed that 'mind […] is of God's very essence' in 'The Over-Mind', H.D. proclaimed that 'the brain and the womb are both centres of consciousness, *equally important*'.[39] According to H.D., these centres remain separate in 'normal consciousness'. In 'over-mind consciousness', however, the brain and the womb fuse together, resulting in a 'womb-brain' to which 'the whole world of vision is open'.[40] As we shall see, the 'world of vision' that H.D. sought to perceive closely resembles the 'super-cosmic' world that Hermes sought to perceive in Mead's translation of his dialogues. H.D.'s method of perceiving 'the reality of the unseen' in both her *Notes* and in *Sea Garden,* however, is different from Hermes' method. In H.D.'s formulation, the perceiver must embrace (rather than deny) the body in order to attain an over-mind state of consciousness because the over-mind itself is 'centered in the love-region of the body or placed like a foetus in the body'.[41] In 'Hermes of the Ways', this body remains firmly rooted on Earth:

> Wind rushes
> over the dunes,
> and the coarse, salt-crusted grass
> answers.
>
> Heu,
> it whips round my ankles! (41)

In the second part of this poem, we learn that Hermes resembles a 'shadow'—an unreal figure that is everything (Messenger God, Hermes Trismegistus, Hermaphroditus) and nothing at once.[42] Having 'leap[t] forth from every body' and 'transcend[ed] all times', Hermes is incapable of

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[38] Albert Gelpi similarly calls attention to the resemblance between H.D.'s over-mind and Emerson's over-soul in his 'Introduction' to H.D.'s *Notes,* pp. 7-16 (p. 12).
[39] Mead, 'Over-Mind', p. 133; H.D., *Notes,* p. 21 [emphasis added].
[40] H.D., *Notes,* p. 22.
[41] Ibid., p. 19.
[42] 'The Hermes of this poem is neither the messenger of the Greek gods […] nor the alchemists' Hermes Trismegistus […] nor is he the statue of a voluptuous young hermaphrodite' according to Collecott, p. 99.

perceiving anything at all. The speaker of 'Hermes of the Ways', by contrast, uses her body precisely as H.D.'s *Notes* prescribe: 'as a means of approach to ecstasy'.[43] Both here and throughout *Sea Garden*, the perceiving body affords the speaker with an ecstatic (but not transcendent) experience of a world replete with 'revolvings and concealments'. And, as the following pages reveal, the 'answer' of the 'salt-crusted grass' is just one of the many unspoken sounds that the speaker encounters over the course of the collection.

The First Pear

While 'Hermes of the Ways' retained its original title upon its republication in *Sea Garden*, 'PRIAPUS / Keeper-of-Orchards' was given the more imagistic title of 'Orchard'. As Celena E. Kusch notes, '"Orchard" is a breakaway poem', both historically (it is 'one of the three poems that announced the poetic revolutions of imagism in 1913') and thematically.[44] Take, for example, the opening couplet: 'I saw the first pear / as it fell—' (29). In just eight words, the couplet presents a Poundian image—'an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time'—of a pear that reverberates with scientific, literary, mythological, and theological meanings as it breaks away from its branch.[45] We will soon discuss each of these meanings in turn, but for now it's important to note that the speaker of 'Orchard' implicates meaning more imagistically than the speaker of 'Garden' by presenting the reader not with gravity but with the epiphenomenal *consequences* of gravity as it pulls cooler, denser air to Earth's surface at harvest time. In addition to Hermeticism, H.D.'s scientific upbringing contributed to her awareness of unseen physical forces like gravity. In *The Gift*, for example, we find a young Hilda meditating on the interplay between gravity and Earth's rotation at the University of Pennsylvania's Flower Observatory:

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[43] H.D., *Notes,* p. 45.
[44] Celena E. Kusch, 'H.D.'s American *Sea Garden:* Drowning the Idyll Threat to US Modernism', *Twentieth-Century Literature,* 56.1 (Spring 2010), 47-70 (p. 61) <doi:10.1215/0041462X-2010-2002>.
[45] Ezra Pound, 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste', *Poetry,* March 1913, pp. 200-206 (p. 200).

> Sometimes I wonder if they [H.D.'s father and half-brother] are able to tell if really a shooting star will not fall down and fall on us and fall on the house and burn us all to death […] I knew it could not because of gravity or something like that, that keeps the stars from falling on us and keeps the world going round.[46]

Here, as in 'Orchard', H.D. is preoccupied with the same forces that preoccupied her father and half-brother, Eric Doolittle. In the young Hilda's understanding, not only does gravity 'keep the stars from falling on us', but it also 'keeps the world going round' so that astronomical seasons can occur. Paradoxically, then, it is the same force that keeps the stars in the sky that also causes ripe fruit to fall to the ground both in 'Orchard' and in the apple orchard that Isaac Newton occupied during the plague years of 1665 and 1666. Like H.D., Newton paid close attention to the falling of fruit, and his meditations led to the conclusion that the moon is subject to the same gravitational attraction that causes a ripe apple to fall to Earth. This, of course, is Newton's Law of Universal Gravitation—praised by H.D.'s father as 'the controlling and governing principle of the planetary system'.[47]

That H.D. was familiar with Newton's apple is clear from *HERmione*, where one of the characters remarks that 'Newton made gravitation accessible to mob mind with his ripe apple'.[48] Here, H.D. depicts Newton's apple story as a contrivance designed to make the concept of gravitation 'accessible' to non-specialists. Such suspicion was widespread after David Brewster published *The Life of Sir Isaac Newton* (1831), where the authority of the anecdote of the falling apple was first brought to question.[49] Any number of falling objects had undoubtedly been observed before Newton observed the falling of an apple. Yet it was only when Newton approached the phenomenon with a hypothesis that this seemingly trivial observation took on such astronomical relevance. Like the speaker of 'Orchard', then, Newton was the first to see fruit

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[46] H.D., *Gift,* ed. by Ohanessian, pp. 78-81.
[47] C.L. Doolittle, 'Some Advances in Astronomical Science During the Nineteenth Century', *Science,* 14.340 (5 July 1901), 1-12 (p. 2) <doi:10.1126/science.14.340.1>.
[48] H.D., *HERmione,* p. 36.
[49] David Brewster, *The Life of Sir Isaac Newton* (London: John Murray, 1831), p. 344; For more details, see D. McKie and G.R. De Beer, 'Newton's Apple', *The Royal Society Journal of the History of Science,* 9.1 (October 1951), 46-54 <doi:10.1098/rsnr.1951.0003>.

as it fell—or at least the first to see its scientific significance. In a 1902 article for *Science,* Professor Doolittle applied this same logic to Galileo Galilei's experiments conducted at the Leaning Tower of Pisa:

> It was only necessary to drop two stones of unequal weight from a house top to prove [Aristotle's] statement [that bodies descend more quickly in proportion as they are heavier] erroneous, but if any one took upon himself the small amount of trouble this implied, before Galileo utilized for the purpose the leaning tower of Pisa, history is silent on the subject.[50]

When this was written, it was not common knowledge that falling body experiments had already been performed by Giambattista Benedetti, Simon Stevin, and Jan Cornets de Groot before Galileo dropped two spheres of different masses from the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Professor Doolittle's larger point, however, is full of insight:

> A working hypothesis must be devised which will connect together in the best manner possible the detached facts of observation. It is here that a judicious use of the scientific imagination is called for.[51]

Here and throughout Professor Doolittle's published papers, we learn that observation not only involves imaginative biases—it depends upon them. In a scientific context, the imagination takes the form of a 'working hypothesis' that 'connect[s] together […] the detached facts of observation' so that they can grow into something relevant, meaningful, and coherent (like Newton's Law of Universal Gravitation). Similarly, 'that sense of sudden growth' that Pound saw as so integral to imagism is made possible by the biases of a poet whose perception is toned by a complex of seemingly disconnected ideas.[52] The deceptively simple images that we find in 'Orchard' and in H.D.'s other early poems are anything but simple when we consider the perceptual and psychological complexity contained within.

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[50] Doolittle, 'Scientific Research', p. 845.
[51] Ibid., p. 846.
[52] Pound, 'A Few Don'ts', p. 200.

If H.D. did not learn to value perceptual biases from her father, she might have learned to do so from Bernard Hart, the only psychologist that Pound cited in his 1913 deployment of the word 'complex'. Hart, of course, was not the originator of complex psychology, but he did much to make psychological complexes—*i.e.,* 'system[s] of emotionally toned ideas' with the power to 'determin[e] the flow of consciousness'—accessible to Anglophone audiences in the first two decades of the twentieth century.[53] And while critics tend to disregard Pound's short-lived engagement with Hart, it's worth considering how Hart's first monograph, *The Psychology of Insanity* (1912), shaped the advent of imagism. Like Professor Doolittle, Hart was aware that scientific observation is conditioned by the observer's imagination: 'even in the world of science', he wrote, 'complexes play a vast part'.[54] Here, Hart appears to be drawing on *The Psychology of Dementia Praecox* (1907), where Carl Jung declared that 'each molecule [of a memory] participates in the feeling-tone of the whole fabric of ideas, which we call the feeling-toned complex'.[55] Like Jung, who felt that 'psychic activity would come to a fatal standstill' without complexes, Hart considered complexes to be fundamental to both normal and abnormal states of consciousness—a conviction that H.D.'s short-term partner, D.H. Lawrence, shared.[56] Sigmund Freud, by contrast, 'saw the complex *only* as a manifestation of illness'.[57] Indeed, as Jolande Jacobi notes, Freudian complexes 'always have a negative character; they are products of the psychic mechanism of repression'.[58] The same could be said of complexes in H.D.'s early prose works, *Asphodel* (c. 1922) and *HERmione*. In these novels, the word 'complex' is consistently preceded by a negative term—*e.g.* 'rigid family complex',

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[53] Bernard Hart, *The Psychology of Insanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1918), pp. 61-62; For more on Hart's influence, see Philip Kuhn, *Psychoanalysis in Britain, 1893-1913: Histories and Historiography* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017), p. 314.
[54] Hart, p. 64.
[55] Carl Jung, *The Psychology of Dementia Praecox,* trans. by R.F.C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 40; For more on the relationship between H.D. and Jung, see Susan Josephine Acheson, '"Catching Up To Jung": A Study of the Occult Relationship between H.D. and Jung' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 1996).
[56] Carl Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul,* trans. by W.S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1933), p. 91; Hart, *Psychology of Insanity,* p. 64; D.H. Lawrence, *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (New York: Thomas Seltzer, 1921), p. 17.
[57] Jolande Jacobi, *Complex, Archetype, Symbol in the Psychology of C.G. Jung,* trans. by Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 20 [emphasis original].
[58] Ibid., p. 20.

'guilty complex', 'failure complex', 'Oedipus complex', 'inferiority complex'—reflecting H.D.'s growing admiration for Freud during the 1920s.[59]

While the imagistic complexes we find in *Sea Garden* bear no traces of pessimism, H.D.'s eventual commitment to Freudian psychoanalysis helps to explain why she decided not to use the word 'complex' to describe her healthy 'tendencies of thought and imagination' in the following passage from *Tribute to Freud* (1956):

> [My] tendencies of thought and imagination […] were not cut away, were not pruned even. My imagination wandered at will; my dreams were revealing, and many of them drew on classical or Biblical symbolism […] Fragmentary ideas, apparently unrelated, were often found to be part of a special layer or stratum of thought and memory, therefore to belong together.[60]

Whereas Freud refrained from pruning H.D.'s complex-like 'tendencies of thought and imagination' during psychoanalysis, Pound was more than willing to pare H.D.'s poetry during their aforementioned meeting at the British Museum in 1912 (about a decade before he infamously pared *The Waste Land*). 'Cut this out, shorten this line', was what Pound said to H.D. before he 'slashed [her poems] with a pencil'.[61] As he did so, H.D. saw the first 'pare'—'that which is pared off something; a shaving; a peeling; a scrap'—of imagism as it fell, thereby witnessing an epochal moment in literary history.[62]

Given the extent to which H.D.'s *Sea Garden* poems were pared both by Pound and by the poet herself, many of the collection's classical and biblical allusions are left unspoken even as they remain symbolically present. When it comes to uncovering these latent allusions, scholars tend to prioritise H.D.'s engagement with classical mythology at the expense of understanding *Sea Garden*'s biblical aspects. With the exception of Elizabeth Anderson's sweeping suggestion that *Sea Garden* is a 'version' of the Garden of Eden, for example, no comparison has been made between *Sea*

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[59] H.D., *Asphodel,* ed. by Robert E. Spoo (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), pp. 54, 73; H.D., *HERmione,* pp. 3, 15.
[60] H.D., *Tribute to Freud,* rev. edn (Manchester: Carcanet, 1985), p. 14.
[61] H.D., *End to Torment,* p. 18.
[62] Oxford English Dictionary Online, 'pare, *n.*'.

Garden and the Garden of Eden despite the fact that the former garden repeatedly—albeit subtly—alludes to the latter.[63] On that note, it's worth mentioning that 'pear' is a homophone of 'pair', and that its usage in 'Orchard' evokes the biblical Fall of the first pair of humans (Adam and Eve). Apart from Cyrena N. Pondrom's brief proposal that 'the fall may be the primal human fall', 'Orchard' has not yet been read in relation to the Old Testament.[64] Doing so, however, opens new ways of approaching the poem and ultimately reveals important aspects of H.D.'s perceptual aesthetic.

The Fall, of course, was the result of Adam and Eve partaking of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. And while Western artistic renditions of the Fall tend to depict the forbidden fruit as an apple, there is no biblical evidence to suggest that this was the case. Thanks to her Moravian upbringing, H.D. certainly would have been aware of the ambiguous nature of the forbidden fruit. And while she never wrote explicitly about the symbolic significance of pears, her close friend Robert Herring did.[65] A fringe member of the POOL group—a trio of film-makers consisting of H.D., her partner Bryher, and Kenneth Macpherson—Herring was highly influenced by H.D.,[66] so it is likely that the pears of *Sea Garden* served as a source of inspiration for the following passage from *Adam and Evelyn at Kew; Or, Revolt in the Gardens* (1930):

> I think the Tree of Knowledge must be a pear, because that's the only fruit like a question-mark. For though it isn't a tree at all, really it's the imagination prompting 'How?' and 'Why?' The fruit it produces at every turn or branch is a query, pear-shaped, upside down, 'Can't you see it?' [67]

Here, the pear is emblematic of perceptual enquiry. As the perceiver (Evelyn in this case) comes face-to-face with the fruit, she begins to formulate questions regarding the origin, meaning, and

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[63] Anderson, *H.D. and Modernist Religious Imagination,* p. 135.
[64] Cyrena N. Pondrom, 'H.D. and the Origins of Imagism', in *Signets,* ed. by DuPlessis and Friedman, pp. 85-109 (p. 94).
[65] I am grateful to Dr Polly Hember for calling my attention to the presence of pears in Herring's work.
[66] For more details, see Susan McCabe, *H.D. and Bryher: An Untold Love Story of Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).
[67] Robert Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew; Or, Revolt in the Gardens* (London: Elkin Matthews & Marrot, 1930), pp. 115-116.

significance of the Tree of Knowledge. 'Can't you see it?' is Evelyn's final question, to which the speaker of 'Orchard' could reply in the affirmative: 'I saw the first pear / as it fell—'.

Deceptively simple in nature, the first eight words of 'Orchard' are the epiphenomenal products of H.D.'s prior encounters with science, literature, mythology, and theology. Until now, however, we have only discussed the first two lines of 'Orchard'—a poem comprised of 31 lines spread over four stanzas of various lengths. Having witnessed 'the first pear / as it fell', the speaker goes on to describe her 'fleet' state and 'prostrate' position in a postlapsarian world, where she brings an 'offering' akin to the offering that Adam and Eve's son Cain made to God in the book of Genesis. Whereas Abel (Cain's brother) earned God's 'respect' for offering 'the firstlings of his flock', Cain fell out of favour with God for offering 'the fruit of the ground'.[68] In 'Orchard', the speaker's offering to the 'rough-hewn / god of the orchard' closely resembles Cain's offering:

> […] fallen hazel-nuts,
> stripped late of their green sheaths,
> grapes, red-purple,
> their berries
> dripping with wine,
> pomegranates already broken,
> and shrunken figs
> and quinces untouched,
> I bring you as offering. (29)

Here, the speaker does not bring the 'first pear' of the harvest but rather a selection of crops that closely resemble the crops that one finds in the utopian orchard of Phaeacia from Homer's *Odyssey:* 'pears and pomegranates and apple trees with their bright fruit, and sweet figs, and luxuriant olives'.[69] Whereas the fruit of the Phaeacians' orchard 'neither perishes nor fails', however, the fruit of H.D.'s 'Orchard' has 'fallen' to the ground and started to decay—a distinction that further

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[68] Genesis 4.3-5. All Bible verses in this chapter are quoted as they appear in the Doolittle Family Bible—*The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments, Translated out of the Original Tongues; and with the Former Translations Diligently Compared and Revised* (New York: American Bible Society, 1868).
[69] Homer, *The Odyssey,* trans. by A.T. Murray, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), I, p. 255.

distances the poem from its original classical context.[70] No longer entitled 'PRIAPUS / Keeper-of-Orchards', 'Orchard' leaves open the possibility that the singular God of the Old Testament is the 'rough-hewn / god' addressed by the speaker. '[S]pare us the beauty / of fruit-trees', petitions the speaker, thereby asking God for the same punishment that was given to Cain: 'when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength'.[71] 'Stripped' of their strength, the crops in the passage above ferment, break, and shrivel for want of 'loveliness'.

H.D.'s intertextual engagement with the Old Testament in 'Orchard' and other *Sea Garden* poems takes her beyond a traditional Christian model of beatific vision to the more mystical model of *visio dei* (vision of the divine) that she went on to develop in later works like *Trilogy* (1944-1946).[72] Here, as in 'Orchard', the 'Presence' of God is manifest not in the eschatological afterlife of beatific vision but 'in the bewildering / sand-heap maze / of present-day endeavour'.[73] Returning to the first two words of 'Orchard', it's worth noting with Barbara Newman that 'I saw'—a phrase 'derived chiefly from the Hebrew Bible'—was frequently used in medieval mystic accounts of *visio dei*.[74] One important example is Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love,* a medieval record of mystical visions in which the phrase 'I saw' is used on nearly 200 occasions. Whether or not H.D. read *Revelations* cannot be ascertained, but she may well have encountered it as a Moravian with a strong proclivity for mysticism.[75] Moreover, as Alexandra Barratt notes in her account of the dissemination of *Revelations*, the text was widely circulated in the early twentieth century, especially after the British Museum purchased the Sloane and Amherst Manuscripts in 1753 and 1909 (respectively).[76] In 1911 (around the time that 'Orchard' was composed), H.D. befriended May

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[70] Ibid., p. 255.
[71] Genesis 4.12.
[72] See Alicia Ostriker, 'A Word Made Flesh: The Bible and Revisionist Women's Poetry', *Religion & Literature,* 23.3 (1991), 9-26 (pp. 21-24) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40059485> [accessed 31 January 2025].
[73] H.D., *Collected Poems,* ed. by Martz, p. 522.
[74] Barbara Newman, 'What Did It Mean to Say "I Saw"? The Clash between Theory and Practice in Medieval Visionary Culture', *Speculum,* 80.1 (January 2005), 1-43 (p. 4) <doi:10.1017/S0038713400006643>.
[75] Anderson similarly relates H.D. to Julian of Norwich in *H.D. and Modernist Religious Imagination,* p. 58.
[76] Alexandra Barratt, 'How Many Children Had Julian of Norwich? Editions, Translations and Versions of her Revelations', in *Vox Mystica: Essays on Medieval Mysticism in Honour of Professor Valerie M. Lagorio*, ed. by Anne Clark Bartlett (Cambridge, MA: D.S. Brewer, 1995), pp. 27-39 (pp. 33-34).

Sinclair, who went on to write about Julian's now-canonical vision of a hazelnut in *A Defence of Idealism* (1917).[77] In the 1901 edition that Sinclair consulted, Julian's vision reads:

> [The Lord] shewed me a little thing, the quantity of an hazel-nut, in the palm of my hand; and it was as round as a ball. I looked thereupon with eye of my understanding and thought: *What may this be?* And it was answered generally thus: *It is all that is made.* I marvelled how it might last, for methought it might suddenly have fallen to naught for little(ness). And I was answered in my understanding: *It lasteth, and ever shall (last) for that God loveth it.* And so All-thing hath the Being by the love of God […][78] And after this I saw God in a Point, that is to say, in mine understanding,—by which sight I saw that He is in all things.[79]

Here, the hazelnut becomes emblematic of a 'fallen' world loved by God, but not until Julian looks, asks, listens, and learns. In this case, then, 'I saw' does not simply imply 'I learned to see' (as Newman argues)—it also implies 'I asked to see', an act that requires agency on the part of the visionary even as it implies a degree of perceptual receptivity.[80] Such is the case not only in 'Orchard' but also in H.D.'s numerous other poems featuring the refrain: 'Heliodora' (1924), 'The Look-out' (1924), 'Electra-Orestes' (1932-1934), 'The Master' (c. 1935), 'Star by Day' (1937), and 'Tribute to Angels' (1945). In these poems, as in 'Orchard', 'I saw' is used repeatedly to register the speaker's mystical visions of God, gods, or a 'sign from the god'—all of which 'would have remained / Unmanifest in [a] dim dimension' if not for the questions, desires, and demands of the perceiver.[81]

In light of H.D.'s conviction that 'our curiosity' is 'greater than the mind, […] the spirit, [… and] the body', it should come as no surprise that the speaker of *Sea Garden* so frequently asks questions during the act of observation.[82] Normally, these questions are directed at the natural object itself. In 'Sea Poppies', for instance, the speaker asks the poppy: 'what meadow yields / so

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[77] See May Sinclair, *A Defence of Idealism: Some Questions & Conclusions* (London: Macmillan, 1917), pp. 304-307.
[78] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love,* ed. by Grace Warrack (London: Methuen, 1901), p. 10 [emphasis original].
[79] Ibid., p. 26.
[80] Newman, p. 22.
[81] H.D., *Collected Poems,* ed. by Martz, pp. 199, 519.
[82] H.D., *HERmione,* p. 178.

fragrant a leaf / as your bright leaf?' (20). In 'Orchard', however, the speaker poses her question to God ('do you […] spare us from loveliness[?]') before learning to see 'fallen hazel-nuts' and other 'late' crops as eligible 'offerings' akin to the offering that a perceiver brings to the thing being perceived. As we have seen, this offering can take many different forms—a 'working hypothesis', a 'feeling-toned complex', a 'pear-shaped […] query', or a clairvoyant question—all of which create the conditions for the kind of perceptual reciprocity that ensues between the speaker and addressee of 'Orchard'.

The idea that a perceiver contributes something to the thing being perceived, an idea known as the extramission theory of perception, owes its origins to Plato's theory that 'sight extends itself outwards through the eyes'.[83] Thanks to the likes of Euclid, Galen, and St. Augustine—all of whom 'believed that the eye itself played an active role in perception, emitting visual rays that sought out their objects and so enabled them to be seen'—extramission was one of the most important models of distal perception for centuries.[84] And while extamissionism was largely abandoned after atomists like Newton promoted intromissionism (the idea that particles enter the eyeball) in the seventeenth century,[85] traces of this model survive in Stein's poetic proclamation that 'out of an eye comes research' and in the 'unseen eyebeam' of Eliot's 'Burnt Norton' (1936).[86] Like Stein and Eliot, H.D. revealed herself to be an extramissionist in her *Notes on Thought and Vision*,[87] where she described visionary perception like this:

> There is […] a set of super-feelings. These feelings extend out and about us; as the long, floating tentacles of the jelly-fish reach out and about him. They are not of different material, extraneous, as the physical arms and legs are extraneous to the

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[83] Mark Eli Kalderon, 'Perception and Extramission in *De quantitate animae*', in *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy,* ed. by Robert Pasnau, 10 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013-2022), IX (2021), pp. 1-39 (p. 3).
[84] Newman, p. 20.
[85] A. Mark Smith, *From Sight to Light: The Passage from Ancient to Modern Optics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), p. 30.
[86] Stein, *Tender Buttons,* p. 11; T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1943), p. 4.
[87] While I am the first to label H.D. as an extramissionist, Adalaide Morris came close to doing so in 'The Concept of Projection: H.D.'s Visionary Powers', *Contemporary Literature,* 25.4 (Winter 1984), 411-436 <doi:10.2307/1208054>.

> gray matter of the directing brain. The super-feelers are part of the super-mind, as the jelly-fish feelers are the jelly-fish itself, elongated in fine threads.[88]

Here, H.D. anticipates Freud's 1920 hypothesis that the sense organs 'may perhaps be compared with feelers which are all the time making tentative advances towards the external world and then drawing back from it'.[89] And while it is unlikely that this passage was influenced by H.D. (she did not meet Freud until 1933), both theories fit Mark Ali Kalderon's definition of extramission as a perceptual process that occurs when 'a part of the perceiver extends through space so that it is in contact with the perceived object such that the perceiver, or at least a part of them, is substantially located where the perceived object is'.[90] Insofar as H.D.'s 'directing brain' is 'located where the perceived object is' by virtue of its 'super-feelers', the extramissionist's act of perception is an act of sympathetic identification. This might help to explain why the act of perceiving the fall of fruit compels the perceiver herself to fall to the ground in 'Orchard': H.D.'s 'doctrine of vision […] begin[s] with sympathy of thought'.[91]

As much as H.D.'s fallen pears and broken hazelnuts *can* be read as emblematic of scientific, classical, literary, and theological forces, *Sea Garden* is not straightforwardly symbolic. Which brings us to an essential difference between H.D.'s imagistic perception and Julian's mystic model of vision. Unlike Julian, H.D. avoided the explicit appropriation of natural objects into spiritual concepts.[92] And while it is tempting to think that her reason for avoiding explicit symbolism was the same as Pound's—'so that a sense, and the poetic quality of the passage, is not lost to those who do not understand the symbol as such'—the lack of such symbolism in *Sea Garden* has less to do with Pound's prescription and more to do with H.D.'s conviction that 'poetry

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[88] H.D., *Notes,* p. 19.
[89] Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* trans. and ed. by James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), p. 22.
[90] Mark Eli Kalderon, *Sympathy in Perception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 149-150.
[91] H.D., *Notes,* p. 22.
[92] One exception occurs in H.D.'s *Notes,* where an 'apple branch … exist[s] as an approach to something else'—'one of a thousand, thousand, beautiful women'—when it is perceived through the male gaze (*Notes,* p. 45).

should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous'.[93] It is true that 'vague generalities' can be discerned in H.D.'s poetry, but they are never 'deal[t]' out to the reader as they are in Julian's *Revelations*. As we shall see in the last chapter of this thesis, Moore took a distaste for 'vague generalities' to another level by actively discouraging and inhibiting the symbolic appropriation of natural objects. By contrast, H.D. neither discourages nor encourages a symbolic reading.[94] Instead, *Sea Garden* makes the 'reality of the unseen'—a reality that includes both natural and cultural phenomena—visible to those who approach each positive image with the same level of care and curiosity that H.D. brought to the act of observation.

Mother of the Shadows

As momentous as 'Orchard' is, gravitational attraction, seasonal oscillation, and literary allusion are not the only unseen forces in *Sea Garden*. Take, for example, the diurnal cycle of Earth, which causes 'light' to 'beat upon' the speaker of 'Mid-Day' (7) before 'black creeps from root to root' in 'Evening' (17).[95] In *Hilda's Book* (c. 1907), Pound's volume of amateur poems written for and about H.D., we find that both the speaker and his muse were preoccupied with this cycle. 'Darkness hath descended upon the earth', records the speaker, 'the sun from zenith to nadir is fallen'.[96] Here, Pound's scientific diction was undoubtedly informed by his encounters with Professor Doolittle's zenith telescope—an instrument that enables the observer to measure the angular distance of a celestial body from the zenith, 'the point on the celestial sphere directly above the observer' and

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93 Ezra Pound, 'Prologomena' [sic], *Poetry Review,* February 1912, pp. 72-76 (p. 73); *Some Imagist Poets,* p. vii.
94 John T. Gage similarly noted how 'there are no explicit comparisons' in H.D.'s 'Oread' (1914). *In the Arresting Eye: The Rhetoric of Imagism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), p. 66.
95 H.D., *Paint It Today,* ed. by Laity, p. 20.
96 Ezra Pound, 'Hilda's Book: Typescript', in the Ezra Pound Papers, YCAL MSS 43, Box 106, Folder 4439, l. 3.

directly opposite the nadir.[97] As H.D. noted in the following passage from *The Gift,* however, Professor Doolittle's zenith telescope only worked under certain conditions:

> When Papa took us into his little domed house […] and we asked to look into his telescope, he said that we would see nothing; you could not see what he was looking at, or looking for, in the day […] when we kept on asking him to let us see, he did let us see, but it was as he told us; there was only a white glare and nothing to be seen and it hurt your eyes. It would be too late to go over there at night, he said, and anyhow, at night he was busy.[98]

Here, the overwhelming presence of light shining from the sun precludes the young H.D. from perceiving heavenly bodies through her father's telescope 'in the daytime'. When H.D. eventually looks through her father's telescope at night, however, the absence of sunlight enables her to see 'what [her father] was looking at, or looking for'—'double stars', 'shooting stars', and 'crescent moons'—all of which can be found in Professor Doolittle's published works.[99]

Whereas Professor Doolittle's observation was directed at celestial realms, H.D.'s perception was firmly rooted in a terrestrial world complete with 'sand—drift—rocks—[and] rubble of the sea' (30). This is especially true of *Sea Garden*, a collection that is deliberately devoid of celestially oriented poems like 'Moonrise' (1915). Contrary to Maureen N. McLane's recent claim that 'H.D. looked more to the skies than to the earth', then, *Sea Garden* constitutes an effort to bring poetry down to earth after centuries of celestiality.[100] In the first half of 'Evening' (1916), for instance, the speaker describes the movement of petals rather than the movement of planets:

> The light passes
> from ridge to ridge,
> from flower to flower—
> the hypaticas [sic], wide-spread

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[97] Ian Ridpath (ed.), 'zenith', in *A Dictionary of Astronomy,* 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), n.p. <doi:10.1093/acref/9780191851193.001.0001>; For more on Doolittle's zenith research, see Charles Leander Doolittle, *A Treatise on Practical Astronomy, as Applied to Geodesy and Navigation* (New York: John Wiley, 1885).
[98] H.D., *Gift,* ed. by Ohanessian, pp. 6-7.
[99] Ibid., pp. 73, 78; H.D., *Hirslanden Notebooks: An Annotated Scholarly Edition,* ed. by Matte Robinson and Demetres P. Tryphonopoulos (Victoria, BC: ELS Editions, 2015), p. 25.
[100] Maureen N. McLane, 'Trees are Complicated: H.D. Casts a Spell', *London Review of Books,* February 2023 <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v45/n03/maureen-n.-mclane/trees-are-complicated> [accessed 27 October 2023].

under the light
grow faint—
the petals reach inward,
the blue tips bend
toward the bluer heart
and the flowers are lost. (17)

Here, H.D. observes a botanical phenomenon known as nyctitropism (now known as nyctinasty)—'the tendency of leaves or other parts of a plant to take up different positions at different times, usually in response to regular (especially nightly) changes in light intensity or temperature'.[101] Having achieved the highest score in her botany exam at Bryn Mawr, H.D. was undoubtedly familiar with this pattern.[102] Much like the stars, nyctitropism can only be perceived when 'the light passes / from ridge to ridge, / from flower to flower' and causes the hepatica to close its diurnally 'wide-spread' petals. Whereas the stars can be perceived from almost any point on earth, however, nyctitropism can only be perceived from a proximate position. Like the speaker of 'Hermes of the Ways', then, the speaker of 'Evening' complies with H.D.'s directive that 'we should be somewhere, not all over the place. We should be *somewhere* with our minds, lines should radiate as toward a centre not out and away from the central point of interest'.[103] In other words, the 'central point of interest' (a field of hepaticas in this case) does not call attention to itself. Instead, the 'lines' of perception 'radiate' from a perceiver 'toward a centre', just as they do in the extramission theory of perception. Yet in order for extramission to work, the perceiver must be 'somewhere'. And while Jacob Korg has argued that the 'somewhere' of *Sea Garden* is 'nearly exclusively that of ancient Greece'—a statement that implies both spatial and temporal

[101] Oxford English Dictionary Online, 'nyctitropism, *n.*'; As Charles and Francis Darwin note in *The Power of Movement in Plants* (1880), many flowers close their petals in order to protect their organs of reproduction from cold weather and 'exclude nocturnal insects which may be ill-adapted for their fertilisation'. Charles Darwin, assisted by Francis Darwin, *The Power of Movement in Plants* (New York: Appleton, 1881), p. 414.
[102] See Emily Mitchell Wallace, 'Athene's Owl', *Poesis,* 6.3/4 (1985), 98-123 (p. 108).
[103] H.D., 'Cinema and the Classics: Restraint', *Close Up,* August 1927, pp. 30-39 (p. 32) [emphasis original].

displacement on H.D.'s part—I share Annette Debo and Celena E. Kusch's conviction that the 'somewhere' of *Sea Garden* is coastal New England.[104]

Not only does New England happen to be the native home of the *Anemone americana*—a blue hepatica flower whose petals are known to 'reach inward' at night in an effort to protect the organism—but it also happens to be the birthplace of Emily Dickinson, another poet who observed the nyctitropic patterns of *Anemone* flowers. H.D. 'felt a strong affinity' with Dickinson according to Susan Stanford Friedman, though there is no biographical evidence to confirm that she read Dickinson's poetry (apart from the coincidence that Dickinson's *The Single Hound* was published in 1914).[105] With that said, there is plenty of textual evidence to suggest that Dickinson's poetry served as a source of inspiration for H.D. The two Dickinsonian dashes that we find in the passage above, for example, are typical of *Sea Garden* in that H.D. used end dashes on over one hundred occasions in her collection. Perhaps even more striking than the formal similarities, however, are the thematic resemblances between *Sea Garden* and Dickinson's poetry. Compare the first half of 'Evening', for example, with the following lines from 'Whose are the little beds, I asked' (c. 1859):

> Whose are the beds – the tiny beds
> So thick upon the plain?
>
> 'Tis Daisy, in the shortest –
> A little further on –
> Nearest the door – to wake the I*st* –
> Little Leontodon.
>
> 'Tis Iris, Sir, and Aster –
> Anemone, and Bell –
> Bartsia, in the blanket red –
> And chubby Daffodil.

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[104] Jacob Korg, *Winter Love: Ezra Pound and H.D.* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), p. 45; Annette Debo, *The American H.D.* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2012), p. 131; Kusch, p. 47. H.D. confessed 'that her nature imagery […] was never really Greek but came from her childhood reminiscences of Watch Hill and the coasts of Rhode Island and Maine' according to Norman Holmes Pearson speaking with L.S. Dembo, 'Norman Holmes Pearson on H.D.: An Interview', *Contemporary Literature,* 10.4 (Autumn 1969), 435-446 (p. 437) <doi:10.2307/1207690>.

[105] Susan Stanford Friedman, *Penelope's Web: Gender, Modernity, H.D.'s Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 52.

[…]
Their bedtime 'tis, she said –
The Bumble bees will wake them
When April woods are red.[106]

Here, as in *Sea Garden*, a question ('whose are the little beds[?]') triggers a vision. As the vision unfolds, Dickinson's dashes repeatedly push the perceiver 'a little further on' both in space and time so that they are finally transported beyond the winter garden of the lyric present to the spring woods of the future. In *Sea Garden,* H.D. similarly uses the dash as an extramissionary gesture akin to the imperative use of the word 'look'. Whereas Dickinson's dashes often take us to places and times beyond the immediate here and now, however, H.D.'s dashes only ever ask us to *look* beyond the empirical circumstances of a perceiver who is '*somewhere*' at some time. No wonder, then, that 'the flowers are lost' in 'Evening'—the setting sun leaves only darkness behind.

H.D.'s commitment to empirical perception in 'Evening' and other *Sea Garden* poems places her in opposition to the Romantic sublime with which Dickinson is so frequently associated. And while Dickinson's poetry occasionally places pressure on the sublime, her nyctitropic poem may have been inspired by her reading of Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'The Sensitive Plant' (1820)—a thoroughly Romantic poem that is marked with an 'x' in the Dickinson family copy of *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1853).[107] In the first stanza of 'The Sensitive Plant', the eponymous organism 'open[s] its fan-like leaves to the light' before 'clos[ing] them beneath the kisses of the night'.[108] Clearly, H.D. and Dickinson were not the first poets to observe nyctitropism, nor were they the first to gesture to the reality of the unseen. Instead, both poets engaged with a Romantic tradition that sought to articulate that which is, in the words of William Wordsworth, '[u]nseen,

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[106] Emily Dickinson, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson,* ed. by R.W. Franklin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 49-50.
[107] Joanne Feit Diehl, *Women Poets and the American Sublime* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 26-43; Joanne Feit Diehl, *Dickinson and the Romantic Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 137.
[108] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound with Other Poems* (London: C. and J. Ollier, 1820), p. 157.

unheard, unwatched by any star'.[109] This impulse is neatly encapsulated in the following quatrain from 'The Sensitive Plant':

> The unseen clouds of the dew, which lie
> Like fire in the flowers till the sun rides high,
> Then wander like spirits among the spheres,
> Each cloud faint with the fragrance it bears;[110]

What distinguishes 'Evening' from 'The Sensitive Plant' and other Romantic poems is H.D.'s imagistic commitment to leaving 'the unseen clouds of the dew' unspoken. Whereas Shelley straightforwardly describes the unseen in his poem, H.D. remains silent regarding the invisible environmental conditions that cause nyctitropism, opting instead to comment on seen qualities like light. In so doing, she takes Walt Whitman's idea that 'the unseen is proved by the seen' to the extreme, suggesting that the 'unseen, unheard, untouchable and untouching' imagery of Romanticism has neither a visible nor an audible place in an imagist aesthetic.[111]

In addition to imagism, H.D.'s reticence exemplifies a grotesque style that deliberately leaves gaps and intervals open in order to facilitate discovery, sustain possibility, and adhere to the bounded nature of embodied perception.[112] As Peter Nicholls explains, 'something is always lacking in the grotesque, something always remains in shadow, imperfectly present'.[113] The same could be said of the second half of 'Evening':

> The cornel-buds are still white,
> but shadows dart
> from the cornel-roots—
> black creeps from root to root,
> each leaf
> cuts another leaf on the grass,

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[109] Wordsworth and Coleridge, p. 76.
[110] Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound,* p. 161.
[111] Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (privately published in Brooklyn, New York, 1855), pp. 14, 57.
[112] See Geoffrey Galt Harpman's discussion of 'The Grotesque as Interval' in *On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 14-17.
[113] Peter Nicholls, 'Ruskin's Grotesque and the Modernism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis', in *Ruskin and Modernism,* ed. by Giovanni Cianci and Nicholls (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), pp. 165-180 (p. 173).

> shadow seeks shadow,
> then both leaf
> and leaf-shadow are lost. (17)

Here, H.D. lives up to the title that Pound bestowed upon her in *Hilda's Book*: 'little mother of the shadows all'.[114] And while Pound's use of the word 'little' has a condescending ring to it, it's worth noting that 'little' serves as an apt description of both the shadows cast by the leaves of *Cornus canadensis*—a species of dwarf cornels that also feature in the poem 'Pursuit' (1916)—and the 'minute' shadows cast by 'dead leaves upon the grass' in volume three of John Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* (1853).[115] Both in this volume and in *White Rose and the Red* (H.D.'s 1948 fictional biography of Elizabeth Siddal), Ruskin functions as father of the shadows, proclaiming that 'light is only beautiful, only available for life, when it is tempered with shadow'.[116] Indeed, the 'flitting shadow' is a hallmark of the Ruskinian grotesque, where it acts as an 'instantaneous and evanescent expression of the visible things around [us]'.[117] Similarly, in *Sea Garden,* shadows obliquely manifest the presence of muscles (10), leaves (16), twigs (40), 'small-leafed boughs' (42), and hyacinths (44).

Given how the bright 'splendour' of the sublime 'forb[ids] / Shadow to fall from leaf and stone' in Romantic poems like Shelley's 'The Triumph of Life' (1822),[118] it should come as no surprise that Ruskin defined the grotesque in opposition to the Romantic sublime in the following passage from *The Stones of Venice*:

> Now, so far as the truth is seen by the imagination in its wholeness and quietness, the vision is sublime; but so far as it is narrowed and broken by the inconsistencies of the human capacity, it becomes grotesque; and it would seem to be rare that any very exalted truth should be impressed on the imagination without some grotesqueness.[119]

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[114] Pound, 'Hilda's Book', l. 25.
[115] John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice III,* in *The Works of John Ruskin,* ed. by E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols (London: George Allen, 1903-1912), XI (1904), p. 217. 'H.D.'s Library' (H.D. Papers, YCAL MSS 24, Box 59a, Folder 1425) reveals that the poet owned six books by Ruskin, four of which—*Mornings in Florence*, *St. Mark's Rest*, and the first two volumes of *The Stones of Venice*—were published before *Sea Garden*.
[116] Ruskin, *Stones III,* p. 262.
[117] Ibid., p. 49.
[118] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Posthumous Poems* (London: Henry L. Hunt, 1824), p. 91.
[119] Ruskin, *Stones III*, p. 181.

Ruskin's distinction between the sublime and the grotesque in the passage above anticipates T.E. Hulme's c. 1913 distinction between Romanticism and classicism. Like Ruskin and his Pre-Raphaelite peers, Hulme and his imagist peers sought to distance themselves from the sublime aesthetics of Romanticism.[120] Whereas Ruskin and Hulme both portrayed the artist as 'a very finite and fixed creature', however, Pound claimed that the imagist poet is capable of achieving 'freedom from time limits and space limits'—the very freedom that Dickinson claimed for the 'Poet' when she described 'Him' as 'Exterior – to time –'.[121] The masculine pronoun is important here, for it simultaneously recalls the Hermetic impulse to 'transcend all times', the Emersonian impulse to 'abolish time and space', and the Romantic impulse to 'crowd eternity into an hour, / Or stretch an hour to eternity'.[122] And while all of these impulses are present in Poundian imagism, the imagist eye of *Sea Garden* is not an 'arresting' one (as John T. Gage argues).[123] Instead, H.D. embraces her body by using both 'time limits' and 'space limits' to her perceptual advantage, to perceive that which is only perceptible under certain spatiotemporal conditions. There is no sublimity to be found in *Sea Garden,* for H.D. presents ephemeral phenomena from a postlapsarian point of view that is precisely as Ruskin describes—'narrowed and broken by the inconsistencies of the human capacity'. Thus perceived, H.D.'s garden emerges as 'a new beauty / in some terrible / wind-tortured place' (19) where fruits fall, flowers fade, petals fall apart, and leaves are lost in deference to forces unseen by the naked eye.

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120 Nicholls, p. 172.
121 T.E. Hulme, 'Romanticism and Classicism', in *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art,* ed. by Herbert Read (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1924), pp. 113-140 (p. 117); Pound, 'A Few Don'ts', p. 200; Dickinson, p. 206.
122 Mead, 'Mind to Hermes', p. 53; Emerson, 'Over-Soul', p. 274; George Gordon Byron, *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron* (New York: D. Appleton, 1850), p. 335.
123 Gage, p. 16.

The Naked Eye

In addition to Professor Doolittle's telescope, Reverend Wolle's microscope contributed to H.D.'s awareness of the reality of the unseen. And while H.D. felt that she had to compete with her father's telescope for his attention, this was far from the case when it came to her grandfather and his microscope. Indeed, H.D. wrote fondly of the hours spent by her grandfather's side in passages like the following from *The Gift:*

> [Our grandfather] had a microscope and studied things and drew pictures of branches of moss that you could not see with your eyes. He put them on a glass slide or pressed a drop of water from a bottle (that he had brought back from trips to the mountains) between two glass slides. That (in time, it was explained) was fresh-water *algae,* a sort of moss, invisible (for the most part) to the naked eye. The apple of my eye. He was the naked eye, he was the apple of God's eye.[124]

Later, when Wolle lifts the young Hilda 'to kneel on the chair by his worktable', she sees 'that where there is nothing, there is something […] that an empty drop of water spread[s] out [into] branches' akin to the microscopic fibres that Ruskin revered when he wrote that 'the cottage may be beautiful, and the smallest moss that grows on its roof, and the minutest fibre of that moss which the microscope can raise into visible form, and all of them in their own right, not less than the mountains and the sky'.[125] For H.D., as for Ruskin, this minute fibre was not only 'visible' but also valuable: it was 'the apple of [the] eye'—a biblical phrase used to refer to something that is so precious as to be hidden 'under the shadow of [God's] wings'.[126]

In light of the positive impact that Wolle's microscope had on H.D., one might expect *Sea Garden* to contain microscopic imagery of the kind that Thomas Hardy embraced when he theorised a 'Poetry of the Microscope—in which minute things are regarded as vast'.[127] Unlike

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[124] H.D., *Gift,* ed. by Ohanessian, p. 41 [emphasis original].
[125] Ibid., p. 11; Ruskin, *Stones III*, p. 160.
[126] Psalm 17.8.
[127] Thomas Hardy, *Thomas Hardy's 'Poetical Matter' Notebook*, ed. by Pamela Dalziel and Michael Millgate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 46 [emphasis excised].

Hardy, however, H.D. was ambivalent about the poet's use of perceptual aids and instruments. On one hand, as *The Gift* makes clear, H.D. celebrated the cellular and celestial worlds made perceptible by microscopes and telescopes as 'the apple of [her] eye'. On the other hand, however, H.D. saw her grandfather as 'the *naked* eye […] the apple of God's eye'.[128] Later, in *HERmione,* H.D. again associated nakedness with divinity when she described the aided eye of Carl Gart, a thinly-veiled Professor Doolittle character who spends his days hovered over a microscope, as 'unholy'.[129] In addition to Carl Gart's eye, the 'bit of alga […] squashed flat' on his glass is also described as 'odd [and] unholy in its beauty under the microscope'.[130] We will discuss the nature of this unholiness in a moment, but for now it suffices to note that H.D. shared her ambivalent attitude to perceptual aids with Ruskin. As Ella Mershon and Polly Gould respectively note, Ruskin 'confin[ed] himself to what is perceptible to the naked eye during the course of a human life' and 'held observation with the naked eye in the highest esteem'.[131] Unlike those professors who prided themselves in 'seeing more by instruments than common people can with the naked eye', Ruskin held that microscopes and similar instruments were limited in their capacity to accurately render experiential phenomena.[132] In volume three of *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin called attention to these limitations when he wrote:

> Nothing can be done well in art, except by vision. Scientific principles and experiences are helps to the eye, as a microscope is; and they are of exactly as much use *without* the eye. No science of perspective, or of anything else, will enable us to draw the simplest natural line accurately, unless we see it and feel it. Science is soon at her wits' end. All the professors of perspective in Europe, could not, by perspective, draw the line of curve of a sea beach; nay, could not outline one pool of the quiet water left among the sand. The eye and hand can do it, nothing else. All the rules of aerial perspective that ever were written, will not tell me how

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128 H.D., *Gift,* ed. by Ohanessian, p. 41 [emphasis added].
129 H.D., *HERmione,* p. 99.
130 Ibid., p. 99.
131 Ella Mershon, 'Ruskin's Dust', *Victorian Studies,* 58.3 (2016), 464-492 (p. 480) <doi:10.2979/victorianstudies.58.3.03>; Polly Gould, 'Molar Heights and Molecular Lowlands: Scale and Imagination in Ruskin and John Tyndall', in *Ruskin's Ecologies: Figures of Relation from Modern Painters to The Storm-Cloud,* ed. by Kelly Freeman and Thomas Hughes (London: Courtauld, 2021), pp. 225-248 (p. 233).
132 John Ruskin, 'An Oxford Lecture', in *The Works of John Ruskin,* ed. by Cook and Wedderburn, XXII (1906), p. 510.

> sharply the pines on the hill-top are drawn at this moment on the sky. I shall know if I see them, and love them; not till then.[133]

Unlike Ruskin, who urged his students to draw without the use of visual aids, Wolle was of the opinion that the illustrator 'should […] be very exact, and in order that they may be so, it is necessary that the microscope should be provided with an eye-piece micrometer with which to measure the length and breadth of the figure to be sketched'.[134] Thus equipped, Wolle worked to eliminate many of the pictorial distortions that necessitated the emergence of photomicrography (the photography of microscopic objects) in the 1880s.[135] In order to compete with this new technology, microbiologists like Wolle placed great emphasis on cellular detail in their illustrations. Take, for example, Wolle's 1887 illustrations of *Coleochaete soluta* and *Coleochaete irregularis* from *Fresh-Water Algae of the United States* (Figure 2.A). Here, 'Papalie's pressed moss' is hand-illustrated down to the 'minutest fibre' so that the organism's cell walls and carpogon clusters appear to be permanently etched into a flat surface rather than raised into visible form. Therein lies the nature of microscopy's unholiness—it disallows movement between the slides and on the illustrated page.

Given the depth of detail in Wolle's illustrations, there is a chance that H.D. had her grandfather in mind when she wrote that artists 'so often fail for lack of some precise and definite clear intellect at the back of the whole, one centralizing focus of thought cutting and pruning the too extraneous underbrush of tangled detail'.[136] 'Someone', she continued, 'should slash and cut'.[137] In early poems like 'Orchard', of course, that 'someone' was Pound. By the time the five flower poems of *Sea Garden* were composed c. 1915, however, H.D. was pruning her own poems to fulfil the following standards set by the protagonist of her autobiographical novel, *Paint It Today* (1921):

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133 Ruskin, *Stones III*, p. 57 [emphasis original].
134 Francis Wolle, *Desmids of the United States* (Bethlehem, PA: Moravian Publication Office, 1892), p. xiv.
135 For more on the history of photomicrography, see Stanley Joel Reiser, *Medicine and the Reign of Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 87.
136 H.D., 'Restraint', p. 33.
137 Ibid., p. 33.

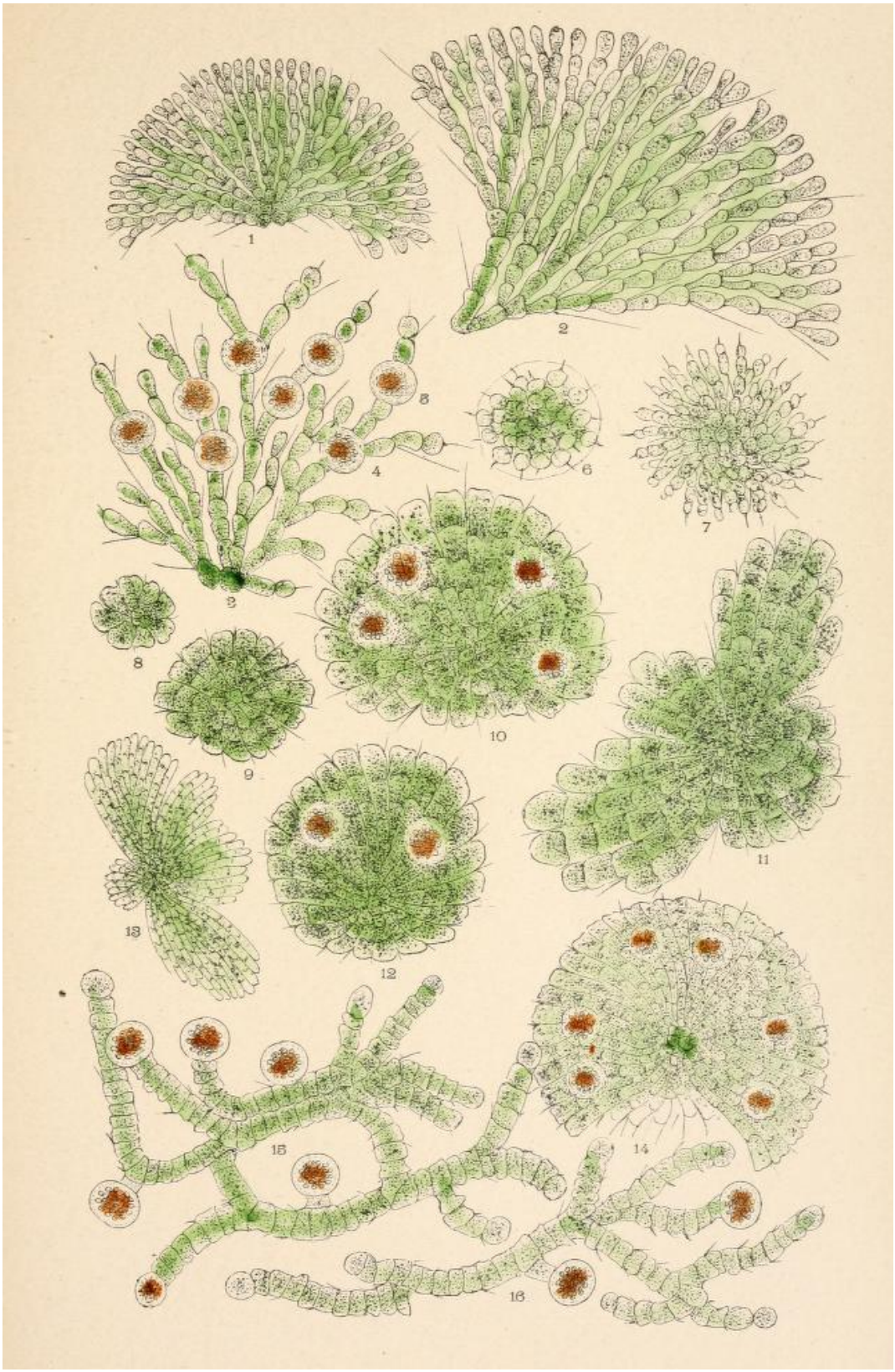

Figure 2.A. Francis Wolle, *Fresh-Water Algae of the United States,* 2 vols (Bethlehem, PA: Comenius Press, 1887), II, Plate LXXII

> She did not wish to be an exact and over-*précieuse* western, a scientific describer of detail of vein and leaf of flowers, dead or living, nor did she wish to press flowers and fern fronds and threads of pink and purple seaweed between the pages of her book. Yet she wanted to combine all these qualities in her writing and to add still another quality […] fragrance.[138]

Normally, H.D. deftly 'combine[s] all these qualities in her writing'. In the first part of 'Sea Iris' (1915), however, these qualities are neatly separated into two stanzas:

> Weed, moss-weed,
> root tangled in sand,
> sea-iris, brittle flower,
> one petal like a shell
> is broken,
> and you print a shadow
> like a thin twig.
>
> Fortunate one,
> scented and stinging,
> rigid myrrh-bud,
> camphor-flower,
> sweet and salt—you are wind
> in our nostrils. (40)

Here, H.D. contrasts two ways of perceiving a sea iris. The speaker of the first stanza addresses the sea iris in the same visual terms one might use to describe a freshly-pressed flower while the speaker of the second stanza plays the Dickinsonian role of the 'Poet […] That / Distills amazing sense / From Ordinary Meanings – / And Attar so immense'.[139] It is not just the whole world of *vision,* then, that *Sea Garden* aspires to open. Instead, it is the whole world of perception—a world that includes unseen flavours, feelings, and fragrances. And, as H.D.'s film criticism makes clear, the 'psychic manifestation' of this unseen world 'need be in no way indicated by any outside innovation of cross lights or of superimposed shadows. It is something in something, something behind something. It is something one feels, that you feel'.[140]

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[138] H.D., *Paint It Today,* ed. by Laity, p. 17 [emphasis original].
[139] Dickinson, p. 206.
[140] H.D. 'Joan of Arc', p. 22.

Poetry, by virtue of its independence from any one of the senses, is privileged in its ability to make unseen flavours, feelings, and fragrances empirically perceptible to the senses—to render them aesthetic. Or, to put the matter in H.D.'s words: the pencil has more 'power' than 'the violin, the chisel, and the brush' because it can 'combine [their] qualities' and 'add still another quality to these three […] the fragrance of the flowers'.[141] When it comes to the five flower poems of *Sea Garden,* the resulting aesthetic is one in which silhouettes, outlines, auras, and contours are privileged over depth of detail. For this reason, H.D.'s sea flowers are less closely related to Wolle's botanical illustrations than they are to Anna Atkins' *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions* (1843). In order to produce this book of cameraless photographs, Atkins placed algae, flowers, and ferns upon photo-sensitive paper before exposing them to sunlight. The resulting images, as Louise Hornby notes, 'not only register the outline of the object, but also record the thickness of the specimen in terms of relative opacity or transparency, its distance from the blue ground'.[142] In Atkins' contact print of *Laurencia pinnatifida* (Figure 2.B), for example, the organism leaves a semi-transparent outline of itself on a page that is 'shot with blue / cut under deeper blue' (5) like 'the sea' of 'The Shrine' (1916). Similarly, the iris of 'Sea Iris' 'print[s] a shadow / like a thin twig'. Whereas Atkins' specimen is merely 'a negative impression […] suspended and contained within a blue world', however, H.D.'s sea iris is itself 'painted blue, / painted like a fresh prow / stained among the salt weeds' (40).[143] Which brings us to the essential difference between Atkins' cyanotype and H.D.'s sea iris: the former is an absent image devoid of colour and height while the latter 'drag[s] up colour / from the sand' so that it appears as positively present as the sea rose that is 'lifted / in the crisp sand' (1), the sea lily that is 'lifted up' (12), and the pear tree that is 'lifted from the earth' (43).

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141 H.D., *Paint It Today,* ed. by Laity, p. 17.
142 Louise Hornby, *Still Modernism: Photography, Literature, Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 153.
143 Ibid., pp. 151, 147.



Figure 2.B. Anna Atkins, *Laurencia pinnatifida,* 1846-1847, cyanotype,
Spencer Collection, New York Public Library

Yet 'Sea Iris' is not solely comprised of positive images, for H.D.'s diction in the following lines gestures beyond the immediate presence of *Iris versicolor*—a species of iris flower that is native to coastal New England—to the ontologically absent image of a postdiluvian rainbow:

> Do the murex-fishers
> drench you as they pass?
> Do your roots drag up colour
> from the sand?
> Have they slipped gold under you—
> rivets of gold?
>
> Band of iris-flowers
> above the waves,
> you are painted blue,
> painted like a fresh prow
> stained among the salt weeds. (40)

Here, H.D.'s 'band of iris-flowers' registers the Greek etymology of the word 'iris' as the name of a messenger goddess who 'was held to display as her sign, or appear as, the rainbow'.[144] Notably, H.D.'s rainbow appears 'above the waves' of a diluvian 'drench', thus recalling the 'bow in the cloud' that appeared in Genesis as a 'token' of God's covenant that 'the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh'.[145] Yet H.D.'s banded iris is not strictly biblical, for its 'rivets of gold' simultaneously recall both the golden rod that Iris was known to possess and the gold that lies at the end of the rainbow in Irish folklore.

Rooted in sand that shifts and slips with no real beginning or end, H.D.'s iris occupies an ontologically unstable ground between lived experience, mythology, religion, and science. In light of the final stanza, we can also add visual art to this list. 'Painted blue' and 'slipped' with 'gold', H.D.'s 'Sea Iris' is reminiscent of Vincent Van Gogh's *Irises* (Figure 2.C), an 1890 painting that H.D. may have encountered at the Galerie Bernheim Jeune during her visit to Paris in the summer

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[144] Oxford English Dictionary Online, 'iris, *n.*'.
[145] Genesis 9.12-15.



Figure 2.C. Vincent Van Gogh, *Irises,* 1889, oil on canvas, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

of 1911. Regardless of whether H.D. was familiar with *Irises* when she composed 'Sea Iris', her understanding of Van Gogh's paintings was that they were 'dynamically exploding inside'.[146] Reflecting on years spent with Lawrence (c. 1914-1917) in her roman-à-clef *Bid Me To Live* (1960), H.D. recalls instructing 'Rico' (*i.e.,* Lawrence) to 'write as Vincent van Gogh [sic] painted'.[147] '[Van Gogh] would draw that magnetism up out of the earth', continued H.D., 'his wheat stalks are quivering with more than the wind that bends them'.[148] Such is the case in *Irises*—a painting that 'quivers' with energy as each stalk moves in deference to unseen magnetism. Much like the roots of H.D.'s sea iris, the roots of Van Gogh's irises appear to 'drag up' the golden colour of the earth below them. 'His painting', as Lawrence remarked of Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* series in 1925, 'does not represent the [flower] itself […] It is neither man-in-the-mirror nor flower-in-the-mirror, neither is it above or below or across anything. It is in-between everything, in the fourth dimension'.[149] The same could be said of H.D.'s 'Sea Iris'—the poem sits 'in between' senses, scales, contexts, and media and thus anticipates the four-dimensional dynamics that Loy and Mirrlees respectively went on to portray in *Songs to Joannes* and *Paris.*

We will return to the issue of the fourth dimension in the third and fourth chapters of this thesis, but for now it suffices to note that H.D.'s 'Sea Iris' does not duplicate the flower's dimensions like a cyanotype. Instead, like Van Gogh's *Irises,* H.D.'s 'band of iris-flowers' is perceived from the proximal kind of perspective that the artist inhabits in the following passage from *Asphodel*:

> Things seen in perspective become things to be grappled with. Art. Isn't art just re-adjusting nature to some intellectual focus? *The things are there all the time,* but art [is] . . . a focus, a sense of proportion like turning the little wheel of an opera glass, getting a great mass of inchoate colour and form into focus, focussing on one small aspect of life though really it is only a tiny circle, a tiny circle. You get life into a tiny circle by art.[150]

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146 H.D., *Bid Me To Live: A Madrigal* (New York: Grove Press, 1960), p. 179.
147 Ibid., p. 183.
148 Ibid., p. 183.
149 D.H. Lawrence, 'Morality and the Novel', *Calendar of Modern Letters,* 2.10 (December 1925), 269-274 (p. 269).
150 H.D., *Asphodel,* ed. by Spoo, pp. 175-176 [emphasis added].

While art objects are always ontologically present in the environment ('the things are there all the time'), it takes a perceiver to render 'inchoate colour and form' aesthetically visible. This, for Lawrence, was 'the essential quality of poetry'—'that it makes a new effort of attention, and "discovers" a new world within the known world'.[151] Both in Lawrence's *The Rainbow* (1915) and in H.D.'s prose, the act of 're-adjusting nature to some intellectual focus' is likened to the act of perceiving through the circular lens of a microscope.[152] For H.D., as for Lawrence, the microscope served as an apt analogy for the artist's ability to render those 'aspect[s] of life' which would otherwise remain unseen.[153] Ultimately, H.D. used her naked eye as an instrument capable of discovering 'the only just not seen' through the adjustment of an 'intellectual focus' akin to the lens of microscope.

Yet for all the focus to be found in the five flower poems of *Sea Garden*, their lines lack the level of detail that one might expect from a close-up descriptive poem. Indeed, much like the 'Sea Rose' that opens the collection, H.D.'s descriptions are 'meagre', 'thin', 'sparse', 'small', and 'stunted' (1). Certainly this sparsity is imagistic. Coupled with metamorphosis, however, it is also grotesque. As the iris transforms from a 'brittle flower' into 'wind / in our nostrils', 'Sea Iris' exhibits what Lindsay Smith calls 'the aberrant tendency of the grotesque'—that is, the tendency to formulate 'both the moment of an object's gradual metamorphosis before the eye and the accompanying "gaps" in understanding caused by its change of appearance *and* the object's ability to fluctuate between two states of appearance'.[154] Throughout the poem, H.D.'s lack of detail leaves grotesque gaps in which 'moss-weeds' are free to metamorphose in deference to unseen and unspoken forces moving both within the organism and outside of it. This is what poetry

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[151] D.H. Lawrence, Introduction to Harry Crosby's *Chariot of the Sun* (1928), in *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D.H. Lawrence,* ed. by Edward D. McDonald (New York: Viking, 1936), p. 255.
[152] See D.H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow* (New York: Modern Library, 1915), pp. 407-417.
[153] See Armstrong, *Microscopy, Magnification and Modernist Fiction*, pp. 37-68.
[154] Lindsay Smith, *Victorian Photography, Painting and Poetry: The Enigma of Visibility in Ruskin, Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 52 [emphasis original].

makes visible—not only to the naked eye but to the entire perceiving body thanks to the multisensory nature of its medium.

Conclusion

Undefined by detail, *Sea Garden* conveys the living and dynamic nature of roses that 'drip […] acrid fragrance' (1), lilies that 'are lifted up' (12), hepaticas that 'are lost' (17), pears that 'cling' (18), violets that 'catch the light' (25), leaves that 'drop upon earth' (35), roots that 'drag up colour' (40), and flower-tufts that 'bring summer and ripe fruits / in their purple hearts' (43). All of these organisms and more can be found in *Sea Garden*, a collection that anticipates the 'living art' of film that H.D. went on to champion in the late '20s and early '30s.[155] Much like a film, *Sea Garden* is comprised not of 'still' images (as Friedman argues) but of 'frail and tortuous veils of light and shadow, wandering in photogenetic guise'.[156] 'Frail and tortuous', H.D's veils empirically manifest the silhouette of 'something behind something' even as they keep that something unseen and unspoken. Unlike Emerson, Mead, and Shelley—all of whom sought to 'pierce' the 'Veil of Light that shut[s] the Beauties, Perfections and Greatnesses of the Intelligible from the eyes of [the] mind'—H.D. kept the veil intact in an effort to give a grotesque sense of 'an infinite power and meaning in the thing seen, beyond all that is apparent therein'.[157]

Confining herself to the spatiotemporal bounds of the naked eye, H.D. made restrained gestures to unseen phenomena ranging from gravitational attraction to diluvian refraction. Throughout the course of *Sea Garden,* these unseen phenomena shape that which is seen so that

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[155] H.D. described film as 'the living art' in a letter to Viola Jordan, 6 June 1927, Viola Baxter Jordan Papers, YCAL MSS 175. For more on H.D.'s contributions to film, see Laura Marcus' introduction to 'The Contribution of H.D.', in *Close Up: 1927-1933,* ed. by James Donald, Anne Friedberg, and Laura Marcus (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 96-104.
[156] Friedman, *Penelope's Web,* p. 52; H.D., 'Cinema and the Classics: Beauty', *Close Up,* July 1927, pp. 22-33 (p. 28).
[157] G.R.S. Mead, *Thrice-Greatest Hermes,* 3 vols (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1906), II, p. 29; John Ruskin, *Modern Painters III*, in *The Works of John Ruskin,* ed. by Cook and Wedderburn, V (1904), p. 133.

pears fall, hepaticas close, waves crash, fruit ripens, leaves die, and irises band together. Portrayed as positive images, these epiphenomenal transformations betray the existence of the reality of the unseen even as that reality remains unspoken. Complete with both absent and present images of celestial, cellular, and spiritual realities, *Sea Garden* gestures beyond the world of vision to the whole world of perception—a world that included not just sights but also scents, sounds, tastes, and feelings. Together with Remy de Gourmont, the French Symbolist poet whose proto-imagist instigations were translated by Pound in 1920, the speaker of *Sea Garden* proclaims: 'my true life is in the unspoken words of my body'.[158]

[158] Ezra Pound, *Instigations of Ezra Pound, Together with an Essay on the Chinese Written Character* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920), p. 172.

CHAPTER THREE

Mina Loy's *Songs to Joannes:*

A Progression of Realisations

Eager to escape the 'congested cosmos of agony' that she inhabited in 'Parturition' (1914), Mina Loy enthusiastically promised Carl Van Vechten that the epistolary poems of *Songs to Joannes* (1917) would 'make a progression of realisations—crescendo & transcendo!'[1] She added:

> All our reactions to the really tremendous phenomena in life—are unrealized—we feel something vaguely—never something conscious—now I believe that life can only evolve something more ample for us—if we help it by getting right into our emotions—& accept their myriad phenomenality—we moderns have hardly a prescribed psychic area—it's expanding.[2]

With the exception of Suzanne W. Churchill's passing comment regarding Loy's 'ability to move us to heightened states of perception and wider understanding', Loy's letter to Van Vechten has received little attention in critical readings of *Songs to Joannes* (or any other poem written by Loy for that matter)—perhaps because the poet had already voiced her desire to 'expand to [her] fullest capacity' on numerous occasions by the time she penned this letter in late 1915 or early 1916.[3] At first glance, then, this letter is a typical manifestation of what various critics have identified as Loy's 'expansive futurist energy', her effort to 'widen the boundaries of discourse', her 'expansive reflexivity', and her poetry's 'potential for widening horizons'.[4] Yet even as Loy was able to

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[1] Loy, 'Parturition', p. 93; Mina Loy to Carl Van Vechten, YCAL MSS 1050, Box 76, Folder 1082, l. 26.
[2] Loy to Van Vechten, YCAL MSS 1050, Box 76, Folder 1082, l. 27 [emphasis original]. The undated letter appears to have been written in late 1915 or early 1916, after Loy moved from room number 54 to 52 Costa San Giorgio in Florence.
[3] Suzanne W. Churchill, *The Little Magazine Others and the Renovation of Modern American Poetry* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), p. 199; Mina Loy, 'Aphorisms on Futurism', *Camera Work,* January 1914, pp. 13-15 (p. 13)
[4] Janet Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 153; Kristina Marie Darling, *Stylistic Innovation, Conscious Experience, and the Self in Modernist Women's Poetry* (London: Lexington

establish a reputation for herself as a 'modern' with an expanded 'psychic area', she rarely revealed her personal recipe for expansion after she published 'Aphorisms on Futurism' in January 1914. Thus the passage above, written in confidence to Van Vechten, presents us with a unique opportunity to gain greater insight into the conceptual workings of Loy's psychological expansion during a period of significant personal and intellectual upheaval.

While it is tempting to assume that Loy expanded her 'prescribed psychic area' by simply following her own Shelleyan advice from 'Aphorisms on Futurism'—'LET the Universe flow into your consciousness'—this assumption is difficult to reconcile with Loy's growing scepticism towards futurism between the composition of 'Feminist Manifesto' in mid- to late-1914 and the final publication of *Songs to Joannes* in April 1917.[5] By this point, Loy had put an end to her love affair with Giovanni Papini—the addressee of *Songs to Joannes* whose first name is the Italian equivalent of John or Joannes.[6] Contrary to those critics who view the addressee of *Songs to Joannes* as a composite figure 'collaged out of [Loy's] failed relationships with several male lovers', I interpret Joannes as a singular figure modelled on Papini.[7] With that said, however, Papini is just one of the 'two or three men' whose patriarchal epistemology of perception is criticised by the speaker of *Songs to Joannes*. 'Fantasy dealt them out as gods', according to Song XV, 'Two or three men looked only human'.[8] Taking a biographically informed approach to the poem, I interpret these 'two men' to be Filippo Marinetti and Giovanni Papini—both of whom played an integral role in converting Loy to the futurist idea that expansion is only available to 'a God' with 'gigantic'

Books, 2021), p. 80; Sara Crangle, *Elevated Realms: An Anatomy of Mina Loy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2024), p. 95; Churchill, p. 200.

[5] Loy, 'Aphorisms on Futurism', p. 14. This line starkly resembles the first two lines of Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'Mont Blanc'—'The everlasting universe of things / Flows through the mind'—first published in his *History of a Six Weeks' Tour through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany and Holland* (London: T. Hookham, 1817), p. 175.

[6] Miller, *Cultures of Modernism,* p. 71. See also Churchill, p. 196.

[7] Maeera Shreiber, '"Love Is a Lyric / of Bodies": The Negative Aesthetics of Mina Loy's *Love Songs to Joannes*', in *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet,* ed. by Shreiber and Keith Tuma (Orono, ME: National Poetry Foundation, 1998), pp. 87-109 (p. 88); Roger Conover, 'Notes on the Text', in Mina Loy, *The Lost Lunar Baedeker,* ed. by Conover (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1996), pp. 175-218 (p. 193).

[8] Mina Loy, *Songs to Joannes* (New York: Others, 1917), p. 10. All further references to this edition will be given after quotations in the text of this chapter.

'egotism'.[9] The shadowy third man, meanwhile, might refer to Loy's first husband Stephen Haweis—the 'Stephen' mentioned in 'TO YOU' (1916), a poem intended to serve as the 'dedication' to *Songs to Joannes.*[10] Like Papini and Marinetti, Haweis attributed godhood to men (and only men) in a little-known pamphlet entitled *The Seven Ages of God* (1912). This pamphlet, like Papini's *Un uomo finito* (1912) and *Pragmatismo* (1913), is an important yet overlooked intertext of *Songs to Joannes.*[11] Not only does it foreground Mina and Stephen's shared desire to 'slowly [awaken] to a newer consciousness, that as yet is only half perceived, half emerged from the Infinite', but it also highlights significant differences in their approaches to the 'progress of the mind'—Haweis' term for the 'psychic evolution' that Loy went on to promote in her 1918 pamphlet, 'Psycho-Democracy: A Movement to Focus Human Reason on the Conscious Direction of Evolution'.[12] Read in light of these two pamphlets, the 34 poems of *Songs to Joannes* emerge as a feminist reworking of Haweis' model of psychological progress at a time when the world was thought by both Loy and her husband to be 'upon the brink of a new estate'.[13]

Songs to Joannes reworks early twentieth-century theories of psychological expansion emerging from futurism, pragmatism, and dynamic psychology. Foregrounding Loy's familiarity with these movements, this chapter asks: to what extent does *Songs to Joannes* uphold, subvert, or revise early twentieth-century theories of psychological expansion? What mode of expansion does Loy adopt in *Songs to Joannes*? What are the origins and implications of Loy's method of expansion? And finally, what is the relationship between the body and psychological growth in Loy's poetry? This chapter seeks to answer these questions with reference to archival, biographical, and historical

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[9] Loy, 'Aphorisms on Futurism', p. 13.
[10] Loy's vision did not come to fruition for reasons outlined by Marisa Alexandra Januzzi in '"Reconstru[ing] Scar[s]": Mina Loy and the Matter of Modernist Poetics' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Columbia University, 1997), pp. 279-280.
[11] Loy read *Un uomo finito* 'whilst she was painting [Papini's] portrait during the winter of 1913-1914' according to Tim Hancock writing in '"You couldn't make it up": The Love of "Bare Facts" in Mina Loy's Italian Poems', *English,* 54.210 (2005), 175-194 (p. 186) <doi:10.1093/english/54.210.175>.
[12] Stephen Haweis, *The Seven Ages of God* (privately published, 1912), pp. 3, 11; Mina Loy, 'Psycho-Democracy: A Movement to Focus Human Reason on the Conscious Direction of Evolution', *Little Review,* September 1921), pp. 14-19 (p. 15). Written in 'Buenos Aires, 1918', Loy's pamphlet was first published by Tipografia Peri and Rossi in 1920 before it appeared in *The Little Review.*
[13] Haweis, p. 15.

materials that illuminate Loy's early encounters with psychology, philosophy, feminism, and visual art.

In *Songs to Joannes,* Loy abandons the futurist 'derision of Humanity' that she once advocated in favour of a feminist affirmation of the body as the only vehicle capable of experiencing earth's 'super-abundance'.[14] According to 'Psycho-Democracy', 'the earth offers [its] super-abundance for All'—not just the futurist who claims to 'see everything' with 'x-ray eyes and ears of steel' in Loy's satirical play 'The Sacred Prostitute' (c. 1914).[15] Contrary to their own estimations, Papini and his futurist peers 'looked only human' to Loy—a factor they failed to take into account as they boasted of the infinite breadth of their technologically augmented 'Uomo-Dio' (Man-God) minds in countless manifestoes, books, and poems.[16] Loy, on the other hand, embraced the 'myriad phenomenality' of her human condition at a time when the likes of Wyndham Lewis were proclaiming that 'THE ACTUAL HUMAN BODY BECOMES OF LESS IMPORTANCE EVERY DAY'.[17] In his instructions for psychological expansion, Papini similarly discredited the body when he wrote: 'Bisogna isolarsi, sopprimere i sentimenti, ricacciare la sensualità, [e] abolire le sensazioni particolari' (one must isolate oneself, overcome feelings, drive back sensuality, and abolish particular sensations [my translation]).[18] Meanwhile, the speaker of *Songs to Joannes* does just the opposite: she 'long[s] to interfere' with her addressee's 'insolent isolation' (20), she 'string[s]' her 'emotions' for all to see (19), and she embraces her seemingly 'infructuous' sexual 'impulses' (3). In other words, she 'get[s] right into [her] emotions' and, as Loy's letter to Van Vechten makes clear, experiences 'something more ample' as a result. Loy's vision of psychological expansion emphasised amplitude and abundance. Paradoxically, however, these traits were contingent upon perceptual contraction. Building on Christina Walter's portrayal

[14] Loy, 'Aphorisms on Futurism', p. 15; Loy, 'Psycho-Democracy', p. 18.
[15] Loy, 'Psycho-Democracy', p. 18; Mina Loy, 'The Sacred Prostitute', in *Stories and Essays of Mina Loy,* ed. by Sara Crangle (Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press, 2011), pp. 188-216 (p. 199).
[16] Giovanni Papini, *Pragmatismo,* 2nd edn (Florence: Vallecchi, 1920), p. 61.
[17] Wyndham Lewis, 'The New Egos', *BLAST*, June 1914, p. 141.
[18] Papini, *Pragmatismo,* p. 69.

of Loy as a poet who 'was aware that her method was ultimately hemmed in by bodily limits' including the 'partiality and temporality of embodied vision', the following pages approach perceptual contraction as an embrace of the spatiotemporal limitations that Papini and his peers sought to surpass.[19] To contract perception is to narrow consciousness to the sensory experiences of the body. Psychological expansion, by contrast, is understood as the emergent realisation of those 'really tremendous phenomena' that Loy could only 'vaguely' discern when she penned her letter to Van Vechten. Together, perceptual contraction and psychological expansion work to produce an alternative aesthetic that is capable of 'crescendo & transcendo' even as it remains rooted in the 'active and reactive' body that scholars have so aptly associated with Loy.[20]

The questions explored in this chapter open new avenues of philosophical inquiry that are yet to be fully answered in relation to the development of Loy's poetics. Thanks to Lara Vetter's study of Loy's connection to Christian Science, Rachel Fountain Eames' discussion of Loy's encounters with the new physics, and Sara Crangle's two-volume *Anatomy of Mina Loy* (2024), which delves into Loy's diverse influences, the philosophical implications of Loy's encounters with science and religion are clearer than ever before.[21] Yet while Loy's familiarity with the work of dynamic psychologists like Henri Bergson, William James, and Frederic Myers is well-documented, her deployment of their vocabulary and methodology remains overlooked and understudied. As this chapter reveals, many of Loy's words, phrases, and images in *Songs to Joannes* derive from new developments in dynamic psychology. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, it is unlikely that Loy encountered this school of psychology at the various art schools she attended in London, Munich, and Paris. Instead, she became familiar with a wide range of ideas from dynamic psychology—like Bergson's 'nucleus' of 'intellect', James' 'psychic fringes', and Myers' 'threshold'

[19] Walter, pp. 139, 149.
[20] Rachel Fountain Eames, *Physics and the Modernist Avant-Garde: Quantum Modernisms and Modernist Relativities* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), p. 78.
[21] Vetter, p. 178; Eames, p. 75; Sara Crangle, *Nethered Regions: An Anatomy of Mina Loy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2024), p. xlviii.

of consciousness—through her social network, independent research, and psychiatric treatment.[22] Thanks to her friend Mabel Dodge Luhan, for example, Loy encountered Myers' magnum opus, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* (1903), in 1913—the same year that she started receiving psychiatric treatment from Roberto Assagioli, a young Florentine psychoanalyst well-versed in the work of James, Myers, and Bergson. Like Luhan, who remarked that 'consciousness is expanding and is bursting through the moulds that have held it up to now' in 1913, Loy deployed the vocabularies and methodologies of dynamic psychologists as part of her aesthetic agenda in the 1910s.[23] As we shall see, however, Loy's poetic deployment of dynamic psychology was revisionist in nature. In *Songs to Joannes,* dynamic psychology served not as a doctrine to be followed but as a point of departure for a poet who sought to make a 'progression of realisations' without abandoning a perceiving body that was more sexual, partial, terrestrial, temporal, and vulnerable than her contemporaries were willing to admit.

The Threshold of the Mind

Just as Loy 'vaguely' felt the existence of 'really tremendous phenomena' just beyond the permeable boundary of her 'prescribed psychic area', James 'obscurely felt' a 'relation to masses of other imagery about to come, but not yet distinctly in focus'.[24] These masses, according to James writing in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890)—a text that Loy may have encountered through Papini, Assagioli, or even Stein—can be found at the 'fringe', or edge, of both thoughts and objects.[25] Like Loy, James struggled to define the nature of 'psychic fringes', a phrase he used interchangeably with 'psychic overtones', 'haloes of relation', and 'unarticulated affinities'.[26] While definitions of

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[22] Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* p. xiii; James, *Principles,* I, pp. 258-259; Myers, *Human Personality,* p. 14.
[23] Luhan, 'Speculations', p. 174. Upon receipt of this article, Loy responded to Luhan: 'your article excited me immensely—you said just what had to be said' on 28 March 1913 (YCAL MSS 196, Box 24, 664).
[24] William James, 'On Some Omissions of Introspective Psychology', *Mind,* os-IX.33 (1884), 1-26 (p. 18) <doi:10.1093/mind/os-ix.33.1>.
[25] James, *Principles,* I, pp. 258-259.
[26] Ibid., pp. 255-269.

the fringe are few, it has generally been understood by psychologists as those 'components of conscious experience occurring outside a *core* of focal, attentive, detailed, sensed, and/or articulated conscious content'.[27] The fringe, in other words, belongs to the same Jamesian 'reality of the unseen' that H.D. gestured to in *Sea Garden.* Meanwhile, the 'core' or 'kernel' surrounding the fringe belongs to an empirically sensed reality. Drawing on his extensive knowledge of biology, James used the word 'nucleus' as a metaphor for that which is known, perceived, and realised in the body.[28] The 'nucleus of the "*me*"', wrote James, 'is always the bodily existence felt to be present at the time'.[29] That the nucleus should be synonymous with 'bodily existence' in James' philosophy is fitting, for 'Loy's corporeal bodies', as Eames notes, 'are rarely presented without consideration of their position in the modern physical universe, where they exist simultaneously at the subatomic, corporeal, and cosmic scales'.[30] In 'Parturition', for example, the 'pin-point nucleus' of the speaker's body is fringed with 'infinitely prolonged nerve-vibrations' of pain.[31] In the following passage from Song XXVII of *Songs to Joannes,* however, the word 'Nucleus' is typographically surrounded by a blank space of 'Nothing':

> Nucleus Nothing
> Inconceivable concept
> Insentient repose (16)

Here, Loy presents us with a nucleus that is 'unfringed'—James' word for 'the image [that] reveals but a simple quality, thing, or event'.[32] Whereas James' unfringed nucleus is clearly a conceivable concept, however, Loy's is both 'insentient' and 'inconceivable'—two words that distance Song XXVII from Jamesian fringe dynamics but bring it closer to Bergson's interpretation of James.

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[27] Dan Lloyd, 'fringe', in *The Oxford Companion to Consciousness,* ed. by Tim Bayne, Axel Cleeremans, and Patrick Wilken (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), n.p. <doi:10.1093/acref/9780198569510.001.0001> [emphasis original].
[28] James, *Principles*, I, p. 299.
[29] Ibid., p. 400 [emphasis original].
[30] Eames, p. 78.
[31] Loy, 'Parturition', p. 93.
[32] James, 'On Some Omissions', p. 18.

According to Bergson writing in *Creative Evolution* (1907), a text that Loy 'assuredly read' according to numerous accounts, it is not 'the bright nucleus' but the surrounding 'fringe' that 'ha[s] more importance for philosophy'.[33] 'For it is [the fringe's] presence', as Bergson notes, 'that enables us to affirm that the nucleus is a nucleus, that pure intellect is a contraction, by condensation, of a more extensive power'.[34] This dependence, however, goes both ways in Bergson's philosophy, for the fringe 'is of no help in directing our action on things' without a bodily nucleus.[35] To 'narrow the universe to the surface of the living body', then, is an essential first step for the Bergsonian perceiver who seeks to 'grow into extensity':

> After having narrowed the universe to the surface of the living body, [the perceiver must] contract this body itself into a centre which he will end by supposing unextended. Then, from this centre will start unextended sensations, which will swell, so to speak, will grow into extensity, and will end by giving extension first to his body, and afterwards to all other material objects.[36]

We have already seen a version of this model of expansion in H.D.'s *Notes on Thought and Vision,* where a brain rooted in the womb grows 'super-feelers' that 'extend out and about' to reveal 'the whole world of vision'.[37] What stands out in Bergson's version, however, is his somewhat dizzying emphasis on bodily contraction as a method of sensory expansion. Loy wholeheartedly embraced this dizzying dynamic in another poem from 1917, 'Human Cylinders', where the Jamesian 'core of the kernel of you […] reach[es] out' and 'extrudes beyond the tangible' with 'one elastic tentacle of intuition'.[38] I describe Loy's term 'core of the kernel' as Jamesian because James used 'kernel' and 'nucleus' interchangeably in his *Principles.*[39] The 'elastic tentacle of intuition', meanwhile, is at once a Bergsonian image and a manifestation of the 'physiological potentiality' that Loy attributed

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[33] Crangle, *Nethered Regions,* p. 4; Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* p. 46.
[34] Ibid.*,* p. 46.
[35] Ibid., p. 46.
[36] Bergson, *Matter and Memory,* p. 52.
[37] H.D., *Notes,* p. 19.
[38] Mina Loy, 'Human Cylinders', in *Others: An Anthology of the New Verse,* ed. by Alfred Kreymbourg (New York: Knopf, 1917), pp. 71-72 (p. 71).
[39] James, *Principles,* I, p. 275.

to the maternal body in her earlier poem 'Parturition'.[40] In *Songs to Joannes,* this dynamic blend of Jamesian and Bergsonian imagery plays out in gendered terms as Loy locates 'spermatazoa [sic] / At the core of Nothing / In the milk of the Moon' (7). The contracted nucleic core, in other words, is figured as anatomically male (recalling Ezra Pound's conflation of 'brain and spermatophore') while its sexually milky surroundings can be read as a mixture of male and female fluids.[41] The former amounts to 'Nothing'—an absent image that undermines the significance of the male seed—while the latter maintains an elevated status as a symbolic manifestation of female fertility. Contrary to Haweis' conviction that 'he only attaineth [freedom] who hath ceased to heed or need either mistress or master', then, Loy's poems suggest that it takes a (hetero)sexual coupling of man and woman, nucleus and fringe, to attain a Bergsonian 'consciousness as wide as life'.[42]

Taken together in the vocabulary of nineteenth-century biology, the nucleus and its fringe constitute a 'protoplasm'—'the material comprising the living contents of a cell'.[43] At the turn of the twentieth century, both Bergson and Myers expounded upon the evolutionary powers of this protoplasm. According to Bergson writing in *Creative Evolution*, it is a 'little mass of protoplasmic jelly which is probably at the root of the genealogical tree of life'.[44] In *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death,* Myers similarly remarked that 'in the protoplasm or primary basis of all organic life there must have been an inherent adaptability to the manifestation of all faculties which organic life has in fact manifested'.[45] In the penultimate song of *Songs to Joannes*, the speaker personifies this protoplasm as follows: 'Proto-plasm was raving mad / Evolving us — — —' (20). While the precise nature of this evolution is unclear from the immediate context of Loy's four-line

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[40] Loy, 'Parturition', p. 93.
[41] Ezra Pound, 'Postscript to *The Natural Philosophy of Love* by Rémy De Gourmont', in *Pavannes and Divagations* (New York: New Directions, 1958), pp. 203-216 (p. 204). Whereas Eric Murphy Selinger reads the 'milk of the Moon' as a 'dated euphemism for "semen"' (see 'Love in the Time of Melancholia', in *Mina Loy,* ed. by Shreiber and Tuma, pp. 19-43 [p. 28]), Cristanne Miller and Sara Crangle respectively interpret it as 'feminine milk' (*Cultures of Modernism,* p. 71) and 'the fluid circularity of the female' (*Nethered Regions,* p. 209).
[42] Haweis, p. 5; Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* p. xii.
[43] Robert Hine (ed.), 'protoplasm', in *A Dictionary of Biology,* 8th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), n.p. <doi:10.1093/acref/9780198821489.001.0001>.
[44] Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* p. 43.
[45] Myers, *Human Personality,* p. 88.

song, Myers figured it less as a biological evolution than as a perceptual evolution, a 'protoplasmic process' whereby 'specialised forms of terrene perception' emerge from 'imperfect adaptations of protoplasm'.[46] When Loy writes of a personified 'proto-plasm' that 'evolv[es] us', therefore, she has in mind a perceptual evolution capable of grasping the 'super-abundance' of earth and producing, in Myers' words, 'a knowledge of things terrene which overpasses the limits of ordinary perception'.[47] Such a reading is not only reinforced by Loy's 'Psycho-Democracy', where we learn that 'Man's evolution through his circumstances has resulted in his point of view', but also by Haweis' biological vocabulary in *The Seven Ages of God,* where we are told that 'towns and great cities are like cells of energy in a mighty brain which is now slowly awakening to a newer consciousness, that as yet is only half perceived, half emerged from the Infinite'.[48] The microscopic protoplasm of the cell—comprised of both nucleus and fringe—is thus linked to the macroscopic evolution of perception that preoccupied both Loy and Haweis throughout their marriage.

While the word 'proto-plasm' enjoys a relatively privileged position in the penultimate line of the penultimate song of *Songs to Joannes,* it is not the only term that Loy's poems have in common with Myers' *Human Personality.* Indeed, both works make use of the word 'threshold'—a term that Myers advocated as an alternative to the Jamesian fringe. Implicitly gesturing to James, Myers dismissed those who 'resort to metaphors of their own to express different streams of "awareness"'.[49] 'They speak of "fringes" of ordinary consciousness', he continued, '[but] there seems to be need of a term of wider application, which shall make as few assumptions as possible'.[50] Drawing on Johann Herbart's 1824 theory of a *limen* at the border between consciousness and the unconscious, Myers advocated in favour of the term 'threshold'—the same word used by psychophysicists to describe a 'level above which sensation or thought must rise

[46] Ibid., p. 90.
[47] Ibid., p. 90.
[48] Loy, 'Psycho-Democracy', p. 17; Haweis, p. 3.
[49] Myers, *Human Personality,* p. 14.
[50] Ibid., p. 14.

before it can enter into our conscious life'.[51] And while Loy went on to describe Myers' book as 'flat' because it 'lacks the risks […] that art & life have',[52] Myers' flatness did not stop her from using his vocabulary in the following lines from Song II:

> My finger-tips are numb from fretting your hair
> A God's door-mat
> On the threshold of your mind (4)

Here, Loy juxtaposes Myers' vocabulary with precisely the kind of language that he tried (and failed) to avoid: metaphor. Joannes' hair, we are told, is 'God's door-mat'—something for the speaker to 'fret' at as she strives to gain access to the Myersian 'supraliminal current of consciousness' that runs above the 'threshold' of his seemingly celestial mind.[53] These lines are typical of what Ryan Bishop and John Phillips have described as Loy's 'attempts to make the threshold itself visible'.[54] In this instance, however, the threshold is not as Bishop and Phillips describe it—'a threshold between sight and sound' (though we will encounter this kind of threshold later in this chapter)—but rather a psychological threshold between what can and cannot be perceived. Like H.D., the speaker of *Songs to Joannes* desires to progress beyond this 'threshold'. Unlike H.D., however, she prioritises the psycho-sexual faculties of the body, the very faculties that Myers failed to confront in *Human Personality,* in order to do so. The rest of *Songs to Joannes* is thus spent in search of a sexual experience that will take the speaker beyond Joannes' experience of sex as a 'clock-work mechanism' to arrive at a 'seismic' expansion of the body's psycho-sexual faculties (18). For now, however, the speaker remains 'virginal to the bellows / Of Experience' (3), her fingertips 'numb' from 'fretting' at the fringe between herself and Joannes.

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[51] Ibid., p. 14.
[52] Mina Loy to Mabel Dodge Luhan, February 1920, in the Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, YCAL MSS 196, Box 24, Folder 664, l. 20.
[53] Myers, *Human Personality,* p. 15 [emphasis excised].
[54] Ryan Bishop and John Phillips, *Modernist Avant-Garde Aesthetics and Contemporary Military Technology: Technicities of Perception* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 41.

Loy had reservations about Myers, but she admired Assagioli enough to become one of his first psychiatric clients in 1913. Like Loy, Assagioli was of Jewish descent, close to Papini, and well-versed in Christian Science and Theosophy. In addition to serving as Loy's psychiatrist, Assagioli also served as a close friend and confidante—one of the few Italian acquaintances to whom Loy could turn to discuss the esoteric aspects of dynamic psychology. Biographers have noted Assagioli's influence on Loy, but evidence suggests that their relationship was one of mutual influence.[55] While Assagioli was treating Loy, for example, he became interested in the notion of a 'divine nucleus'—an image that emerges in Loy's work on multiple occasions from 'Parturition' to 'Psycho-Democracy'.[56] Another example of this kind of nucleus can be found in *Two Plays* (1915), where a futurist 'MAN' modelled on Marinetti responds to a 'pandemonium of sound and motion' with the following declaration:

> At last—vibration is intensified to the requisite ratio—for every latent conscious and sub-conscious impulse to respond to automatically—completely—virility ceases to be implicated in dis-integrant autostimuli—leaving the Nucleus free for self-activity—
>
> Expansion—Extension—Intension—
>
> CREATION—[57]

Here, the idea that the nucleus responds without the intervention of a thinking subject bears stark resemblance to William B. Carpenter's 1874 theory that 'a large part of our Intellectual activity […] is essentially *automatic,* and may be described in Physiological language as the *reflex action of the Cerebrum'*.[58] If Eames is correct that *Two Plays* serves as a 'brilliantly distilled example of Loy's futurist parody', however, then Loy's understanding of the nucleus and its 'expansion' might have been formed in complete antithesis to the futurist 'MAN'.[59]

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[55] See Carolyn Burke, *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), pp. 146-147.
[56] See Archivio Assagioli Online, Box 41, Folder 3.5.2 <https://www.archivioassagioli.org/> [accessed 17 January 2025].
[57] Mina Loy, 'Two Plays', *Rogue,* June 1915, pp. 15-16 (p. 15).
[58] Carpenter, p. 515 [emphasis original].
[59] Eames, p. 92.

While the 'MAN' from *Two Plays* understands the expansion of his nucleus as an 'automatic' action divorced from the demands of agency, Assagioli understood expansion as an outcome of the will exerting itself upon a specific 'punto di applicazione' (point of application).[60] Expansion by means of concentration—it might appear counterintuitive, noted Assagioli, until one considers the special meaning that the word 'concentrazione' (concentration) has for American 'New Thought' writers like William James, Prentice Mulford, and Horatio Dresser. According to Assagioli:

> [U]na potente volontà, sorretta da un intenso e incessante ed esclusivo desiderio, è capace, per mezzo del sapiente uso della concentrazione, di condurre direttamente la nostra coscienza a stati completamente differenti ed enormemente superiori a quelli ordinari.[61]
>
> [A] powerful will, supported by an intense, incessant and exclusive desire, is capable, by means of the skilful use of concentration, to directly lead our consciousness to completely different states, enormously superior to ordinary ones [my translation].

By concentrating the will on potentialities that have not yet reached the threshold of consciousness, the individual can attain 'superconsciousness'—Assagioli's term for a 'higher' psychic state in which concentration is 'upward-directed'.[62] As Loy's correspondence with Luhan reveals, Assagioli's notion of superconsciousness suffused with willpower was more appealing to the poet than the Freudian unconscious, which did 'not leave much room in it for evolving Creative inspiration' as she understood it.[63] The problem with the unconscious, for both Loy and Assagioli, was its lack of will and choice, its automatism. The same could be said for Bergson, who argued that superconsciousness 'lies dormant when life is condemned to automatism [and] wakens

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[60] Roberto Grego Assagioli, *Il "Nuovo pensiero" americano: The NEW THOUGHT* (privately published in Florence, 1907), p. 5. This pamphlet is an exact reproduction of Assagioli's article first published in *Leonardo,* 5.2 (1907), pp. 201-214.
[61] Ibid., p. 9.
[62] Roberto Grego Assagioli, *The Act of Will* (New York: Penguin Books, 1974), pp. 25-26. See also Archivio Assagioli Online, Box 5, Folder 2.2.2.1 <https://www.archivioassagioli.org/> [accessed 17 January 2025].
[63] Loy to Luhan, 28 March 1913, YCAL MSS 196, Box 24, Folder 664.

as soon as the possibility of a choice is restored'.[64] Unlike her futurist peers, Loy never attributed her psychic expansion to an unconscious automatism, opting instead to concentrate her will upon the 'myriad phenomenality' to be found at the threshold of the mind.

Eclosion and Care

Songs to Joannes is full of indications that its speaker senses unseen realities behind and beyond surface appearances. 'Behind God's eyes', we are told in Song VIII, for example, 'There might / Be other lights' (6). Later, in Song XIV, the word 'imperceptible' follows the word 'apparent' in a string of seemingly antithetical adjectives that gesture beyond the immediate here-and-now of the lyric present (10). Like the speaker of *Sea Garden*, the speaker of *Songs to Joannes* cares about 'eclosion' (20)—Loy's term, borrowed from entomology, for the perceptual process of emerging from concealment, as a larva emerges from an egg. Yet sometimes, as in the following passage from Song XVII, the speaker simply *doesn't* care:

> I don't care
> Where the legs of the legs of the furniture are walking to
> Or what is hidden in the shadows they stride
> Or what would look at me
> If the shutters were not shut (11)

Here, Loy manifests an awareness of things beyond the confines of a visible reality—one comprised, in this instance, of shadows and shutters. Her awareness, however, is resolutely 'care'-less. And while Laura Scuriatti attributes Loy's lack of care to the idea that the meaning of a dead metaphor like 'the legs of the furniture' would 'neither be hidden nor relevant', the biographical context of *Songs to Joannes* suggests a different motivation.[65] Reading the passage biographically, it appears to have been written in response to Haweis' depiction of 'woman' in *The Seven Ages of God*,

[64] Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* p. 261.
[65] Laura Scuriatti, *Mina Loy's Critical Modernism* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2019), p. 155.

Papini's portrayal of Loy in a farewell letter entitled 'Congedo' (1914), or both at the same time. As we take these two texts in turn, it will become clear that the problem, for Loy, was not the hidden nature of the unnamed phenomena lurking in the shadows and beyond the shutters. Instead, Loy's lack of care in this instance can be attributed to her lifelong desire, first declared in her 'Feminist Manifesto' (1914), to 'unmask' the 'illusions' of the male gaze.[66]

In *The Seven Ages of God,* Haweis portrays 'woman' as *femme fatale*, the duplicitous creator of a 'Love' (spelled here, as is often the case in Loy's oeuvre, with a capital L) invented 'to keep the desire of Man':

> The adorable shape of woman was disguised in that dream, hidden, as a reminiscence of the games of childhood and ladies listened with parted lips for the sound of footsteps, seeking shy 'cuckoos' through the painted curtains and gilded rooms. Tip-toed, mock earnest, the silken-clothed swain sought through point lace and cunning embroidery for his treasure, seeking it ever in play where he knew it was not; listening with delight to the trembling of his heart and of her heart, until both were leaned together; the mask delicately removed from expectant eyes, and a kiss delicately attained: for the paint and powder God did not disturb.[67]

'Paint[ed]' and 'powder[ed]', Haweis' woman is a character 'incognito'—a word used pejoratively in Song XXIX, where two bodies, presumably male and female, 'clash together / From their incognitoes / In seismic orgasm' (18). Here, sexual experience brings both a man and a woman out of an 'incognito' state. In *The Seven Ages of God,* by contrast, it is only woman who is hidden—she is a merely 'adorable shape' concealed by 'point lace and cunning embroidery'. This 'shy' woman certainly cares 'what would look at [her] / If the shutters were not shut', but the speaker of *Songs to Joannes* is determined not to share her shame. Her body is not only visible but also audible: 'My pair of feet / Smack the flag-stones / That are something left over from your walking' (6). This is not the timid 'tip-toe' of Haweis' courtly dance, but the brazen sound of someone who avowedly escaped the 'danger of disappearing from [her]self' at the age of seven:

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[66] Mina Loy, 'Feminist Manifesto', in *Lost Lunar Baedeker,* ed. by Conover, pp. 153-156 (p. 153).
[67] Haweis, p. 5; pp. 13-14.

> I had no identity until, wandering into an empty, ill-lit room, I came upon my appearance in a towering triple mirror. Drenched in those depths and distances of interreflected glass which are endless in having no existence […] I found the image of my covered body surmounted by my naked face.[68]

In this passage from *The Child and the Parent,* an autobiographical novel never published during Loy's lifetime, Loy follows Bergson's advice to 'narrow the universe to the surface of the living body'. Before this moment, Loy was 'stuck in an impersonal scenery […] from which [she] was incapable of making a conscious advance'.[69] By 'attach[ing] [her] leg to [her] locality', however, Loy was able to become 'alive from the inside'—a feeling she described as 'like having an open window where others see our solid face'.[70] No wonder, then, that the speaker of Song XVII does not 'care' about 'what would look at [her] / If the shutters were not shut'—to hide from life is to limit it.

In addition to *The Seven Ages of God,* Song XVII can also be read as a response to Papini's 'Congedo', a 1914 farewell note first published in Italian in *La Riviera Ligure* before a literal English translation entitled 'Leavetaking' appeared five years later in Alfred Kreymbourg's *Others: A Magazine of the New Verse*—the same magazine that devoted an entire issue to *Songs to Joannes*. In 'Leavetaking', Papini shared his desire to expose 'what is hidden in the shadows' when he wrote: 'you do not weigh, over the rectangles of the sidewalk, more than the shadows stretched under your little boots'.[71] Here, the 'weight' of the shadows that Loy strides has been fixed by Papini's objectifying eye, which measures a woman's 'corpulence' in order to determine which sexual label she deserves—'big whore' or 'virgin and lean'.[72] According to Papini, Loy belongs to the latter group of women because her body is 'long and skinny' like the 'shadows stretched under [her] little boots'. Not only does Loy's weightless virginity attract Papini, but it also makes her desirable to an imagined group of 'people looking from the doors of drug stores, over the bridges of the

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[68] Loy, *Lost Writings,* ed. by Kelsey, p. 76.
[69] Ibid., p. 75.
[70] Ibid., pp. 75-76.
[71] Giovanni Papini, 'Leavetaking', trans. by Emanuel Carnevali, *Others: A Magazine of the New Verse,* July 1919, pp. 20-21 (p. 20).
[72] Ibid., p. 21.

factories, from behind the panes of the tailor and especially from inside the bar'.[73] Yet even as Papini cares to know 'how many eyes are looking [at Loy] from behind' her 'green shutters, shutters drawn-to', the speaker of Song XVII does not care about 'what would look at [her] / If the shutters were not shut'.[74] Instead, as Papini notes, she 'pass[es] and pass[es] again, shamelessly, under [the] window'—a defiant and self-defining act that renders useless the 'x-ray eyes' of the 'Futurist' who sees through Love's 'formless roseate garment[s]' in 'The Sacred Prostitute'.[75] Ultimately, as Song XXIX makes clear, Loy sought to establish a degree of bodily 'differentiation / Rather than watch / Own-self distortion' in the eyes of another (19).

Thanks to Haweis and Papini, Loy was acutely aware of her vulnerability to the male gaze. Indeed, more than any other poet in this thesis, Loy recognised her dual condition both as an embodied perceiver *and* as a perceived body. As one of the most frequently photographed, painted, and poeticised women of the early twentieth century, Loy's body was subjected to a particularly high volume of unsolicited commentary.[76] 'Leavetaking' is just one of the many material traces of the male gaze projected onto Loy's body. And while the vast majority of photographs, portraits, poems, and letters depicting Loy's appearance owe their origins to men, women like Harriet Monroe, Sylvia Beach, and even Marianne Moore were also involved in analysing Loy's appearance. As Loy's 'Feminist Manifesto' makes clear, these women were not exempt from perceiving in a patriarchal manner. '<u>Women</u>', wrote Loy, 'if you want to realize yourselves—you are on the eve of a devastating psychological upheaval—all your pet illusions must be unmasked'.[77] This unmasking takes many forms in *Songs to Joannes*. In Song XXVI, for example, the speaker places herself in the business of 'shedding [her] petty pruderies / From slit eyes' and 'sidl[ing] up / To Nature / — — — that irate pornographist' (15-16). 'Petty pruderies' include not only 'the doctrine of original sin', which 'crushe[s]' the 'old Pagan joy' of sexual pleasure in *The Seven Ages of*

[73] Ibid., p. 20.
[74] Ibid., p. 20.
[75] Ibid., p. 20; Loy, 'Sacred Prostitute', p. 199.
[76] For an overview of comments on Loy's appearance, see Miller, *Cultures of Modernism,* pp. 111-112.
[77] Loy, 'Feminist Manifesto', p. 153 [emphasis original].

Man, but also the patriarchal habits of perception that preclude play.[78] We have just witnessed how limited and limiting the male gaze can be, how it can display a tendency to transform women into objects with fixed values. From 1914 to 1918, Loy repeatedly attributed this 'belligerent tendency' to 'uniform education'.[79] When Loy writes pejoratively of education, however, she has a very particular pedagogy in mind—a Victorian curriculum that instils patriarchal attitudes of prudery, modesty, and militarism—the same kind of education that Loy's exact contemporary, Virginia Woolf, disparaged in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938). Indeed, it is an education that 'hoard[s] dust and perpetrate[s] traditions' (to borrow Woolf's words), and not her own education at a progressive school in London, that Loy has in mind when she laments how 'education' puts 'spectacles on wholesome eyes'.[80] Such a claim is not incompatible with Loy's 1925 embrace of 'the intelligence of our senses', for 'wholesome eyes' can be intelligent without being indoctrinated.[81] Indeed, Loy saw sensory intelligence as a requisite part of the Steinian ideal of 'never see[ing] the same thing *ONCE*', for without intelligence there can be no recollection of first sight.[82] Like Woolf, who called for 'an experimental college […] built on lines of its own' in *Three Guineas*, Loy called for a 'revised education' in 'Psycho-Democracy' with the promise that 'different tendencies in human nature' would flourish with the adoption of new practices.[83]

The effects of Loy's investment in a 'revised education' are felt palpably in *Songs to Joannes,* from the speaker's revisionist deployment of scientific diction to her playful use of common sayings like 'the legs of the furniture'. The 'legs of furniture', according to Loy writing in *The Child and the Parent,* 'pillared so much of [Loy's] adventure'—not only as a child but also as an adult.[84]

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78 Haweis, p. 12.
79 Loy, 'Feminist Manifesto', p. 153; Loy, 'In . . . Formation', p. 7; Loy, 'Psycho-Democracy', p. 19.
80 Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (London: Hogarth Press, 1938), p. 61; Loy, 'In … Formation', p. 7.
81 Loy, 'Modern Poetry', p. 16. Here, Loy places the 'intelligence of our senses' in quotation marks. If exactly quoted, the phrase owes its origins to George Moore's *The Use of the Body in Relation to the Mind* (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1846), p. 135. If loosely quoted, the phrase is likely inspired by Vedantic philosophy.
82 Loy, 'In … Formation', p. 7 [emphasis original].
83 Woolf, *Three Guineas,* p. 61; Loy, 'Psycho-Democracy', p. 19.
84 Loy, *Lost Writings,* ed. by Kelsey, pp. 17-18.

Proto-Surrealist, Loy's repetitive reworking of this cliché in *Songs to Joannes* ('the legs of the legs of the furniture') is reminiscent of *Tender Buttons,* a collection that Loy was undoubtedly familiar with thanks to her friendship with Stein in Florence and Paris. Like Stein, who plays a game of 'I spy' in *Tender Buttons,* Loy imagines a game of 'hide and seek' in Song XVI of *Songs to Joannes* (11). Whereas Stein's game is unmarred by perceptual obstructions, however, Loy's game is 'played' amongst 'love and cob-webs' (11). Love, both here and throughout *Songs to Joannes*, is not only 'the preeminent literateur' (20) but also a Steinian game:

> Shuttle-cock and battle-door
> A little pink-love
> And feathers are strewn (7)

In these three lines comprising the entirety of Song X, Loy combines the poetic play of Stein with the vocabulary of Bergson. The penultimate line is reminiscent of Stein's 'pink cut pink'—a phrase that has been read as a sexual euphemism akin to Loy's 'little pink-love'—while the last line recalls Stein's 'feather' that is 'trimmed […] by the light' in *Tender Buttons.*[85] The first line, meanwhile, recalls the 'shuttlecock between two battledores', an early version of badminton, that Bergson used to illustrate his theory that 'disorder [is] the substratum of order' in *Creative Evolution.*[86] The two battledores, according to Bergson, represent 'two species of order' while the shuttlecock represents 'the idea of disorder [that] arises in our mind whenever, seeking one of the two kinds of order, we find the other'.[87] 'We perceive that we are going to and fro like a shuttle between the two kinds of order, passing into the one just at the moment at which we might catch ourself in the other, and that the supposed absence of all order is really the presence of both, with, besides, the swaying of a mind that cannot rest finally in either'.[88] The mind, in other words, is caught between two kinds of order and enters a disordered state that 'is neither perceived nor conceived, a simple verbal

[85] See Scherr, p. 195; Stein, *Tender Buttons,* p. 25.
[86] Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* p. 234.
[87] Ibid.*,* p. 222.
[88] Ibid., p. 234.

entity' not unlike the verbal entities of *Tender Buttons* and *Songs to Joannes.*[89] The 'form' of the mind, in this framework, is precisely as the speaker of Song XXIX describes it: 'a blurr [sic]' (18) that does not always find what it seeks as it submits to Loy's futurist dynamic, 'hurtling against itself […] thrown beyond the synopsis of vision'.[90]

The Bergsonian significance of Loy's 'shuttle-cock and battle-door' is unmistakable. Yet Loy's hyphenated spelling of 'shuttle-cock' (not shuttlecock) and 'battle-door' (not 'battledore') should give us pause. As is so often the case with Loy's poetry, these two words act as double-entendres that simultaneously register the vocabulary of sex, the vocabulary of sport, and the vocabulary of war.[91] Here it's worth noting that Song X was published in the second and final instalment of *Songs to Joannes,* meaning it was composed between July 1915 and April 1917. During this period of international conflict, Loy's attitude towards the Great War took a dramatic turn. Once enthusiastic about the prospect of the war 'getting jolly serious', Loy was desperate for the war to end by September 1915.[92] Now, feeling 'utter defeat' in both 'the sex war' *and* the world war,[93] Loy steps beyond the 'God's door-mat' of Song II and opens the 'battle-door' to reveal a sexually intimate scene in the second and final stanza of Song XVII:

> Red a warm colour on the battle-field
> Heavy on my knees as a counter pane
> Count counter
> I counted the fringe of the towel
> Till two tassels clinging together
> Let the square room fall away
> From a round vacuum
> Dilating with my breath (11)

[89] Ibid., p. 222.
[90] Loy, 'Aphorisms on Futurism', p. 13.
[91] For more on Loy's wordplay, see Craig Dworkin, *Radium of the Word: A Poetics of Materiality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), pp. 68-75.
[92] Mina Loy quoted by Burke, p. 188. In a September 1915 letter to Carl Van Vechten, Loy confessed that she was 'hold[ing] on tight to [her] sanity till after the war'. YCAL MSS 1050, Box 76, Folder 1082, l. 24.
[93] Loy quoted by Burke, p. 185.

Here, battlefield blood seeps into the (presumably) green 'shutters' that hide the lovers in the preceding stanza.[94] The two colours—red and green—simultaneously complement and clash with one another, the red blood 'counter[ing]' the green battlefield 'on' to which it explodes.[95] In the following line, the 'field' becomes 'fringe[d]' by the border conflict between war-torn nations. Paradoxically, however, the brokenness of the border aids the bonding between 'two tassels' that meet at 'the only point at which the interests of the sexes merge […] the sexual embrace'.[96] Thus 'clinging together' on the fringe between battlefield and bedroom, the two lovers 'let the square room fall away'. Here, as in H.D.'s 'Orchard', the 'fall' can be interpreted as a lapsarian loss of innocence accompanied by the emergence of a postlapsarian point of view—one which is, to repeat the words of Ruskin, 'narrowed and broken by the inconsistencies of the human capacity'.[97] Such a reading is reinforced by the 'fall' found in the last line of Song XXXI, where each stanza begins with 'Crucifixion' before compelling womankind, 'arms […] wracked' like Christ on the cross, to 'Index extremities / In vacuum / To the unbroken fall' (20). Like a shuttlecock between two battledores, the postlapsarian speaker of Song XVII stands capable of 'index[ing] extremities'—contraction, on the one hand, and dilation on the other—in a 'vacuum' state of coexistence.

Contracting and dilating in succession, the 'round vacuum' of Song XVII has been widely interpreted as a metaphor for one of the speaker's body parts (mouth, pupil, vulva, etc.).[98] Both the speaker's body and its surroundings, in this interpretation, are neither static nor discrete. Instead, certain features expand and shrink as the speaker uses her body to move and use the objects in the room. By dropping to her knees, for example, the speaker sees the room from a

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[94] My reading of Song XVII is based on the premise that the speaker's shutters are as 'green' as Papini described them in 'Leavetaking' and as Loy describes them in 'The Costa San Giorgio' (1914).
[95] 'And the most of nature is green' according to Song XXX (19).
[96] Loy, 'Feminist Manifesto', p. 154.
[97] Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice III,* in *The Works of John Ruskin,* ed. by Cook and Wedderburn, XI (1904), p. 181.
[98] See Churchill, p. 199; See also Shreiber, p. 91. One exception is Julie Gonnering Lein, who reads the 'round vacuum' as a light bulb in 'Shades of Meaning: Mina Loy's Poetics of Luminous Opacity', *Modernism/modernity,* 18.3 (2011), 617-629 (p. 626) <doi:10.1353/mod.2011.0075>.

truncated point of view that makes the 'fringe of the towel' not only more visible, but also more meaningful by virtue of the novel affordances—counting (distraction), analogising (identification), and clinging (connection)—that she is now able to perceive. From the 'white towel' of Song XXVIII to the 'round vacuum' of Song XVII, Loy's oeuvre is replete with objects that have limited physical properties but unlimited potential for perception and action. Loy's objects, however, have not yet been analysed in relation to pragmatist philosophy despite the fact that Loy was surrounded by popularisers of pragmatism—the most significant example being Papini—when she lived in Florence. And while it is certainly possible that Loy encountered pragmatism independently of Papini, it's worth noting the potential influence of Papini's *Pragmatismo,* published just before the height of his affair with Loy.[99]

Much to James' satisfaction, Papini defined pragmatism as the '*unstiffening* of all our theories and beliefs by attending to their *instrumental* value'.[100] This definition, with its emphasis on flexibility of thought, certainly would have appealed to Loy as she looked for ways to expand her psychic area. Like James, who rejected the traditional idea of objects as 'flat "content", immediately given, and, as such, fixed' after reading Bergson's critique of 'stiff' and 'fixed concepts',[101] Loy sought to 'move away from all fixed concepts in order to advance'.[102] According to Loy, one of the 'fixed concepts' that must be rejected is the 'point of view' of the 'Dominator', which is always necessarily accompanied by a 'standard' set of perceptual 'habits' and 'aethetic [sic] contour[s]' that limit what is perceptible.[103] By 'shedding' these perceptual patterns, it becomes possible to develop new habits and push the aesthetic contours of perception to encompass a more 'democratic interchange and

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[99] In a 1914 letter to Luhan, Loy confessed that she was 'frightfully in love' with Papini according to Burke, p. 181.

[100] Papini, *Pragmatismo,* p. 91. Translated by William James in 'G. Papini and the Pragmatist Movement in Italy', *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods,* 3.13 (1906), 337-341 (p. 338 [emphasis original]) <doi:10.2307/2011869>.

[101] William James, *Manuscript Essays and Notes*, ed. by Frederick H. Burkhardt, Fredson Bowers, and Ignas K. Skrupskelis (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 104; Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics,* trans. by T.E. Hulme (London: Macmillan, 1913), p. 58. See Dunham for more on James' 'Bergsonian conversion'.

[102] Loy, 'Psycho-Democracy', p. 15.

[103] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

valuation of ideas' akin to the 'democratised […] subject matter' that Loy associated with modernism in her essay 'Gertrude Stein' (1924).[104] Loy's 'round vacuum'—at once a domestic object, a scientific concept, and a body part—is part of a pragmatist programme that sought, in the words of James, to 'mak[e] activity a part of the content [of the object] itself' by 'reintroducing agents [and] not leaving them behind the scenes'.[105] Like Papini, who was 'assisting at the *éclosion* of a great new mental epoch, life, religion, and philosophy in one' according to James writing to F.C.S. Schiller in 1906, Loy contributed to the eclosion of new qualities that transgressed traditional disciplinary boundaries.[106] Unlike Papini, however, Loy operated beyond the shame-laden language of shadows and shutters.

In *Songs to Joannes,* Loy takes James and Bergson's philosophical appetite for flexibility to a new level by unstiffening her approach to sex. In Bergson's *Creative Evolution,* sexuality is treated as nothing more than a reproductive faculty. And while Loy was invested in a eugenic ideal of reproduction, she valued sexuality beyond its procreative powers.[107] In *Songs to Joannes,* the affordances of sexuality are not only reproductive but also perceptual. In Song XIV, for instance, the speaker observes 'the impact of lighted bodies / Knocking sparks off each other / In chaos' (10). Long before Bergson explored the sensory dimensions of sexual pleasure in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1932), then, Loy took the perceptual affordances of sexual pleasure seriously.[108] By contrast, James remained sceptical of sexual pleasure, even in later works like *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902).[109] There, as Jeremy Carrette observes, 'the "amatory" body—

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[104] Ibid., p. 14; Loy, 'Gertrude Stein', p. 430.
[105] James, *Manuscript Essays and Notes,* p. 104.
[106] James to Schiller, 7 April 1906, in *The Letters of William James,* ed. by Henry James, 2 vols (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1920), II, p. 246 [emphasis original].
[107] Loy proclaimed that 'every woman of superior intelligence should realize her race-responsibility, in producing children in adequate proportion to the unfit or degenerate members of her sex' in 'Feminist Manifesto', p. 155.
[108] See Leonard Lawlor, 'Asceticism and Sexuality: "Cheating Nature" in Bergson's *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion',* in *Bergson, Politics, and Religion,* ed. by Alexander Lefebvre and Melanie White (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), pp. 144-158.
[109] Jeremy Carrette, '"A Perverse Kind of Pleasure": James, the Body, and Women's Mystical Experience', in *Feminist Interpretations of William James,* ed. by Tarver and Sullivan, pp. 210-234 (p. 217).

the sexual and excessive body'—is not considered equal to other bodily states of consciousness.[110] James's reluctance to engage with sexual pleasure reflects a nineteenth-century context that struggled to recognise sexuality as a legitimate mode of experience. Loy, however, boldly proclaimed that 'there is nothing impure in sex—except in the mental attitude to it' in her 'Feminist Manifesto'.[111] Here and throughout her oeuvre, Loy unstiffens sex, treating it as a mode of perception as valid as any other. For Loy, sexual pleasure has the capacity to expand perception, unlocking modes of awareness previously repressed or neglected. The 'round vacuum' that 'dilat[es]' with the speaker's breath in *Songs to Joannes* emerges as a manifestation of Loy's psycho-sexual expansion into forbidden, unforeseen, and unprecedented realms. Defiant and self-defining, the 'round vacuum' ultimately 'dilates' in accordance with the psycho-sexual sensations of an embodied agent who seeks to realise the full extent of her physiological potentiality.

A New Dimension

Much of what I have been suggesting about Loy's pragmatic proclivity for perceiving the 'myriad phenomenality' of everyday objects, sensations, and emotions is consistent with Virginia Kouidis' observation that Loy was less optimistic about her ability to 'transcend the fragmentations of earthly time and merge with Bergsonian *durée*' by the time she published 'Love Songs' (the first instalment of *Songs to Joannes*) in the inaugural issue of *Others* in 1915.[112] For all of the Bergsonian significance that we have identified in *Songs to Joannes,* the poet behind this collection went beyond Bergson in many respects. In addition to her progressive embrace of sexual pleasure, Loy's departure from Bergsonism includes a more pragmatic view of the spatiotemporal limitations of the perceiving body. Indeed, whereas Loy's earlier poem 'Parturition', as Kouidis describes it,

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[110] Ibid., p. 214.
[111] Loy, 'Feminist Manifesto', p. 156 [emphasis original].
[112] Virginia Kouidis, 'Rediscovering Our Sources: The Poetry of Mina Loy', *boundary 2,* 8.3 (1980), 167-188 (pp. 174-181) <doi:10.2307/302972>.

'depict[s] the movement of consciousness inward to discover the essence of self and outward to place the self in cosmic becoming', *Songs to Joannes* precludes the possibility of cosmic transcendence by virtue of a first-person speaker who never strays far from her bodily nucleus and the perceptual contraction it affords.[113] Taking her cue from James, who noted that 'the turnings of our attention form the nucleus of our inner self', Loy prioritised contracted attention over the 'endless flow' of Bergsonian duration—an act that proved key to the widening of her psychic fringe.[114]

While Loy embraced both 'involuntary attention' and 'voluntary attention' as a means of 'get[ting] in touch with' the 'whole "intelligence of [her] senses"', Bergson mourned the fact that attention can only capture 'snapshots of the changing reality'.[115] According to Bergson, the attention fixates on those aspects that it finds most 'interest[ing]' and regards them as separate and distinct elements, thus forcing them to break from the 'continuity of [the] background on which they are designed' and leaving the perceiver with an 'artificial' picture of pure duration.[116] The distinction between attention and duration is important here, for Bergson went to great lengths to differentiate the one from the other in *Creative Evolution*:

> Instead of a [durational] flux of fleeting shades merging into each other, [attention] perceives distinct and, so to speak, *solid* colors, set side by side like the beads of a necklace; it must perforce then suppose a thread, also itself solid, to hold the beads together.[117]

This passage must have left a great impact on Loy, for she went on to note how Bergson's 'beads of Time strung on the continuous flux of Being' were 'in the air' while she was composing *Songs to*

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[113] Kouidis, p. 174. Maeera Shreiber similarly notes that 'there is no salvation to be gained or earned' in *Songs to Joannes* 'since Loy's ontology does not include a transcendent disembodied version of the self' (p. 99).
[114] James, *Principles,* I, p. 447; Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* p. 3.
[115] Mina Loy, 'Modern Poetry', p. 16; Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 317. Contrary to Crangle, who notes that 'Bergson idealises […] a "mind camera" that cuts the world into contained, comprehensible images' in *Nethered Regions*, p. 62, Bergson celebrated the continuity of durational experience over the disconnected fragmentation of attention.
[116] Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* p. 3.
[117] Ibid., p. 3 [emphasis original].

Joannes—an experience she later described as 'like making jewellery'.[118] From the 'coloured glass' (3) of Song I to the 'string[ed]' and 'looped […] emotions' of Song XXX (19), *Songs to Joannes* threads the reader through a number of 'solid' situations separated not only by 34 roman numerals but also by several rows of dashes that interrupt the durational flow of Loy's epistolary songs.[119] The formal organisation of *Songs to Joannes,* therefore, departs dramatically from the uninterrupted kaleidoscope of sights and sounds that we will encounter in the next chapter of this thesis. Unlike Mirrlees, who placed great faith in her ability to render a durational 'flux of fleeting shades merging into each other' in her long poem *Paris,* Loy embraced the discrete nature of attention by dividing her *Songs* into sections that afford attentional intensity rather than durational extensity. No matter if the sequence is 'merely a symbol [of] the artificial character of the process by which the attention places clean-cut states side by side'—the act of making a necklace is truer to the way in which Loy 'follow[ed] the broken line of [her] acts of attention'.[120]

As her jewellery analogy makes clear, Loy was more interested in celebrating the fringed and fragmented aspects of attentive experience than perceiving the world as Papini's Man-God portrayed it in *Pragmatismo*: 'una sola cosa, immobile, omogenea' (one single thing, immobile, homogeneous [my translation]).[121] Such a world is devoid of perspectival difference, multi-dimensionality, instrumental variety, and evolutionary novelty—the very qualities that the speaker calls to Joannes' attention in the first stanza of Song XIII:

> Come to me There is something
> I have got to tell you and I can't tell
> Something taking shape
> Something that has a new name
> A new dimension
> A new use
> A new illusion (9)

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[118] Loy, 'Gertrude Stein', p. 305; Mina Loy, 'Interview with Paul Blackburn and Robert Vas Dias', in *Mina Loy,* ed. by Shreiber and Tuma, pp. 205-243 (p. 214).
[119] For an insightful discussion of Loy's dashes, see David Trotter, *The Literature of Connection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 126-127.
[120] Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* pp. 3-4.
[121] Papini, *Pragmatismo,* p. 65.

Here, an ambiguous 'something' emerges into being—something that 'can't' be told even though it 'has a new name'. Some critics have promoted the hypothesis that this something is a human foetus taking shape in the 'new dimension' of the speaker's reproductive body (her womb),[122] while others propose that it signifies something even more mysterious: a 'new [horizon] in technology and art' or a 'new consciousness or awareness'.[123] Loy herself, meanwhile, was even less specific regarding the nature of the emerging 'thing'. Like Stein, who could not name the 'something having meaning' and the 'something being struggling' that 'had been coming out of' Picasso and Matisse in 1912, Loy remained reticent about the 'new name' of the 'something taking shape', opting instead to gesture to its unfixed flexibility.[124]

Taken together, the four 'new' qualities of the 'something taking shape'—its new name, dimension, use, and illusion—register the influence that Marcel Duchamp and other New York Dadaists had on Loy after she moved to New York City in 1915. The 'new name', for starters, recalls the 'new title and point of view' that Duchamp attributed to his ready-made sculptures in the 1910s. Defending his ready-made *Fountain* (1917) in *The Blindman,* Duchamp described his creative process in terms strikingly similar to Song XIII: '[I] took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view [and] created a new thought for that object'.[125] *Fountain,* in Duchamp's interpretation, loses its 'useful significance' under its 'new name'. The 'something taking shape' in Song XIII, by contrast, has 'a new use' that distances it from Dada but brings it closer to a pragmatic system of thought that finds new affordances beyond ordinary use-values. Duchamp's *Fountain,* in a pragmatist interpretation, gains 'useful significance' as it becomes a vehicle for 'new thought' rather than a mere receptacle for

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[122] Shreiber, p. 100; Selinger, pp. 36-37.
[123] Lein, p. 620; Jeffrey Twitchell-Waas, 'Little Lusts and Lucidities: Reading Mina Loy's *Love Songs'*, in *Mina Loy,* ed. by Shreiber and Tuma, pp. 111-128 (p. 120).
[124] Gertrude Stein, 'Pablo Picasso', *Camera Work*, August 1912, pp. 29-30 (p. 29); Gertrude Stein, 'Henri Matisse', *Camera Work*, August 1912, pp. 23-25 (p. 24).
[125] Marcel Duchamp, 'The Richard Mutt Case', *The Blind Man,* May 1917, p. 5 [emphasis original].

urine. This 'new thought', however, can only be conceived in a 'new dimension' akin to the fourth dimension that preoccupied both Loy and Duchamp. And while Loy did not begin to write seriously about the fourth dimension until after Natalie Barney praised her 'perception of a fourth dimension' in 1929, traces of this theory can be found in early poems from the 'pure dimension' of '"The Starry Sky" of Wyndham Lewis' (c. 1918) to the 'Omniprevalent Dimension' of 'The Dead' (c. 1919).[126] Composed in 1915 or 1916, Song XIII constitutes Loy's first poetic reference to the fourth dimension, written in the wake of meeting a man who spoke 'very urgently about the fourth dimension' (to borrow Stein's 1913 description of Duchamp).[127] When Loy met Duchamp in 1915, the artist was just beginning work on *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)* (Figure 3.A). Duchamp intended the upper half of his glass sculpture to render the illusion of four-dimensional space.[128] By the time Song XIII was published in 1917, Duchamp had finished work on the upper half of his sculpture—the Bride, as he perceived her, evoked the fourth dimension by virtue of the non-Euclidean idea that a three-dimensional 'shadow' is the 'projection of a four-dimensional object'.[129]

'Something' with 'a new dimension' was indeed 'taking shape' around Loy in the 1910s, and it wasn't just Loy who struggled to find its name. Haweis, for instance, observed 'live indications of the fourth age' with 'God stand[ing] upon the brink of a new estate' that could not be named.[130] Myers similarly noted how society was 'failing to grasp a fourth [dimension];—or whatever', he added, 'be the law of that higher cognisance which begins to report fragmentarily to

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[126] Natalie Barney, *Adventures of the Mind,* trans. by John Spalding Gatton (New York: New York University Press, 1992), p. 158; Mina Loy, '"The Starry Sky" of Wyndham Lewis', in *The Lunar Baedeker* (Paris: Contact Press, 1923), 19-20 (p. 20); Mina Loy, 'The Dead', in *Others for 1919: An Anthology of the New Verse,* ed. by Alfred Kreymbourg (New York: Nicholas L. Brown, 1920), pp. 112-114 (p. 113). Loy's most thorough treatment of the fourth dimension can be found in her philosophical dialogue, 'Mi & Lo', written in the 1930s.
[127] Gertrude Stein to Mabel Dodge Luhan, 1913, quoted by Robert M. Crunden in *American Salons: Encounters with European Modernism, 1885-1917* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 392.
[128] See Linda Dalrymple Henderson, *Duchamp in Context: Science and Technology in the* Large Glass *and Related Works* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 81.
[129] Marcel Duchamp quoted by Pierre Cabanne in *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp,* trans. by Ron Padgett (New York: Viking, 1971), p. 40.
[130] Haweis, p. 16.

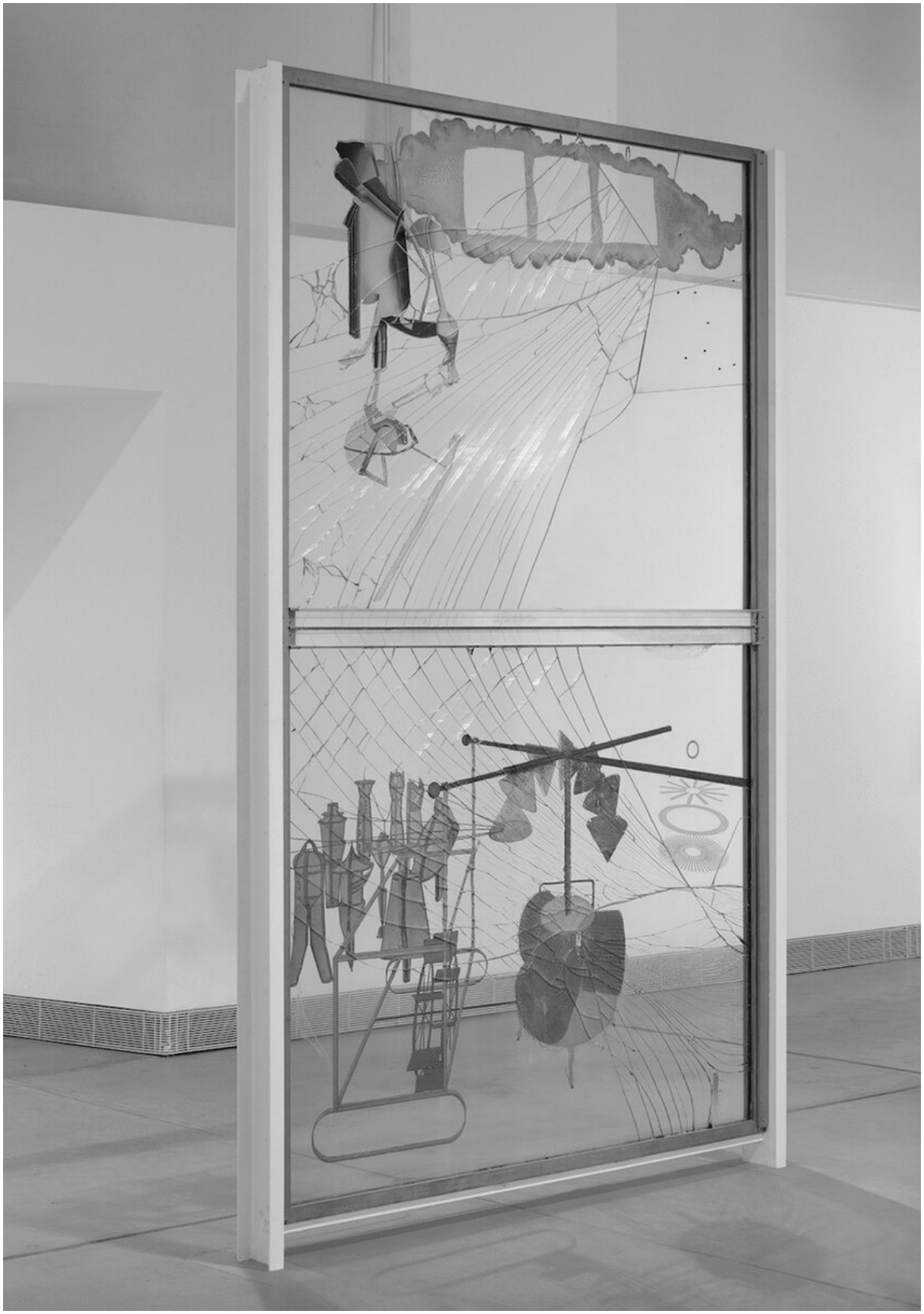

Figure 3.A. Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)*, 1915-1923, oil, varnish, lead foil, lead wire, and dust on two glass panels, Philadelphia Museum of Art

man that which his ordinary senses cannot discern'.[131] Loy's kindred silence regarding the name of the 'something taking shape' suggests that it could be anything depending upon who it is 'for'. Thus when the speaker begins to use more descriptive language in subsequent stanzas of Song XIII, she is also careful to specify whose perspective that language serves:

> It is ambient And it is in your eyes
> Something shiny Something only for you
> Something that I must not see
>
> It is in my ears Something very resonant
> Something that you must not hear
> Something only for me (9)

The passage above is a prime example of parallax—the 'apparent movement of an object resulting from a change in the vantage point from which it is viewed'.[132] Crucially, parallax depends upon a perceptible difference between at least two vantage points, in this case a speaker and her addressee. According to the speaker, the 'thing' in question is 'ambient'—a word Loy uses elsewhere to describe the colourless surroundings of a 'cipher' with no 'preferences'.[133] Seen from the 'eyes' of the addressee, however, the thing is 'shiny'—a word that not only recalls the 'shining indication of yellow' that we encountered in *Tender Buttons* but also the 'Policy' of 'Psycho-Democracy': 'to illuminate the earth with her people's eyes'.[134] Yet this shininess is 'only for' Joannes. 'Liv[ing] in [her] lantern' (3), the speaker cannot see what is in the 'God's eyes' of her addressee (8). Despite his seemingly privileged point of view, however, Joannes is deafened by his ocularcentrism, which precludes him from hearing the 'very resonant' sound that is 'in [the speaker's] ears'.[135]

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131 Myers, *Human Personality,* p. 203.
132 Colman, 'parallax, *n.*', in *Dictionary of Psychology,* n.p.; Jacqueline Vaught Brogan similarly reads this passage as an example of 'simultanism'—'the simultaneous representation of the different figures of a form seen from different points of view' (Marius de Zayas, 'Simultanism', *291,* March 1915, p. 5)—in *Part of the Climate: American Cubist Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 25.
133 In 'Aphorisms on Futurism', for example, Loy instructs her reader 'NOT to be a cipher in your ambient / but to color your ambient with your preferences' (p. 14).
134 See p. 59 of this thesis; Loy, 'Psycho-Democracy', p. 15.
135 Janet Lyon similarly notes how Joannes' 'blinkered conceptual apparatus limits his field to just a narrow strip of the poem's physical and emotional territory' (p. 157).

That the speaker associates herself with the ear rather than the eye in Song XIII is hardly surprising, for by this point she has already established a strong connection with non-ocular body parts including 'finger-tips' (4), 'lips' (4), 'lungs' (6), 'nostrils' (6), and 'flesh' (8)—not to mention a sensitivity 'to the shallow sound of dissonance / And boom of escaping breath' articulated in the lines immediately preceding Song XIII (8). Like 'Nature', to whom she has 'sidle[d] up', the speaker adopts 'blind eyes' akin to the 'eyeless offspring' found in her poem 'Der Blinde Junge' (c. 1922).[136] In Bishop and Phillips' interpretation of this poem, as in my interpretation of Song XIII, 'Loy displaces sight onto hearing'—not with 'a simple displacement from sight to sound' but with a sophisticated attempt 'to produce […] a writing that allows sound to evoke blindness'.[137] Whereas 'Der Blinde Junge' accomplishes a mimetic bond between sight and sound in the 'otherwise unbridgeable gap between sensate phenomena', however, Song XIII maintains the separation of the senses.[138] The ear, when isolated from the eye, has unique access to new dimensions—a hypothesis that Duchamp endorsed when he predicted that 'the young artist of tomorrow […] will pass through the looking glass of the retina to reach deeper mines of expression'.[139] We will soon discuss this hypothesis in relation to Mirrlees' *Paris*, but for now it suffices to note that the speaker of *Songs to Joannes* maintains sensory separation through perspectival parallax. No longer wishing Joannes to 'come' to her for fear of becoming 'welded' to his deafness, the speaker instead asks him to 'keep away' from her so that she can maintain her personal point of view and the 'aspirations' that accompany it (9). 'Please give me a push', she asks in the final stanza of the song, thereby signalling her desire for 'differentiation' (19) and eliminating any hope that the parallactic gap that 'something' occupies can be closed with language.

While the word 'parallax' was not in Loy's written vocabulary when she composed *Songs to Joannes,* the phenomenon was certainly well-known to her peers—the most obvious example being

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136 Mina Loy, 'Der Blinde Junge', in *Lunar Baedeker,* pp. 13-14 (p. 13).
137 Bishop and Phillips, p. 39.
138 Ibid., p. 40.
139 Marcel Duchamp quoted by Arturo Schwarz in *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1969), p. 19.

her friend Nancy Cunard, who published a long poem entitled *Parallax* with the Hogarth Press in 1925. In her epigraph, Cunard quoted the following passage from Sir Thomas Browne's *Christian Morals* (1716): 'many things are known, as some are seen, that is by Parallaxis, or at some distance from their true and proper beings'.[140] Here, Browne calls attention to the apparent 'distance' between perception and reality—a distance that he hoped to collapse through Christian morality. Much like Bergson, who sought to transcend the 'contingencies of action' and intellect in order to 'penetrat[e] into the inner nature' of life, Browne sought to overcome the fragmentary nature of parallax in order to get nearer to 'the central and vital interiours of truth'.[141] Cunard, on the other hand, celebrated parallax as a product of 'dual mood[s]', 'multipl[e] […] urges', and 'the will to fragments'.[142] The mathematician Henri Poincaré similarly praised the unsettling role that parallax plays in non-Euclidean geometry in *Science and Hypothesis* (1902), where he noted that proof of large stellar parallaxes ('the difference in position of a celestial object as seen from opposite sides of the Earth's orbit') would necessitate a modification of 'the laws of optics'.[143] Like Cunard and Poincaré, Loy embraced this parallactic gap as a productive site for the emergence of 'nascent' sensory experiences. In Song XVIII, for example, 'The nascent / Static / Of night' emerges 'Out of the severing / Of hill from hill' and 'The interim / Of star from star' (11-12). Thus conceived, 'the distance between the stars' is not as Haweis hypothesised: 'but the space between one atom and another'.[144] Instead, the parallactic gap between various points of view crescendos beyond containment.

Loy's refusal to resolve parallax in *Songs to Joannes* positions her, once again, at odds with Papini's model of psychological expansion. According to his 1913 memoir, Papini sought to 'dissolve himself into the real [so] as to feel its every atom and appearance kin of his kin [so that]

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140 Sir Thomas Browne, *Christian Morals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1716), p. 49.
141 Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* pp. 195-199; Browne, p. 50.
142 Nancy Cunard, *Parallax* (London: Hogarth Press, 1925), pp. 5-6.
143 Henri Poincaré, *Science and Hypothesis,* trans. by William John Greenstreet (London: Walter Scott Publishing, 1905), pp. 83-84; Ridpath (ed.), 'parallax', in *A Dictionary of Astronomy,* n.p.
144 Haweis, p. 3.

his finite limited body would be absorbed into the limitless infinite body of the universe'.[145] Here and elsewhere, Papini idealises a universe perceived not by a finite being with a particular point of view but by a Man-God who values homogeneity over perspectival parallax. Psychological expansion, in Papini's model, is achieved through a 'perpetual reaching out for the Whole, for the Universe'.[146] As Song XI makes clear, however, Papini's capital-U 'Universe / Is only / a colorless onion' that leaves 'a disheartening odour / About [his] nervy hands' (7). Here and throughout *Songs to Joannes,* Loy brings Papini back to the body that he has tried to abandon in an effort to transcend the perceptual fragmentations of parallax.

Rather than attempting to reconcile conflicting points of view with an all-seeing eye akin to Papini's Man-God perspective, Loy celebrated the parallactic gap between two perceivers as a new perceptual dimension from which novel names, uses, dimensions, and illusions could emerge and evolve. Perceptual contraction precludes reconciliation, for 'two or three' cannot be 'welded together' in Loy's system of thought without 'becom[ing] god', 'Depersonalized / Identical / Into the terrific Nirvana' devoid of spatiotemporal specificity (9-10).[147] Indeed, as Natalya Lusty notes, *Songs to Joannes* 'achieves […] a "parallax vision", a multiple and shifting perspective that refuses to dissolve the integrity of each view and, thus, continually deferring meaning, closure, arrival'.[148] The parallactic gap in Song XIII is left open because 'art', as Duchamp notes, 'is th[e] missing link, not the link which exists. It's not what you see that is art, art is the gap'.[149] 'The ego' of *Songs to Joannes* no longer 'succeeds' in performing the role it played in 'Parturition': 'unifying the positive and / negative poles of sensation / Uniting the opposing and resisting forces / In lascivious

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145 Giovanni Papini, *The Failure,* trans. by Virginia Pope (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1924), p. 202. First published in Italian as *Un uomo finito* (Florence: Libreria Della Voce, 1913).
146 Ibid., p. 34.
147 This is the same nirvana imagined by Papini, who claimed that the immobile and homogenous world of the Man-God is 'il vero *nirvana* a cui aspirano tutte la anime' (the true *nirvana* to which all souls aspire [my translation]) in *Pragmatismo,* p. 65 [emphasis original].
148 Natalya Lusty, 'Sexing the Manifesto: Mina Loy, Feminism and Futurism', *Women: A Cultural Review,* 19.3 (2008), 245-260 (p. 258) <doi:10.1080/09574040802413834>.
149 Duchamp quoted by Schwarz, p. 197.

revelation'.[150] Instead, like a shuttlecock between two Bergsonian battledores, it recognises two species of order without any desire for reconciliation. The same could be said of Pablo Picasso, who juxtaposed multiple points of view in his cubist paintings rather than blending them into a single unified perspective. Take, for example, Picasso's 1908 still life *Carafe and Three Bowls* (Figure 3.B). Here, the top of the carafe, apparently painted from eye level, tilts open towards a viewer who sees it from an angle slightly higher than eye level. Other obvious examples from Picasso's oeuvre include *Still Life with Lemons* (1907), *Pot, Wine-Glass and Book* (1908), and *Carafe, Jug, and Fruit Bowl* (1909)—all of which highlight the disparity in appearance that results from seeing an object from different vantage points.

By painting the parallactic shape of pots and pitchers rather than planets, Picasso portrayed parallax at a local level despite the fact that his scientific contemporaries (including H.D.'s father, Charles Leander Doolittle) were more concerned with quantitatively measuring parallax on a cosmic scale.[151] While scientists did not publish proof of large stellar parallaxes until c. 1918, Picasso exhibited his painterly experiments with parallax throughout the first decade of the twentieth century, triggering what Loy called 'the somersault of society, [which] dates from the day that [Picasso] so inevitably exhibited the portrait of a wine glass, "looking both ways at once"'.[152] Loy likely had Picasso's 1912 papier collé *Bottle and Wine Glass on a Table* (Figure 3.C) in mind when she wrote this statement in 1925, for by this point it had been purchased and publicised by her photographer friend Alfred Stieglitz.[153] In this collage, as in *Carafe and Three Bowls,* head-on and aerial views of a wine glass overlap and intersect with one another, casting Duchampian shadows (feathery pencil strokes) in multiple directions. Rather than blending the parallactic gap between these two 'ways' of 'looking' into nonexistence, Picasso's papier collé celebrates the gap as 'a new

[150] Loy, 'Parturition', p. 93.
[151] See Doolittle, *A Treatise,* pp. 119-153.
[152] Mina Loy, 'Gate Crashers of Olympus', in *Stories and Essays*, ed. by Crangle, pp. 230-231 (p. 230).
[153] See Anon., 'Exhibition "Arrangements" at "291"', *Camera Work,* October 1916, pp. 65-68 (p. 67).



Figure 3.B. Pablo Picasso, *Carafe and Three Bowls*, 1908, oil on cardboard, Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

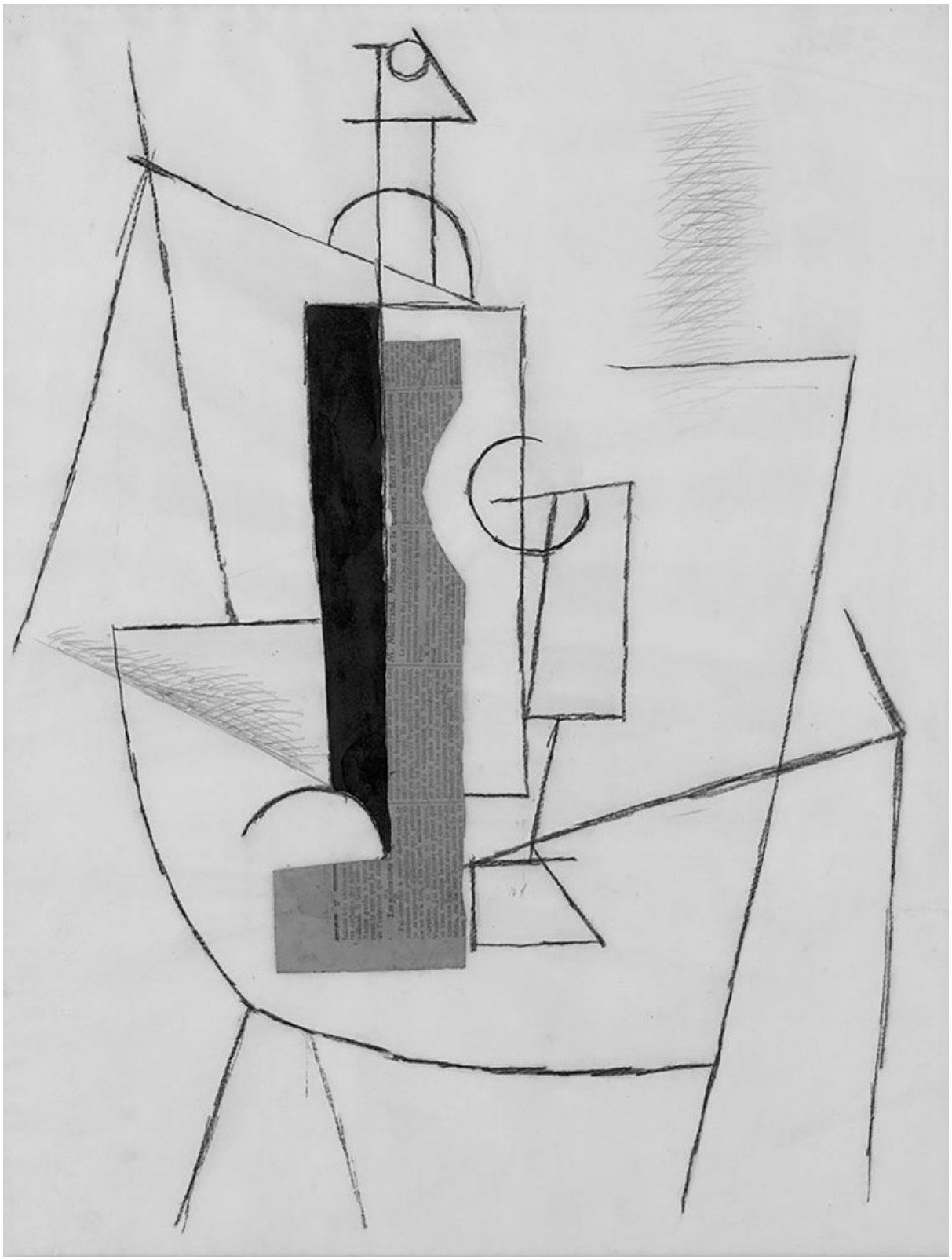

Figure 3.C. Pablo Picasso, *Bottle and Wine Glass on a Table,* 1912, charcoal, ink, cut and pasted newspaper, and graphite on paper, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City

dimension' that cannot be reduced to a single point of view. It should come as no surprise, then, that the titles of Picasso's still lifes typically contain a total of three or four positive terms—their presence indicates the existence of multiple overlapping dimensions at work in the perception of everyday objects. Similarly, in *Songs to Joannes,* Loy gestured to the parallactic nature of her perceptual environment by placing roman numerals at the beginning of each poem. Unlike the title of Picasso's *Carafe and Three Bowls*, however, the title of Song XIII leaves its audience to draw their own conclusions regarding the name of the 'thing' that changes so dramatically depending upon the perceiver and their point of view. Thus refusing to fix the object to a single name, Loy preserved the integrity of both perspectives and their parallactic relationship to one another.

Conclusion

The futurists with whom Loy associated did not share her optimism regarding the poet's ability to achieve 'momentary experience[s] of extended consciousness'.[154] In 1912, for example, Marinetti proclaimed that 'human psychology [is] now exhausted' and so must be 'destroyed'.[155] Two years later, in a 1914 article entitled "Il cerchio si chiude' (The Circle is Closing), Papini voiced his kindred concern that 'the circle of the creative mind' was 'closing' across painting, literature, music, and philosophy.[156] Composed in the immediate aftermath of Papini's article, *Songs to Joannes* suggests otherwise. Like Umberto Boccioni, whose reaction to Papini can be summed up by the title of his swift rebuttal—'Il cerchio non si chiude!' (The Circle Isn't Closing!)—the author of *Songs to Joannes* maintained faith in what she called 'the unsurpassable openness of the circle'.[157] For

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154 Mina Loy Papers, YCAL MSS 6, Box 7, Folder 187 [emphasis original].
155 F.T. Marinetti, 'Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature', trans. by Lawrence Rainey in *Futurism: An Anthology,* ed. by Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 119-124 (p. 122). First published in Italian as an independent leaflet entitled 'Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista'.
156 Giovanni Papini, 'The Circle is Closing', trans. by Rainey in *Futurism: An Anthology,* ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 173-175 (p. 173). First published in Italian as 'Il cerchio si chiude' in *Lacerba,* 15 February 1914, pp. 49-50.
157 Umberto Boccioni, 'Il cerchio non si chiude!', *Lacerba,* 1 March 1914, pp. 67-69; Loy, 'The Dead', p. 113.

Loy, there was 'no limit' to the 'coherent variability' of 'the straight line and the circle'.[158] In keeping with this belief, *Songs to Joannes* not only features straight lines in the form of em dashes, but was also intended to be 'printed on one side of each page only [with] a large round in the middle of the blank reverse of each page'.[159] Loy's typographical vision never came to fruition, but circular and spherical imagery can still be discerned throughout her songs, with examples including the 'colorless onion' of Song XI, the 'weak eddy' of Song XV (10), the 'round vacuum' of Song XVII, and the bodies that 'twiddle […] round and round' in Song XXV (15). Like these circles and spheres, the circular openings of the body are porous and productive—'the milk of the Moon' (7), 'drivel' (10), 'tear drops' (14), 'cymophonous [sic] sweat' (17), and 'homophonous hiccoughs' (18) escape from the vulva, mouth, eyes, and pores while 'scum' (6), 'disheartening odour[s]' (7), and 'pollen' (17) enter into the nostrils. Abject as they may seem, these are the products of 'Life' as Loy perceived it: 'a jolly noise and a rush and sequence of ample reactions'.[160] Amplitude, super-abundance, and excess are Loy's articles of faith, found not in the futurist 'derision of Humanity' but in the 'myriad phenomenality' of a body that is prone to parallax because of its particular position in space and time.

Loy's optimism about the mind's capacity to open and expand, first expressed in her c. 1915 letter quoted at the beginning this chapter, never faltered. In 'Psycho-Democracy', for example, Loy proclaimed that 'it w[ould] be a simple task to persuade great peoples to the effort of self realization in a life amplifying ideal'.[161] Here it is clear that 'realization' and 'amplification' held great weight for Loy, for she employed the same terms (albeit with anglicised spelling) in her 1915 letter to Van Vechten. In Loy's aesthetic system, 'realisation' can be understood as the process of making the full amplitude of life *real*—salient, perceptible, aesthetic. To realise all aspects of an embodied self—its emotions, impulses, reactions, desires, and intentions—is to

[158] Loy, 'Aphorisms on Futurism', p. 13.
[159] Loy to Van Vechten, c. 1916, YCAL MSS 1050, Box 76, Folder 1082.
[160] Loy, 'In . . . Formation', p. 7.
[161] Loy, 'Psycho-Democracy', p. 19.

realise the 'really tremendous phenomena of life' that Loy envisioned in her letter to Van Vechten. There, we recall, Loy promised to 'make a progression of realisations' in *Songs to Joannes*—a promise fulfilled by virtue of a Myersian 'proto-plasm' that 'raves' and 'evolves' to reveal the unrealised. Comprised of a bodily nucleus surrounded by a psychic fringe, the 'proto-plasm' of *Songs to Joannes* precipitates a perceptual evolution capable of progressing beyond the threshold of ordinary awareness.

Inspired by new developments in dynamic psychology, Loy celebrated the body as the only vehicle capable of inducing psychological expansion. In a 1907 article on the 'New Thought', Assagioli described dynamic psychology's embrace of the body like this: 'il corpo non viene più ritenuto come un ostacolo allo sviluppo della coscienza, come il carceriere dell'anima; esso anzi viene considerato come necessario strumento nell'opera dello svolgimento delle facoltà interne' (the body is no longer considered as an obstacle to the development of consciousness, as the jailer of the soul; rather, it is considered as a necessary instrument in the work of developing the internal faculties [my translation]).[162] Operating outside of scientific and psychological circles, Loy embraced the body to a level that would have made James, Bergson, and Myers blush. The body, in *Songs to Joannes*, is transgressive, unruly, sexual, and excessive. Meanwhile, the body embraced by dynamic psychologists is always polite and often prudish. Rather than limiting herself to the body's higher functions, Loy reimagined concepts from dynamic psychology in more visceral terms. James' 'stream of thought', Bergson's 'flowing reality', and Myers' 'supraliminal current of consciousness', for example, are transformed in the first song of *Songs to Joannes* into a 'river' that 'run[s] no fresher / Than a trickle of saliva' (3).[163] Here and throughout the collection, Loy rejects 'petty pruderies' in an attempt to realise the 'myriad phenomenality' of a perceiving body that departs from patriarchal models of perception through its embrace of sexuality, partiality, terrestriality, temporality, and vulnerability. Having escaped Papini's capital-U Universe devoid of

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[162] Assagioli, *Nuovo pensiero*, p. 11.
[163] James, *Principles,* I, p. 224; Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* p. 344; Myers, *Human Personality,* p. 15 [emphasis excised].

perspectival difference, the speaker of *Songs to Joannes* ultimately progresses into a parallactic dimension that anticipates the polyphonic play space we will encounter in Mirrlees' *Paris*.

CHAPTER FOUR

Hope Mirrlees' *Paris*:

An Aural Kaleidoscope

In the following passage from a 1926 article entitled 'Listening in to the Past', Hope Mirrlees conceptualised an 'aural kaleidoscope' capable of 'controll[ing] the old fragments of human speech':

> If the time ever comes when we can listen in to the past, I shall immediately order a wireless, though this will be due more to my love of a kaleidoscope than to my love of the past. My knowledge of the relation between sound-waves and ether-waves is of the vaguest, nor do I know anything about electricity, magnetism, or the Quantum Theory, nevertheless I am sure it will be very difficult to control the old fragments of human speech blown in from the waste places of the universe to be lost again for another thousand years. No, it will be an aural kaleidoscope, rather than a lesson in history: disparate fragments of Cockney, Egyptian, Babylonian, Provençal, ever forming into new patterns for the ear, but not for the mind.[1]

Given that the kaleidoscope has long been heralded as an instrument that privileges the eye over the other organs of perception, Mirrlees' 'aural kaleidoscope' might sound radically unconventional.[2] Yet the inventor of the kaleidoscope, Sir David Brewster, originally intended his instrument to 'please the eye […] in the same manner as the ear is delighted by the combination of musical sounds' when he patented the kaleidoscope in 1817.[3] According to Brewster, 'the Kaleidoscope realizes, in the fullest manner, the formerly chimerical idea of an ocular harpsichord'—that is, 'a common harpsichord, fitted up in such a manner, that when a certain

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[1] Hope Mirrlees, 'Listening in to the Past', in *Collected Poems,* ed. by Sandeep Parmar (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2011), pp. 85-89 (p. 85).
[2] See Aimée Boutin, *City of Noise: Sound and Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), p. 15.
[3] David Brewster, 'Dr. Brewster's Patent for a Kaleidoscope', *New Monthly Magazine,* 1 December 1817, pp. 444-445 (p. 445).

sound is produced by striking the keys, a colour related to that sound is at the same instant exhibited to the eye'.[4] Despite Brewster's repeated attempts to show how the kaleidoscope's combination of colours and forms could accompany a musical arrangement, the aural origins of the instrument were lost by the time Charles Baudelaire famously described the *flâneur* as a 'kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness' in 1863.[5] Four years later, Alfred Delvau similarly described the city of Paris as a place in which 'you're sure to have your eyes distracted […] a kaleidoscope where objects and people, diversely, but always picturesquely coloured, change each step and each instant'.[6] Sentiments like these can be found throughout nineteenth-century literature—particularly in French texts written from the perspective of the *flâneur*. And while the novelty of the kaleidoscope as a literary analogy wore off by the end of the nineteenth century, its strength was renewed at the turn of the next century by avant-garde artists seeking to articulate the vision behind their fragmented aesthetic. Take, for example, *Simultaneous Contrasts: Sun and Moon* (Figure 4.A). Painted by Robert Delaunay (the Orphic cubist who argued that 'auditory perception is insufficient for our knowledge of the Universe') in 1912, the kaleidoscopic scene emerges through a lens-like tondo that is the product of Delaunay's ocularcentric belief that 'the Eye is our highest sense, the one which communicates most closely with our brain and consciousness'.[7]

That Mirrlees was sceptical of ocularcentric sentiments like Delaunay's is clear from her archival notebooks, where she casts doubt on Joseph Addison's conviction that 'our sight is the most perfect and delightful of all our senses […] the sense which furnishes the imagination with

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[4] David Brewster, *A Treatise on the Kaleidoscope* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1819), pp. 131-134.
[5] Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1965), p. 9.
[6] Alfred Delvau quoted in English by Gordon Hughes in *Resisting Abstraction: Robert Delaunay and Vision in the Face of Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), p. 156.
[7] Delaunay, 'Light', p. 82; Delaunay's decision to paint *Simultaneous Contrasts* as a tondo can be traced to the experiments he conducted in a dark room with the shutters nailed shut. As Blaise Cendrars recounts: 'Having prepared his canvas and ground his colors he bore a small hole into the shutter with a hand drill … he began to paint it, to study it, to decompose it, to analyze it, in its elements of form and colour'. Quoted in English by Hughes, p. 53.



Figure 4.A. Robert Delaunay, *Simultaneous Contrasts: Sun and Moon,* 1913, oil on canvas, Museum of Modern Art, New York City

its ideas'.[8] According to Mirrlees, Addison's theory is only 'supposedly' true—a point that Stein, H.D., and Loy certainly would have agreed with. More than any other poet in this thesis, however, Mirrlees' poetry resonates with what Martin Jay calls 'the denigration of vision in twentieth-century French thought'.[9] And nowhere in Mirrlees' work is this denigration felt as strongly as in *Paris: A Poem* (1920), where the polyphonic soundscape of interwar Paris threatens to drown the perceiver with nonstop noise. In order to make sense of her sonic surroundings, Mirrlees adopted the same strategy that French language poets like Stéphane Mallarmé, Guillaume Apollinaire, Pierre Reverdy, Jean Cocteau, and Blaise Cendrars adopted at the turn of the twentieth century: experimental typography. For Mirrlees, as for her French predecessors and peers, experimental typography afforded the ability to visualise that which is verbal—the same ability that French phoneticians like Édouard-Léon Scott de Martinville and Jean-Pierre Rousselot sought to cultivate with the invention of instruments that claimed to make sound visible to the eyes at the turn of the twentieth century. As Ezra Pound recounts: 'there was in those days still a Parisian research for technique […] [Rousselot] made a machine for measuring the duration of verbal components. A quill or tube held in the nostril, a less shaved quill or other tube in the mouth, and your consonants signed as you spoke them'.[10] Writing *Paris* in the wake of such experiments, and in the wake of a war that 'did much to reorganize its participants' psychological lives in terms of sound rather than sight', Mirrlees shared the French understanding of sound as something that necessitated a new spatiotemporal orientation both on and off the page.[11]

Yet the denigration of vision was not limited to French thought in the early twentieth century, for it was also present in Russian thought after Helena Blavatsky voiced her theory that

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[8] Hope Mirrlees Papers, 6/4/1.
[9] Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
[10] Ezra Pound, *Polite Essays* (London: Faber, 1937), p. 129.
[11] Steven Connor, 'The Modern Auditory I', in *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Middle Ages to the Present,* ed. by Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 203-223 (p. 209).

'*the spoken word has a potency unknown to, unsuspected and disbelieved in,* by the modern "sages"' in 1888.[12] Not only was Mirrlees familiar with Blavatsky, but she was also familiar with the work of Alexey Mikhailovich Remizov, Leo Tolstoy, Nikolai Gogol, D.S. Mirsky, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Vladimir Mayakovsky—all of whom contributed to the denigration of vision in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian thought.[13] And while *Paris* contains very few allusions to Russian thought and literature, it's important to note that the poem was composed during Mirrlees' study of Russian at the École des Langues Orientales in Paris—a city that was smitten with 'Russomania', Rebecca Beasley's term for the modernist fascination with Russian culture.[14] As Beasley notes, one of the many British Russophiles of the early twentieth century was Mirrlees' partner, Jane Harrison.[15] According to Harrison writing in 1919 (the year that *Paris* was composed), 'the Russian' experiences life as it should be experienced: 'not as a forward march but as a ballet, not as an inevitable evolution but as a kaleidoscope phantasmagoria'.[16] In 'The Philosophy of the Kaleidoscope' (1922), for example, the Russian painter Kazimir Severinovich Malevich proclaimed that 'man, like everything in nature represents one substance in an endless movement of phenomena. Nature is a kind of kaleidoscope into which one little piece of painted glass has been thrown and which creates a multitude of form-structures'.[17] As Harrison notes, the only two things that can 'arrest and fix this shifting kaleidoscope' are 'art which makes the image, [and] literature which crystallizes attributes and functions'.[18] If the former is the function of the imagist, the latter is the function of the futurist. As my previous chapter makes clear, Loy participated in the Italian

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[12] H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy,* 2 vols (London: Theosophical Publishing Company, 1888), I (1888), p. 307 [emphasis original].
[13] See Hope Mirrlees, 'Some Aspects of the Art of Alexey Mikhailovich Remizov', in *Collected Poems*, ed. by Parmar, pp. 75-84 (p. 75); See also Annabel Robinson, *The Life and Work of Jane Ellen Harrison* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 278-305.
[14] Rebecca Beasley, *Russomania: Russian Culture and the Creation of British Modernism, 1881-1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).
[15] Ibid., p. 246.
[16] Jane Harrison, *Aspects, Aorists, and the Classical Tripos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1919), p. 34.
[17] Kazimir Severinovich Malevich, 'The Philosophy of the Kaleidoscope', in *The World as Non-Objectivity: Unpublished Writings, 1922-1925,* ed. by Troels Andersen, trans. by Xenia Glowacki-Prus and Edmund T. Little (Copenhagen: Borgen, 1976), pp. 11-33 (p. 19).
[18] Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), p. 164.

strand of futurism. Mirrlees, on the other hand, was in close dialogue with the Russian strand of futurism during the composition of *Paris*. And while critics of *Paris* tend to privilege the Parisian context of the poem, the Russian futurists shaped Mirrlees' perceptual aesthetic so dramatically that they cannot be ignored.

Given the way in which *Paris* is so thoroughly rooted in the city after which it is named, it should come as no surprise that the poem has frequently been read as a 'rare example of a direct connection between English-language poetry and the Parisian avant-garde'.[19] Since Peter Howarth thus described *Paris* with no mention of its Russian context in 2011, scholars like Nina Enemark, Sean Pryor, Oliver Tearle, Nell Wasserstrom, and Daniel Matore have similarly emphasised the connection between the poem's place of composition (Rue de Beaune in Paris) and its place of publication (Hogarth House in London).[20] These studies have significantly informed my reading of *Paris*, not least when it comes to the poem's Bergsonian and Bloomsburian aspects. Yet, as Marilyn Schwinn Smith notes, the 'Bergsonian poetic' that Mirrlees and Harrison cultivated in the early twentieth century was intimately connected with their ongoing study of Russian linguistics and literature.[21] In their influential introductions to Mirrlees' *Paris* and her *Collected Poems*, Julia Briggs and Sandeep Parmar similarly cite Mirrlees and Harrison's shared 'affinity for all things Russian' as a major aspect of *Paris*, and it is largely thanks to their work that we can begin to better understand Mirrlees' engagement with avant-garde Russian, French, and British culture.[22] As we shall see, many of the most celebrated aspects of *Paris*—such as its playful typography, its

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[19] Peter Howarth, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernist Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 4.

[20] Nina Enemark, 'Antiquarian Magic: Jane Harrison's Ritual Theory and Hope Mirrlees's Antiquarianism in *Paris*', in *Modernist Women Writers and Spirituality*, ed. by Anderson, Radford, and Walton, pp. 115-133 (p. 119); Sean Pryor, 'A poetics of occasion in Hope Mirrlees's *Paris', Critical Quarterly,* 61.1 (2019), 37-53 (p. 39) <doi:10.1111/criq.12452>; Oliver Tearle, *The Great War,* The Waste Land, *and the Modernist Long Poem* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), p. 42; Nell Wasserstrom, 'Disfiguration and Desire: The Erotic Historiography of Hope Mirrlees's *Paris: A Poem*', *Modern Philology,* 118.1 (2020), 107-129 (p. 112) <doi:10.1086/709117>; Daniel Matore, *The Graphics of Verse: Experimental Typography in Twentieth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), pp. 135-137.

[21] Marilyn Schwinn Smith, '"Bergsonian Poetics" and the Beast: Jane Harrison's Translations from the Russian', *Translation and Literature,* 20.3 (Autumn 2011), 314-333 <doi:10.3366/tal.2011.0034>.

[22] Julia Briggs, 'Hope Mirrlees and Continental Modernism', in *Gender in Modernism,* ed. by Scott, pp. 261-303 (p. 266); Sandeep Parmar, 'Introduction' to *Collected Poems,* ed. by Parmar, pp. ix-liii (p. l).

perceptual plasticity, and its polyphonic soundscape—can be traced not only to the avant-garde circles of Paris and London but also to St. Petersburg, where the likes of Remizov and Malevich were similarly experimenting with typography, plasticity, and polyphony in works like *Maroun* (1910) and *A Game in Hell* (1914). Inspired by this kaleidoscopic aesthetic, *Paris* constitutes Mirrlees' attempt to fulfil Harrison's 'hope' that 'there will come one day a Futurist […] who will cast the spell, and set the motors and aeroplanes sleep-walking'.[23] Soon after Harrison voiced this hope in *Alpha and Omega* (1915),[24] Mirrlees put the 'Tuileries […] in a trance' and sent 'the winds' to 'sleep' in *Paris*—a manifestation of her futuristic desire to freeze and fix the kaleidoscopic soundscape of her perceptual environment onto the space of the page.[25]

The Toy of Circumstance

Just a few years after Delaunay debuted his kaleidoscopic paintings, Alvin Langdon Coburn debuted a kaleidoscopic form of photography called vortography. According to Coburn, the vortograph 'is composed of three mirrors fastened together to form a triangle, and resembling to a certain extent the Kaleidoscope—and I think many of us can remember the delight we experienced with this scientific toy. The mirrors acted as a prism splitting the image formed by the lens into segments'.[26] In Coburn's 1917 vortograph *The Eagle* (Figure 4.B), bits of crystal, glass, and metal are kaleidoscopically reflected and refracted to form a semi-symmetrical picture with a shallow depth of field. As Anne McCauley notes, however, 'only a segment of the images reflected

[23] Jane Harrison, *Alpha and Omega* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1915), p. 218.
[24] *Alpha and Omega* is a collection of essays—some or all of which were published in periodical or pamphlet form prior to the publication of the collection. The origin of 'Art and Mr. Clive Bell', the essay in which my quotation appears, is currently unknown though it appears to have been written in response to Bell's *Art* (1914).
[25] Hope Mirrlees, *Paris: A Poem* (Richmond: Hogarth Press, 1920), pp. 4, 21. All further references to this edition will be given after quotations in the text of this chapter.
[26] A.L. Coburn, *Alvin Langdon Coburn, Photographer: An Autobiography* (London: Faber, 1966), p. 102.



Figure 4.B. Alvin Langdon Coburn, *The Eagle,* 1917,
gelatin silver print, private collection

in the viewing tube is selected, so that the deadening mandala of circular kaleidoscopic images is never present' in the vortograph.[27] For Pound, this was precisely the value of the vortograph: whereas normal photographers are unable to 'select' or 'emphasise' specific aspects of the perceptual environment because the photograph 'has to put in everything, or nearly everything', the vortograph allows the vortographer to 'take the elements of design from what is in front of the camera, shut out what [they] don't want, twist the "elements" onto the part of the plate where [they] want 'em, and then fire'.[28] Thus conceived, the vortograph differs from the photograph *and* the kaleidoscope insofar as both instruments resemble the 'TOY of circumstance' that Pound disparaged in the following passage from 'Vortex' (1914):

> You may think of [man] as the TOY of circumstance, as the plastic substance RECEIVING impressions. OR you may think of him as DIRECTING a certain fluid force against circumstance, as CONCEIVING instead of merely observing and reflecting.[29]

Within this dichotomy we might liken the first man to a Baudelairean 'kaleidoscope endowed with consciousness' and the second man to a vortographer. In the first approach, 'man' is primarily impressionistic—a modernist 'code word', as Julian Murphet notes in *Modernism and Masculinity* (2014), for 'languid nineteenth-century aesthetic passivity'.[30] In the second approach, man is primarily expressionistic—capable of 'applying a particular and suitable force' as he 'conceives' a new 'expression of life'.[31] Pound clearly favoured this latter approach, as did Coburn.[32] Mirrlees, on the other hand, flirted with both modes of perceiving during the period in which *Paris* was composed.

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[27] Anne McCauley, 'Witch Work, Art Work, and the Spiritual Roots of Abstraction: Ezra Pound, Alvin Langdon Coburn and the Vortographs', in *Vorticism: New Perspectives,* ed. by Mark Antliff and Scott W. Klein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 156-174 (p. 166).
[28] Ezra Pound, 'Art Notes: Kinema, Kinesis, Hepworth, Etc.', *New Age,* 26 September 1918, p. 352; Ezra Pound to Homer L. Pound, 22 September 1916, quoted in *Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts,* ed. by Harriet Zinnes (New York: New Directions, 1980), p. 293.
[29] Ezra Pound, 'Vortex', *BLAST,* June 1914, pp. 153-154 (p. 153).
[30] Julian Murphet, 'Towards a Gendered Media Ecology', in *Modernism and Masculinity,* ed. by Natalya Lusty and Julian Murphet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 53-68 (p. 58).
[31] Pound, 'Affirmations', p. 277.
[32] For more details, see McCauley, pp. 158-159.

Rather than erring on either side of Pound's dichotomy, Mirrlees conflated Pound's terms in the preface to her first novel, *Madeleine, One of Love's Jansenists* (1919). Here, Mirrlees set out her aesthetic agenda like this:

> Life is like a blind and limitless expanse of sky, for ever dividing into tiny drops of circumstances that rain down, thick and fast, on the just and unjust alike. Art is the dauntless, plastic force that builds up stubborn, amorphous substance cell by cell, into the frail geometry of a shell.[33]

Mirrlees' conception of 'life' in the passage above may have been formed in conversation with one of her favourite Russian writers, Alexey Mikhailovich Remizov, who described the perceptual experience of 'everyday life' as 'thousands of minute pinprick impressions' in a 1903 letter to his wife.[34] According to Smith, Mirrlees and Harrison did not become personally acquainted with Remizov until he visited them at their home in Paris in March 1924.[35] Given that the two women invited Remizov to their home just months after he moved to Paris, however, it is likely that Mirrlees was already familiar with his work by the time she wrote her Remizovian description of life. Regardless of whether Remizov influenced Mirrlees, however, it's worth noting that she was not alone in understanding life as a shower of circumstances. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, the first sentence in the passage above likely inspired Virginia Woolf's impressionistic definition of life as 'an incessant shower of innumerable atoms'.[36] Mirrlees' conception of art in the second sentence, however, was very different from Woolf's. According to Mirrlees, the artist's task is not to 'convey', 'record', and 'trace' impressions as they fall upon the mind, but to apply the 'constructive force of a human consciousness' to 'trivial, disorderly happenings', 'arrang[ing] them

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33 Mirrlees, *Madeleine,* p. vii.
34 Alexey Mikhailovich Remizov to Serafima Pavlovna, 27 May 1903, quoted in English by Avril Pyman in 'Petersburg Dreams', in *Aleksej Remizov: Approaches to a Protean Writer,* ed. by Greta N. Slobin (Columbus, OH: Slavica, 1987), pp. 51-112 (p. 56).
35 Marilyn Schwinn Smith, 'Bears in Bloomsbury: Jane Ellen Harrison and Russia', in *Virginia Woolf: Three Centenary Celebrations*, ed. by Maria Candida Zamith and Luisa Flora (Porto: Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 2007), pp. 119-144 (p. 125).
36 Emma Felin, 'A New Source of Inspiration for Virginia Woolf's "Modern Novels"', *Notes and Queries*, 71.1 (March 2024), 116-117 <doi:10.1093/notesj/gjad139>; Virginia Woolf, 'Modern Novels', *Times Literary Supplement,* 10 April 1919, pp. 189-190 (p. 189).

into the pattern of logic or of drama'.[37] Here, Mirrlees' expressionistic conception of the artist seems to have been inspired by Harrison, who declared in *Ancient Art and Ritual* (1913) that modern art must not only 'embody' life (as impressionist art had done) but also 'purge and order it, by complexities of tone and rhythm hitherto unattempted'.[38] According to Harrison, it is not the post-impressionists but rather another 'section of the Expressionists' who are 'in the main right' when it comes to 'purging and ordering' life: 'the Futurists'.[39] By 'futurists', Harrison did not necessarily mean Marinetti, Papini, Severini, and Boccioni (the key players of Italian futurism). Instead, it is more likely that she meant Vladimir Mayakovsky, David Burliuk, Alexei Kruchenykh, and Victor Khlebnikov—all of whom participated in the Russian futurist movement. Sound, for these writers, was to be stripped of its semantic sense, resulting in a 'transrational language […] which does not have any definite meaning'.[40] Similarly, for Mirrlees, sound had the capacity to make new patterns 'for the ear, but not for the mind'—an idea that Harrison endorsed when she 'pray[ed] with Keats: "Oh, for a life of sensations, rather than thought!"'.[41]

While the Russian futurists' effort to grasp language at the sonic level clearly had an impact on both Harrison and Mirrlees, their two favourite Russian writers—Tolstoy (who died before the advent of Russian futurism) and Remizov (who mingled with the likes of Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh)—did not identify as futurists. Still, Harrison was of the opinion that 'Tolstoy's theory of Art […] approaches the dogmas of the Futurist' and Remizov remained in close contact with the futurists of St. Petersburg despite the fact that they deemed him 'insignificant' in their tongue-in-cheek manifesto, 'Slap in the Face of Public Taste' (1912).[42] When it came to the Russian

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[37] Woolf, 'Modern Novels', p. 189; Mirrlees, *Madeleine,* p. vii.
[38] Jane Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual* (New York: Henry Holt, 1913), p. 233.
[39] Ibid., p. 236.
[40] Alexei (Aleksander) Kruchenykh, 'Declaration of the Word as Such', in *Russian Futurism Through its Manifestoes, 1912-1928,* ed. and trans. by Anna Lawton and Herbert Eagle (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 67-68 (p. 67).
[41] Harrison, *Alpha,* p. 236.
[42] Harrison, *Ancient Art,* p. 238; Julia Friedman, *Beyond Symbolism and Surrealism: Alexei Remizov's Synthetic Art* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010), p. xxvii; D. Burliuk and others, 'Slap in the Face of Public Taste', in *Russian Futurism,* ed. by Lawton and Eagle, pp. 51-52 (p. 51).

futurists' experiments with the materiality of the written word, Remizov's work was far from insignificant.[43] When it came to what Johanna Drucker has identified as the futurists' commitment to 'subvert the possibility of semantic meaning and its pedestrian concerns', however, Remizov was not on the same page as his futurist peers.[44] Unlike Kruchenykh, who saw 'common language' as constrictive, Remizov was preoccupied with the seemingly banal language of the pedestrian—a preoccupation that resonated with Mirrlees' habit of recording the sound of pedestrians pronouncing words like '*cho - co - lat*' (12) and 'por-no-gra-phie' (16).[45] Not quite a futurist, Remizov instead resembles an aural 'antiquary' in the following passage from Mirrlees' 1926 article entitled 'Some Aspects of the Art of Alexey Mikhailovich Remizov', first published in Pierre Janet and Georges Dumas' *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique*:

> [Remizov] tracks an old tune to a shepherd whistling it in the hidden valley where it was born, chases winged words with his net, listens to old wives' tales, and hastens to catch the last faltered words of the dying gods […] He treats the present with the reverend accuracy of the antiquary, handling it delicately and lovingly, as if it were a rare and very fragile object; and this is not the same as treating it merely decoratively—'the learned eye is still the loving one'.[46]

In Mirrlees' interpretation of Remizov, the writer is neither a Baudelairean 'toy of circumstance', nor does he go 'against circumstance' with the violence of a vorticist. Instead, as Mirrlees notes, he 'handles' circumstance 'as if it were a rare and very fragile object' like a Victorian kaleidoscope. When it came to their sonic circumstances, Remizov and Mirrlees saw speech not as something to be stripped down to elementary syllables, but as something that one must 'learn' to listen to. 'The learned ear', to modify the quotation above, 'is still the loving one'.

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[43] See Friedman, *Beyond Symbolism and Surrealism,* pp. 27-28. See also Henryk Baran, 'Towards a Typology of Russian Modernism: Ivanov, Remizov, Xlebnikov', in *Aleksej Remizov,* ed. by Slobin, pp. 175-193.
[44] Johanna Drucker, *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909-1923* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 69.
[45] Kruchenykh, p. 67; For more on Mirrlees' admiration for Remizov, see Marilyn Schwinn Smith, 'Aleksei Remizov's English-language Translators: New Material', in *A People Passing Rude: British Responses to Russian Culture*, ed. by Anthony Cross (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2012), pp. 189-200.
[46] Mirrlees, 'Some Aspects', p. 80.

Mirrlees' quotation in the passage above—'the learned eye is still the loving one'—owes its origins to the following passage from Robert Browning's *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country* (1873):

> Much, was there not, in place and people both,
> To lend an eye to? and what eye like yours—
> The learned eye is still the loving one! [47]

Here, Browning registers the plethora of visual stimuli available to the pedestrians of 'London, Paris, [and] Rome'.[48] In *Paris,* Mirrlees also notes that 'little funny things ceaselessly happen' on the street (17), including a 'Scarlet Woman shouting BYRRH' (3) and a 'Roman boy picking a thorn out of his foot' (6). Similarly, in Mirrlees' second novel *The Counterplot* (1923), the narrator is moved by "'the modern mysticism"—that sense, made possible by wireless and cables, of all the different doings of the world happening *simultaneously*'.[49] In such an environment, the perceiver must cultivate not only a 'learned eye' but also an 'intelligent ear'—Reinier Plomp's term for the ear that actively 'seek[s] out which sound components belong together' and 'capture[s] each individual sound with its associated characteristics'.[50] And while the ear must be intelligent in all circumstances—both urban and rural—city noise, as Aimée Boutin notes, 'heightens the significance of selective listening' because the ear is forced to deal with simultaneous sounds from many sources.[51]

Since the first street cries of Paris were recorded by Guillaume de Villeneuve in 1265, Paris has been known as one of the noisiest cities in Europe. To cite just one example, Delphine de Girardin noted in 1837 that 'in Paris today, the day is a perpetual concert, a series of uninterrupted serenades; Parisian ears have not one instant of rest'.[52] As Boutin's research reveals, Girardin's portrayal of Paris as a 'perpetual concert' was particularly prevalent among nineteenth-century

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[47] Robert Browning, *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country, or Turf and Towers* (London: Smith and Elder, 1873), p. 8.
[48] Ibid., p. 7.
[49] Mirrlees, *Counterplot,* p. 32 [emphasis original].
[50] Reinier Plomp, *The Intelligent Ear: On the Nature of Sound Perception* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2001), p. 1.
[51] Boutin, p. 3.
[52] Delphine de Girardin quoted in English by Boutin, p. 19.

flâneurs like Honoré de Balzac, Auguste de Lacroix, and Victor Fournel.[53] And while many of these writers were willing to admit the cacophonous nature of this concert, none of them could have anticipated the cacophony that ensued in the immediate aftermath of World War I. Like never before, the sounds of celebration, commerce, negotiation, protest, music, and mourning clashed and competed across the city of Paris, leaving Cendrars feeling furious after Apollinaire's funeral procession was interrupted 'by a crowd of noisy celebrants of the Armistice, men and women with arms waving, singing, dancing, kissing, shouting deliriously' in November 1918.[54] By this point, Mirrlees and Harrison were already living in a 'Sapphic flat' on the Left Bank of the Seine.[55] It is here that the speaker of *Paris* starts her journey across the city, taking the 'Nord-Sud' metro line (now line 12) northbound from Rue du Bac to Concorde before stopping to remark: 'I can't / I must go slowly' (3). In these words, we recognise not the fast pace of the futurist, nor the languid passivity of the impressionist, but something else entirely: the cries of one who wishes to resist the speed of the street so that she can 'hark' to the quiet sound of 'whispering' (4), '[e]choes of Bossuet chanting dead queens' (10), 'little widows moaning' (11), 'the silence of *la grève*' (14) 'small dry voice[s]' (18), and 'an angelic troubadour [who] sings her songs' (20)—all of which can only be heard by an intelligent ear with the ability to tune into soft sounds despite the persistent presence of 'shout[s]' (20), 'shrieks' (9), and 'strident voices' (11).

Despite the intelligence of Mirrlees' ear, the perceptual circumstances of the city street preclude the kind of concentration that H.D. espoused in the rural poems of *Sea Garden*. Compared to *Sea Garden*, *Paris* is full of interruptions that each demand more attention than the perceiver is able to give. And while we tend to think of interruption as a purely auditory phenomenon, sounds are not the only source of interruption in *Paris*. Take, for example, page nine of the poem. Here, the smell of lilac is interrupted by sayings, street signs, and overheard voices:

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[53] Boutin, pp. 11-34.
[54] Blaise Cendrars quoted in English by Jay Winter in *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 20.
[55] Virginia Woolf, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf, Volume III: 1923-1928*, ed. by Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (London: Chatto and Windus, 1981), p. 30.

Lilac

SPRING IS SOLOMON'S LITTLE SISTER; SHE HAS NO BREASTS.

LAIT SUPERIEUR
DE LA
FERME DE RAMBOUILLET

ICI ON CONSULTE
LE BOTTIN

CHARCUTERIE
COMESTIBLES DE IRE CHOIX

APERITIFS

ALIMENTS DIABETIQUES
DEUIL EN 24 HEURES

Messieursetdames (9)

Here and throughout the entirety of *Paris,* Mirrlees adopts the following typographical code: small capital letters are used to depict slogans, sayings, and small plaques; large capital letters are used to depict street signs and advertisements; italics are used to depict overheard voices as well as the titles of books and paintings; and, finally, normal type is used for narration.[56] Despite a few deviations, Mirrlees' sign system is remarkably consistent, and yet very little has been said of it apart from Matore's passing observation that the typography of *Paris* 'diagrammatizes how slogans are impressed upon the urban environment'.[57] It is indeed true that Mirrlees' typographical code serves a mimetic function. In the passage above, for instance, advertisements are rendered in capital letters to reflect how the advertisements of early twentieth-century Paris blazed with 'an intense illumination […] repetitive, hopping, vibrating, […] catching the gaze, blinding pupils,

[56] It is clear from the three surviving proof pages of *Paris,* held in the E.J. Pratt Library at Victoria University, that Mirrlees gave strict typographical instructions to the Woolfs. Given the rush with which *Paris* was printed, however, there are some deviations that may or may not be the result of the Woolfs' struggle to bring Mirrlees' typographical vision to fruition. 'YANKEES' (12), for example, is printed in capital letters rather than normal type while "'Elles se balancent sur les hanches [*sic*]'" (12) is placed in quotation marks rather than italics.
[57] Matore, p. 137.

wringing the optic nerves […] tyrannizing attention, breaking through indifference' (according to Léo Claretie writing in 1912).[58] Beyond serving a mimetic function, however, Mirrlees' typographical code also serves an organisational function in that it allows her to categorise, control, and contain the 'little funny things' that 'ceaselessly happen'. Without such a system, as we shall see, certain 'cells' of experience would swell to the point of total eclipse.

Thanks to Mirrlees' typographical code, visually invasive percepts like advertisements fail to 'tyrannize' the speaker's attention for long before aural percepts emerge in italics (also visually invasive) to take up their assigned space on the page. The passage quoted above, for instance, ends with the sound of an anonymous voice repeating '*Messieursetdames*'. Numerous interruptions follow, yet the anonymous voice remains as persistent as the voice that repeats 'HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME' in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922).[59] Unlike Eliot, who never revealed the source of this voice in his poem, Mirrlees went on to reveal the source of '*Messieursetdames*' in the following passage from *Paris:*

> MORT AU CHAMP D'HONNEUR;
>
> And little widows moaning
> *Le pauvre grand!*
> *Le pauvre grand!*
>
> And petites bourgeoises with tight lips and strident voices are counting out the change and saying *Messieursetdames* and their hearts are the ruined province of Picardie. . . . (11)

Much like Remizov, who 'tracks an old tune to a shepherd whistling it in the hidden valley where it was born', Mirrlees traces the sound of *'Messieursetdames'* to its origin: broken-hearted widows collecting change for wounded soldiers. At this point, the uninterrupted series of interruptions ends with an ellipsis used to signify an intentional syntactic omission. As a classicist with intimate

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[58] Léo Claretie quoted in English by Hazel Hahn in 'Boulevard Culture and Advertising in 19th-Century Paris', in *The City and the Senses: Urban Culture Since 1500*, ed. by Alexander Cowan and Jill Steward (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 156-175 (p. 174).
[59] T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922), pp. 23-26.

knowledge of Greek, Mirrlees certainly would have been aware of the etymology of 'ellipsis' as a borrowing from the Greek *ἔλλειψις*—'to come short'—and indeed it is true that the speaker of *Paris* comes short of including every interruption that she encounters during her day-long *flânerie.*[60]

Just as the vortograph enabled Coburn to 'shut out' that which he did not wish to include in his photographs, ellipses enable Mirrlees to exert further control over her perceptual environment by omitting that which is irrelevant to her intelligent ear. Take, for example, the following passage from *Paris:*

> We went to Benediction in Notre-Dame-des-Champs,
> Droning. . . droning. . . droning. (19)

Here, the speaker chooses to omit the 'droning' details of the Benediction service at Notre-Dame-des-Champs—most likely because she, much like the eponymous protagonist of *Madeleine,* was 'quite unmoved by the solemn drama' of Roman Catholic church music.[61] In both *Madeleine* and *Paris,* Mirrlees' disdain for church music can be linked to her respect for Harrison, who argued that 'woman must flee […] at the sound of the church-bell' ringing from 'Man's Church' in *Alpha and Omega.*[62] Elsewhere in this book, Harrison recognises that the 'swelling out' of one entity necessarily involves the 'diminish[ment]' of another, and indeed it is the case that the ellipses in the passage above serve to diminish one sound in order to make more space for another.[63] Given Mirrlees' feminist proclivities, it should come as no surprise that she reduces the 'droning' voice of a clergyman down to dots in order to make space for the marginalised voices of women, workers, and wounded soldiers—figures who are traditionally seen but rarely heard.[64]

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[60] Oxford English Dictionary Online, 'ellipsis, *n.*'
[61] Mirrlees, *Madeleine,* p. 130.
[62] Harrison, *Alpha,* p. 108.
[63] Ibid., p. 69.
[64] Boutin similarly notes how the *flâneur* is 'fascinated' by 'peddlers, hawkers, acrobats, street musicians, and beggars' while 'the average bourgeois pedestrian would ignore (sometimes willfully) the social outcasts who embody their anxieties about pauperism' in *City of Noise*, p. 11.

By virtue of their salient presence, however, ellipses are incapable of playing an entirely exclusionary role. Always present on the page, an ellipsis can be used not only to shrink something into near-nothingness, but also to gesture to something so 'beautiful—awful—[and] huge' that it cannot be contained in the space of the page:

> Cell on cell
> Experience
> Very slowly
> Is forming up
> Into something beautiful—awful—huge
>
> The coming to . . . . . .
> Thick halting speech—the curse of vastness. (13)

Here, Mirrlees' ellipsis expands to reflect how 'experience' swells 'into something' ineffably 'beautiful', 'awful', and 'huge'. This is a version of the Romantic sublime, but one that is tempered by the same restraint that H.D. showed in *Sea Garden.* As the passage above makes clear, Mirrlees shared H.D.'s unwillingness to vocalise the sublimity of the unseen. Where H.D. uses Dickinsonian dashes in place of the unseen sublime, however, Mirrlees uses ellipses that expand across the page in mimesis of a sublime experience that escapes 'on the viewless wings of Poesy' that Keats wielded in 'Ode to a Nightingale' (1819).[65] Similarly, in *Madeleine,* the protagonist describes her perceptual environment as one in which 'divers objects, such as cheeses and jugs and strings of onions and lutes and spoons […] swell and swell' until she 'feel[s] 'tis all so unreal, just a "vision"'.[66] In this passage, Madeleine compares her vision to a seventeenth-century 'Dutch picture' in which exotic delicacies spill over the tops of plates, bowls, baskets, and tables in vivid detail.[67] Later writing in an undated archival notebook entitled 'Various Tit Bits from my own Memories', Mirrlees went on to describe Paul Cézanne's still life paintings in a strikingly similar manner: 'Cézanne when he came his vision began to fill out […] fruit and pots began to swell and

[65] John Keats, 'Ode to a Nightingale', in *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St Agnes and Other Poems* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1820), pp. 107-112 (p. 109).
[66] Mirrlees, *Madeleine,* pp. 29-30.
[67] Ibid., p. 30.

grow plump and solid'.[68] This, for Mirrlees, was the mark of genius—the ability to swell the significance of something to the point of ineffability. It should come as no surprise, then, that a 'Chinese village' opens out into a series of ellipses when it is contemplated in 'a genius's mind': aesthetic contemplation of the kind that Pound espoused when he wrote orientalist poetry results in a kind of expansiveness that cannot be contained in ordinary language but can be implicated with the use of punctuation. No matter if the genius' elliptical thoughts remain unheard, for 'unheard melodies are sweeter' than 'heard melodies' according to Mirrlees quoting Keats' 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' (1819) in her archival notebook.[69]

While the act of aesthetic contemplation often remains elliptical in *Paris,* Mirrlees went on to spell out its origins and effects in the following passage from *The Counterplot*:

> Then the practical relation between [Teresa] and the shabby familiar furniture suddenly snapped, and she looked at it with new eyes—the old basket-chair, the horse-hair sofa, the little table on which was an aspidistra in a pot—they were now merely arrangements of planes and lines, and, as such, startlingly significant. For the first time she was looking at them æsthetically, and so novel was the sensation that it felt like a mystical experience. The Beatific Vision . . . may it not be this æsthetic vision turned on spiritual formula?[70]

Here, as in Cézanne's still-life paintings and Pound's orientalist poems, domestic objects like chairs, sofas, tables, and pots dissolve into 'planes and lines' that are 'startlingly significant' by virtue of the perceptual 'novel[ty]' that emerges in the absence of 'practical relations'. Once again, we can trace Mirrlees' thinking back to Harrison, who proclaimed in *Ancient Art and Ritual* that 'to see a thing, to feel a thing, as a work of art we must […] become for the time unpractical'.[71] We will discuss this quotation at length in a moment. For now, however, it's worth noting the influence of another member of the Bloomsbury Group: Roger Fry. Given Mirrlees' admiration for Fry, it is not unlikely that she had the essays of *Vision and Design* (1920) in mind as she wrote of the

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[68] Jane Harrison Collection, Newnham College, Cambridge, 4/3/1.
[69] Hope Mirrlees Papers, 6/4/1 [emphasis original].
[70] Mirrlees, *Counterplot,* p. 86.
[71] Harrison, *Ancient Art,* p. 133.

aesthetic significance of geometric forms.[72] According to Fry writing in 'The Artist's Vision'—a 1919 essay originally published in the *Athenaeum*—aesthetic contemplation results in the following kaleidoscopic form of perception:

> Almost any turn of the kaleidoscope of nature may set up in the artist this detached and impassioned vision, and, as he contemplates the particular field of vision, the (æsthetically) chaotic and accidental conjunction of forms and colours begins to crystallise into a harmony; and as this harmony becomes clear to the artist, his actual vision becomes distorted by the emphasis of the rhythm which has been set up within him […] Certain relations of directions of line become for him full of meaning; he apprehends them no longer casually or merely curiously, but passionately, and these lines begin to be so stressed and stand out so clearly from the rest that he sees them far more distinctly than he did at first […] objects as such tend to disappear, to lose their separate unities, and to take their places as so many bits in the whole mosaic of vision.[73]

The passage above serves as an apt description of the mosaic of vision and audition that Mirrlees inscribes onto the pages of *Paris*. Like Fry, the speaker of *Paris* notes that 'the unities are smashed' (11). Unlike Fry, however, she attributes this brokenness to a war that muddied the eyes of soldiers so that all they could see, as Helen Saunders noted in 'A Vision of Mud' (1915), were 'shapes' that 'swell and shrink, merge into one another like an ashen kaleidoscope'.[74] 'Hands are spreading mud everywhere', Saunders writes, thereby anticipating the 'little boys […] whose hands [are] sticky with play' in *Paris*.[75] Much like these boys' hands, Mirrlees' were 'sticky with play' after arranging and re-arranging the planes and lines of her perceptual environment into a kaleidoscopic pattern that would do justice to the broken reality of post-war Paris while simultaneously celebrating the city as a polyphonic play space for exploring the plasticity of perceptual reality.

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[72] Mirrlees frequently mentions Fry in letters to her mother, Emily Lina Moncrieff (see the Hope Mirrlees Papers, 2/1/3).
[73] Fry, pp. 33-34.
[74] H. Sanders [sic], 'A Vision of Mud', *BLAST,* July 1915, pp. 73-74 (p. 73).
[75] Ibid., p. 73.

Playful Proclivities

The futurist affinities of Mirrlees' intelligent ear have forced us to abandon Pound's impressionistic definition of a 'toy of circumstance' in favour of a playful perceiver who plasticises her sonic surroundings before arranging them into a 'frail geometry' akin to the ever-changing geometric mandala of a kaleidoscope. Before we proceed to discuss Mirrlees' proclivity to play with the geometrical configuration of her perceptual environment in *Paris,* however, two things need to be noted. First, as *The Counterplot* makes clear, Mirrlees understood perceptual play as something that is only possible in the absence of 'practical relations'. As I previously mentioned, this idea was likely inspired by Harrison's hypothesis that 'to see a thing, to feel a thing, as a work of art we must […] become for the time unpractical'.[76] Here, Harrison's theory owes its origins to Henri Bergson's 'La Perception du Changement' (The Perception of Change)—a lecture series delivered at the University of Oxford in 1911. Thanks to Harrison's correspondence with Bergson,[77] coupled with her heavy deployment of Bergsonian themes in her seminal work *Themis* (1912), Bergson's philosophical theory of duration has been frequently cited by critics of *Paris.*[78] We will soon discuss the durational aspects of *Paris*, but for now it's worth noting that the poem has not yet been read in relation to Bergson's theory that 'the more we are preoccupied with living, the less we are inclined to contemplate, [as] the necessities of action tend to limit the field of vision'.[79] First voiced in 'The Perception of Change', this belief was not only shared by Harrison and Fry, but also by Remizov, who similarly wrote that 'our everyday life with its thousands of minute pinprick impressions effaces what is important "in life"'.[80] According to Remizov, 'it is necessary to shake

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[76] Harrison, *Ancient Art,* p. 133.
[77] See, for example, Henri Bergson to Jane Harrison, 10 November 1911, Hope Mirrlees Papers, 1/1/3.
[78] See Enemark, p. 119; See also Howarth, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernist Poetry,* pp. 26-27.
[79] Henri Bergson, 'The Perception of Change', in *The Creative Mind,* trans. by Mabelle L. Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), pp. 153-186 (p. 161).
[80] See Fry's 'Essay in Aesthetics' (1909), in *Vision and Design*, pp. 11-26; See also Mary Ann Gillies, *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), pp. 56-57; Remizov quoted in English by Avril Pyman in 'Petersburg Dreams', *Aleksej Remizov*, ed. by Slobin, 51-112 (p. 56).

off the volatile dust of everyday impressions […] then life will show itself from another point of view, will show its other face'.[81] Note here that Remizov does not claim the ability to 'abstract [himself] completely' and thereby the gain the perceptual omniscience that Fry went on to claim for himself in his 'Essay in Aesthetics' (1909).[82] Rather, Remizov (and Mirrlees, for that matter) shared Bergson's conviction that 'instead of trying to rise above [her] perception of things', the artist must 'plunge into it for the purpose of deepening and widening it'.[83]

Soon after Bergson delivered his lecture series, Harrison cited it in *Ancient Art and Ritual*, where she defined the artist as someone who 'renounces doing in order to practice seeing'.[84] She continued: 'he is by nature what Professor Bergson calls "distrait," aloof, absent-minded; intent only, or mainly, on contemplation'.[85] The same could be said of the *flâneur*—that he 'renounces doing in order to practice seeing'. Not just seeing, of course, but also hearing, as Balzac makes clear in the following passage from *The Physiology of Marriage* (1829):

> Where is the foot-soldier of Paris upon whose ear these words, out of the thousands uttered by the passers-by, have not fallen, like bullets on the day of battle? Where is the man who has not seized one of those innumerable words, frozen in the air, of which Rabelais speaks? But most men walk about Paris as they eat and as they live, without thinking. There are but few musicians clever enough to recognize the key of those few scattered notes, few practiced readers of faces who can tell from what passion they proceed. To wander through Paris! Truly a delightful, an adorable existence! Strolling is a science, a feast of the eye. Walking is vegetating; strolling is life.[86]

The Balzacian *flâneur*, here likened to an 'infantryman on a battlefield pummeled [*sic*] by a confused barrage of spoken words', is capable of recognising the significance of certain 'scattered notes' as he 'stroll[s]' the streets of Paris.[87] By contrast, 'most men' walk in search of something to 'eat' so

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[81] Ibid., p. 56.
[82] Fry, p. 13.
[83] Bergson, 'The Perception of Change', p. 158.
[84] Harrison, *Ancient Art,* p. 134.
[85] Ibid., p. 134.
[86] Honoré de Balzac, *The Physiology of Marriage,* trans. by Sharon Marcus (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 32.
[87] Boutin, p. 17.

that they may 'live'; and 'life', as Bergson notes, 'demands that we put on blinders, that we look neither to the right, nor to the left nor behind us, but straight ahead in the direction we have to go'.[88]

A quick glance at *Paris* reveals that the speaker's walk is neither straight nor steadfast. The third line of the poem, after all, is 'ZIG-ZAG' (3)—not only a reference to a brand of cigarette paper but also an apt description of the journey that ensues. Like the Balzacian *flâneur*, the speaker of *Paris* finds it 'pleasant to sit on the Grand Boulevards' (11), noting how the rue Saint-Honoré 'saunters […] shabby and indifferent' (6), the Seine 'meanders imperturbably towards the sea' (14), and François de La Rochefoucauld 'mak[es] for the *salon d'automne* […] with a superbly leisurely gait' (19). Meanwhile, Mirrlees' playful typography mimetically mirrors the excursive nature of the speaker's *flânerie*: spaces between words reflect the spatial layout of the Tuileries, large and small letters imitate the lettering sizes of signs, and one line is even printed vertically. This last 'trick of type', although it had already been employed by Apollinaire in a calligram entitled 'Il Pleut' (1918), was particularly shocking to the first readers of *Paris*.[89] According to one reviewer writing in *The Times Literary Supplement* in 1920, 'to print the words "there is no lily of the valley" in a vertical column of single letters might be part of a nursery game. It does not belong to the art of poetry'.[90] 'Damning' as it may sound, this review registers Mirrlees' conviction that writing 'is a sort of game' in which the writer must 'fit', 'weave', or 'adapt' as 'many as possible of the amusing, or pretty, or recondite facts that he has collected from his observation of the present, or his reading about the past'.[91] Like her friend Gertrude Stein, then, Mirrlees experimented with form to create a play space for exploring the plasticity of perceptual reality.[92] Unlike Stein, however, Mirrlees' play was

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88 Bergson, 'The Perception of Change', p. 161.
89 Anon., 'Paris: A Poem by Hope Mirrlees', *Times Literary Supplement,* 6 May 1920, p. 286.
90 Ibid., p. 286.
91 Parmar, p. xxxix; Mirrlees, 'Some Aspects', p. 81.
92 Prior to writing *Paris,* Mirrlees met and corresponded with Stein and Toklas on numerous occasions (see YCAL MSS 76, Box 116, Folder 2469). Meanwhile, Harrison described 'the prose of Miss Stein' as 'the purest bosh' in a letter to Mirrlees on 10 November 1913 (Jane Harrison Collection, 1/3/1).

not limited to domestic realms (potentially because she suffered from claustrophobia).[93] Instead, as we shall soon see, Mirrlees attributed plasticity to some of the city's most stiff and solid structures.

As playful as *Paris* is, the typographical and geographical trajectory of the poem is more linear than the trajectory of, say, Khlebnikov's *Zangezi* (1922). Which brings me to my second point: that the 'game' Mirrlees plays in *Paris* is pragmatic insofar as the poem is framed by the speaker's search for a holophrase—an expression of 'personal experience' in which 'subject and object have not yet got their heads above water, but are still submerged in a situation'.[94] 'I want a holophrase', proclaims the speaker in the very first line of the poem, thereby placing herself in the tradition of Romantic quest poems like Keats' *Endymion: A Poetic Romance* (1818).[95] As her archival notebooks reveal, Mirrlees considered *Endymion*—possibly the most famous Romantic quest poem—to be Keats' most significant work, written when the poet 'began to be conscious' of his 'mysterious longings' for 'ethereal things … greater things than our Creator himself made'.[96] In *Endymion,* these ethereal things become perceptible to a perceiver whose 'eclipsing eyes' and 'anxious ear[s]' can be linked to Keats' 'Romantic antipictorialism'—W.J.T. Mitchell's term for the 'negative role' that 'pictures and vision frequently play […] in Romantic poetic theory'.[97] Not only did Mirrlees appear to share Keats' antipictorialist position (a point I will challenge later), but she also shared his longing for 'ethereal things' including 'ghost[s]' (6), 'spirit[s]' (12), and 'angel[s]' (20). Whereas Keats 'look[ed] upon the sun, the Moon, the stars, the earth and its contents, as materials to form greater things […] ethereal things', however, Mirrlees refused to 'step out of

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[93] See Mirrlees' correspondence with Charles Du Bos, November 1929, Fonds Charles Du Bos, Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques-Doucet, MS 26591.
[94] Harrison, *Aspects,* pp. 16-18.
[95] See Harold Bloom, *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry,* rev. edn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), pp. 368-378.
[96] Hope Mirrlees Papers, 6/4/1 [emphasis original]. Here, Mirrlees quotes Keats' letter to Benjamin Robert Haydon, 10-11 May 1817, *Letters of John Keats to His Family and Friends,* ed. by Sidney Colvin (London: Macmillan, 1891), p. 15.
[97] John Keats, *Endymion: A Poetic Romance* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1818), pp. 94-96; W.J.T. Mitchell, 'Visible Language: Blake's Wond'rous Art of Writing', in *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism,* ed. by Morris Eaves and Michael Fischer (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 46-95 (pp. 49-50); Connor similarly discusses 'the Romantic idealization of sound' in 'The Modern Auditory "I"', p. 207.

actuality into *the aspect of non-experience*'.[98] Doing so, as Harrison's writing reveals, would only produce a 'holophrastic perfective'—an inferior kind of holophrase that 'has no internal time, no duration' and is therefore 'free from the hot intimacy of personal experience'.[99]

Not to be confused with a holophrastic perfective, the holophrase that the speaker of *Paris* seeks is imperfective in that it 'expresses actual duration, or […] actual, personal experience'.[100] In order to find such a phrase, the speaker must reject the Romantic tendency towards 'exaltation', for 'when we are in that condition', according to Mirrlees, we cease not only to be 'submerged in a situation' but we also 'cease to play'.[101] And play, as Jane F. Thrailkill notes, is inherently pragmatic: it names 'the dynamic ways in which human beings come to "mind" the world' through active repetition and experimentation.[102] Holophrases, similarly, are used by children in the early stages of language acquisition, when there is a high level of plasticity between 'subject and object' because 'practical relations' have not yet solidified. For this reason, Harrison's holophrase is closely linked to a Bloomsburian interpretation of Bergson's philosophy which says that 'by an effort of attention, we can enlarge the field of our immediate acquaintance so as to contain in it more and more of the specious present'.[103] First put forward by Stephen (a fringe member of the Bloomsbury Group) in 1915, this interpretation of Bergson is based on his idea that 'perception […] may be entirely altered by a very slight change in a certain privileged image—my body. This image occupies the centre; by it all others are conditioned; at each of its movements everything changes, as though by a turn of a kaleidoscope'.[104] Here, Bergson presupposes a high degree of plasticity in his perceptual environment as it shifts and swells in response to the 'movements' of the attending body. One small shift in attention, and 'everything changes' so that it is possible to 'enlarge the

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[98] Keats, *Letters,* p. 15; Harrison, *Aspects,* p. 17 [emphasis original].
[99] Ibid., pp. 10, 18.
[100] Ibid., p. 17.
[101] Mirrlees, 'Some Aspects', p. 82.
[102] Thrailkill, p. 126.
[103] Karin Stephen, 'Complexity and Synthesis: A Comparison of the Data and Philosophical Methods of Mr. Russell and M. Bergson', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society,* 15.1 (June 1915), 271-303 (p. 296) <doi:10.1093/aristotelian/15.1.271>.
[104] Bergson, *Matter and Memory,* p. 12.

field of our immediate acquaintance' by merely attending to the seemingly 'specious' sensations of the perceiving body. In true Bergsonian fashion, then, the speaker of *Paris* 'plunge[s] into a statement of relations' that are 'palpable', 'personal', and pragmatic but not practical in any traditional sense of the word.[105]

Plaster Pavilions

In the absence of 'practical relations', plasticity emerges as the defining feature of Mirrlees' fictional and poetic landscapes. Take, for example, the following passage from *Madeleine:*

> Bells were pealing from a score of churches; in a dozen different keys viols and lutes and guitars were playing sarabands; hawkers were crying their wares, valets were swearing; and there were scarlet cloaks and green jerkins and yellow hose. And all the time that quiet artist, the evening light of Paris, was softening the colours, flattening the architecture, and giving to the whole scene an aspect remote, classical, unreal. Down the motley street marched Madeleine with unseeing eyes, a passionate prayer for grace walling up in her heart.[106]

Here, as Madeleine 'marches' down the rue Saint-Jacques on the Left Bank of Paris with 'unseeing eyes', the sounds of the street eclipse its sights so that they are pushed into a 'remote' state of 'unreality'. Peals, sarabands, cries, and voices—this is Madeleine's version of the Jamesian 'reality of the unseen', and it makes itself manifest through the ear. As Harrison's writing makes clear, however, the 'world of the unseen' is comprised of much more than sound: 'it is the world of what we call the soul and the supposed objects of the soul's perception—sprites, demons, ghosts, and gods'.[107] In this 'supersensuous world' of the unseen, the perceiver encounters 'sense-illusions, shadows, dreams, souls, ghosts, ancestors, names, numbers, images'—all of which make themselves heard in *Paris*.[108]

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[105] Harrison, *Aspects,* pp. 16-17.
[106] Mirrlees, *Madeleine,* p. 165.
[107] Harrison, *Alpha,* p. 153.
[108] Ibid., pp. 170-171.

Given the wealth of religious resonance in both *Madeleine* and *Paris,* it's worth briefly noting that sound has a particularly important role to play in Christian traditions. In the Bible, which Mirrlees was evidently well-versed in, divinity repeatedly makes itself manifest to the ear rather than the eye. Moses, for example, reminds the children of Israel: 'the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice'.[109] Later in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses proclaims: 'hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass'.[110] Not only do these verses recall Mirrlees' definition of life as a shower of circumstances, but they also recall the moment when 'the Holy Ghost coos in his dove-cot' in *Paris* (19). Here, as in I Kings, God makes himself manifest with a 'still small voice' that can only be discerned by unseeing eyes akin to what Remizov called his 'clipped eyes'—partially blind eyes which 'opened the many-dimensioned world of moons, stars, and comets before [him]'.[111] Similarly writing outside of a Christian tradition, theosophists like Blavatsky, anthropologists like Harrison, scientists like Henri Poincaré, and artists like Marcel Duchamp also claimed that the ear has access to spatiotemporal dimensions unavailable to the eye.[112] Ultimately, for Mirrlees and her French and Russian contemporaries, sound had a 'magic potency' reaching all the way back to biblical times.[113]

Much like Madeleine, who 'worship[s] the Unseen' and 'long[s] for things invisible', the speaker of *Paris* uses her unseeing eyes to perceive 'invisible' figures like 'Magi' (5), 'Roman Legions' (10), and 'ghosts' (18).[114] More often than not, these 'unseen' phenomena impose their presence on that which is empirically seen. Take, for example, these five lines from *Paris:*

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[109] Deuteronomy 4.12.
[110] Deuteronomy 32.1-2.
[111] I Kings 19.12; Alexey Mikhailovich Remizov quoted in English by Sarah P. Burke in 'A Bearer of Tradition: Remizov and His Milieu', in *Aleksej Remizov,* ed. by Slobin, pp. 167-174 (p. 171).
[112] Blavatsky, p. 307; Jane Harrison, *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), p. 477; Henri Poincaré, *Dernières pensées* (Paris: E. Flammarion, 1913), pp. 75-76; For Duchamp's perspective, see p. 159 of this thesis.
[113] Blavatsky, p. 307.
[114] Mirrlees, *Madeleine,* pp. 132, 136.

I see the Arc de Triomphe,
Square and shadowy like Julius Cæsar's dreams:
Scorn the laws of solid geometry,
Step boldly into the wall of the Salle Caillebotte
And on and on . . . (5)

Here we are reminded of Madeleine's observation that 'the Unseen [is] always bursting through the ramparts of nature's laws'—a remark that likely owes its origins to *Alpha and Omega,* where Harrison described how 'the unseen […] surg[es] up behind the visible'.[115] In the passage above, the 'unseen' takes the form of an allusion to Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (1599), where Caesar's wife dreams of her husband as a 'statue' akin to the Caesar sculpture that was erected in the Tuileries one century after *Julius Caesar* was first performed.[116] Facing Caesar's sculpture, the Arc de Triomphe can be seen in the far distance, where it indeed appears 'square and shadowy'.[117] By contrast, the wall of the Salle Caillebotte—a small room in the Musée du Luxembourg which housed a number of famous French impressionist paintings—is anything but 'square and shadowy'. Instead, the paintings on the wall 'scorn the laws of solid geometry', allowing the beholder to 'step boldly' into a new dimension that goes 'on and on' without end.

A quick glance at the artists represented in the Salle Caillebotte (Degas, Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, Sisley, and Cézanne) reveals that many of them came to be associated with the emergence of a fourth dimension in modern art.[118] Perhaps most significantly, the Salle Caillebotte housed two oil paintings by Cézanne—the first artist, according to André Lhote writing in the *Athenaeum* in 1919, to arrive at a 'supplementary extra-geometrical dimension […] by applying, over the whole surface of his canvas, a series of planes like the steps of an irregular staircase'.[119] Here, Lhote could easily have been referring to the two paintings that appeared in the Salle Caillebotte: *Cour d'une*

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[115] Ibid., p. 237; Harrison, *Alpha,* p. 206.
[116] William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar,* II.2.81.
[117] Julia Briggs points this out in her 'Commentary' on *Paris: A Poem* (London: Faber, 2020), 25-50 (p. 28).
[118] Alexis Clark, 'Writing Impressionism into the Musée du Luxembourg's History of Nineteenth-Century Art', *Museum History Journal,* 11.1 (2018), 57-75 (p. 67) <doi:10.1080/19369816.2018.1429369>.
[119] André Lhote, 'Cubism and the Modern Artistic Sensibility', *Athenaeum,* 19 September 1919, pp. 919-920 (p. 920).

Ferme (c. 1879) and *Le Golfe de Marseille vu de L'Estaque* (c. 1879). While the former painting (Figure 4.C) with its 'series of planes' placed at irregular angles aptly conveys the Lhotean sense of a 'new pictorial volume', the latter painting was singly installed on the ceiling of the crowded Salle Caillebotte, thus adding an unexpected dimension to the room.[120] As the work of Linda Dalrymple Henderson, Elizabeth L. Throesch, and Mark Blacklock reveals, this new dimension captivated the minds of numerous painters, poets, writers, and composers at the turn of the twentieth century.[121] We have already seen, for example, how Loy and Duchamp respectively gestured to the fourth dimension in *Songs to Joannes* and *The Large Glass*. For the purposes of this chapter, however, we will briefly focus on just two of the many artists who shared Mirrlees' 'scorn' for 'the laws of solid geometry': Remizov and Apollinaire.

Writing and painting in the aftermath of Nikolai Lobachevsky's non-Euclidean geometry, Remizov believed that the waking world is less 'clear and mathematical than is customarily assumed'.[122] Meanwhile, in the multi-dimensional world of dreams, Remizov felt the 'sense' of a 'second, nonsensical reality' and even went on to publish an album of 'dream drawings' entitled *Tales from the Fourth Dimension* (1937).[123] Writing in 'The Fourth Dimension from a Plastic Point of View' (1910), the artist Max Weber similarly blurred the boundary between fantasy and reality when he wrote that 'dreams realized through plastic means are the pyramids and temples, the Acropolis and the Palatine structures; cathedrals and decorations; tunnels, bridges, and towers'.[124] In light of these quotations, it is no wonder that as the speaker of *Paris* 'wade[s] knee-deep in dreams', she perceives 'the Louvre, the Ritz, the Palais-Royale, [and] the Hôtel de Ville' as 'light

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[120] Ibid., p. 920; Gustave Geffroy, 'Au Luxembourg', *Journal, quotidien, littéraire, artistique et politique*, 16 February 1897, p. 5.
[121] Henderson, *Fourth Dimension*; Elizabeth L. Throesch, *Before Einstein: The Fourth Dimension in Fin-de-Siècle Literature and Culture* (London: Anthem Press, 2017); Mark Blacklock, *The Emergence of the Fourth Dimension: Higher Spatial Thinking in the Fin de Siècle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[122] Remizov quoted in English by Pyman, p. 51.
[123] Ibid., p. 55.
[124] Max Weber, 'The Fourth Dimension from a Plastic Point of View', *Camera Work,* July 1910, p. 25.

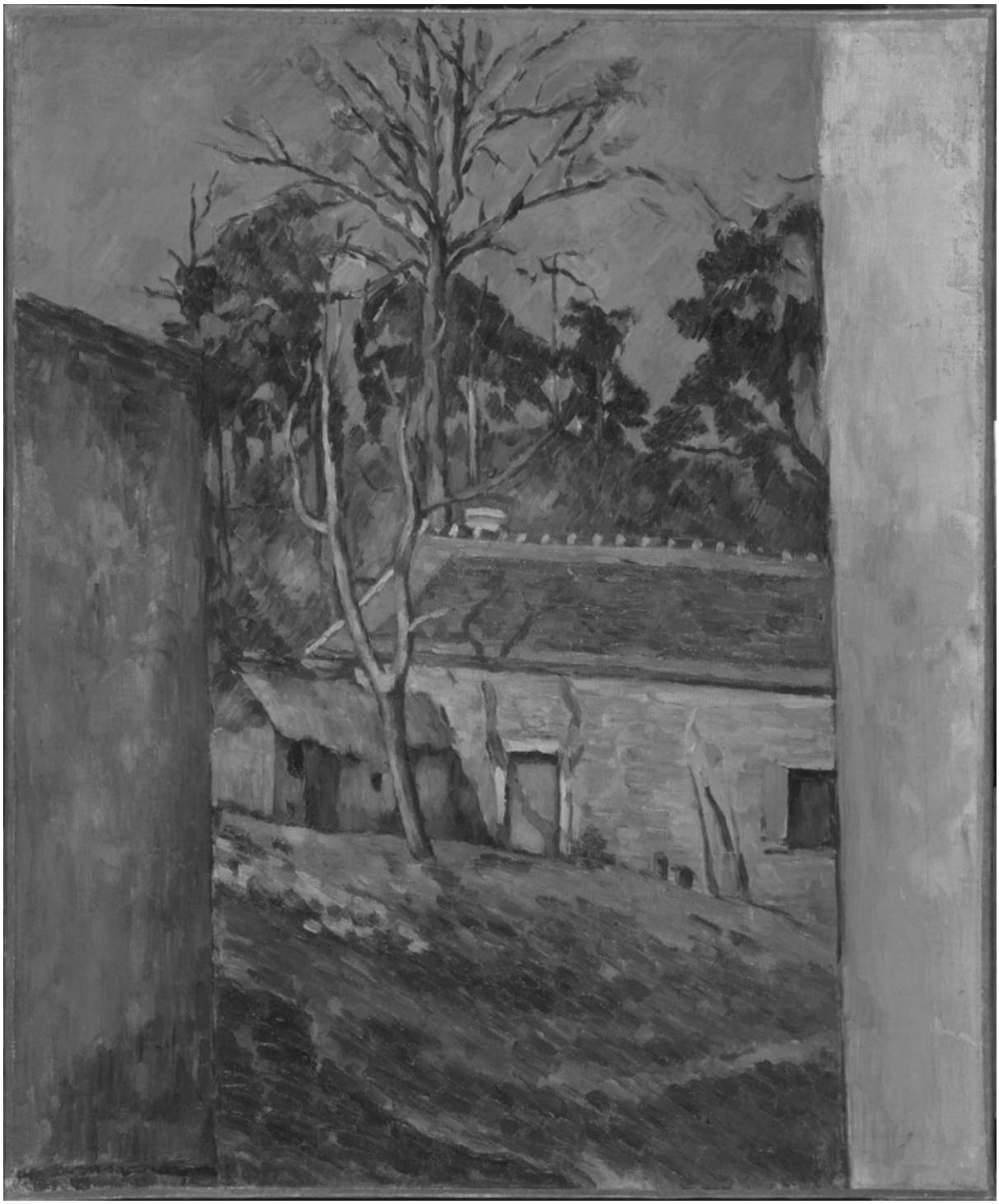

Figure 4.C. Paul Cézanne, *Cour d'une Ferme,* c. 1879, oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

and frail / Plaster pavilions of pleasure' (15-16). These buildings loom large in the landscape of Paris, yet their ontological standing is eclipsed by 'subaqueous' experiences that form 'into something beautiful – awful – huge'. As W. David Shaw notes, the tendency to prioritise that which is subaqueous over that which is solid was typical at the turn of the twentieth century:

> After 1870, the rise of the formalist tradition, founded upon a theory of symbolic fictions in the philosophy of science and religion, treats the images of the artist as material realities in their own right. Instead of likening these images to shadows, to the mere copies of an original, formalism becomes a potent means for turning the tables on reality—for turning *it* into a shadow. The disappearance of dimensions of depth (the spatial depth of a stereopticon and the temporal depth of a time-lapse photograph) bring into being a new region of copresence, which resembles the merely two-dimensional surface of kaleidoscopes.[125]

A survey of Mirrlees' impulse to place her perceptions on an ontological spectrum of reality and 'unreality' reveals that Shaw's diagnosis is absolutely applicable to *Paris*. On one end of Mirrlees' ontological spectrum, the 'shifting kaleidoscope' of Harrisonian reality is frozen into art: 'pigeons', for instance, 'perch on statues / And are turned to stone' (4). On the other end of the spectrum, art objects come alive so that they can participate in the aural kaleidoscope of the city: 'The Scarlet Woman' from John's Book of Revelation, for example, shouts 'BYRRH' (3)—the name of a brand of 'fortified wine, advertised with a poster of a woman dressed in scarlet, playing a drum and shouting'.[126] Similarly, a statue of Leon Gambetta listens to whispered 'secrets' in front of the Louvre (4). Meanwhile, inside the Louvre, culturally noisy paintings like Jean-Antoine Watteau's *Gilles* (1719) and Édouard Manet's *Olympia* (1863) 'arise […] from their subterranean sleep' (8). As they do so, however, the Louvre 'melt[s] into mist' (14), thereby anticipating the hazy capitol buildings of Mirrlees' fantasy novel, *Lud-in-the-Mist* (1926).

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[125] W.D. Shaw, 'The Optical Metaphor: Victorian Poetics and the Theory of Knowledge', *Victorian Studies,* 23.3 (1980), 293-324 (p. 320) [emphasis original] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3827337> [accessed 2 December 2023].
[126] Briggs, 'Commentary', p. 26.

Normally, Mirrlees uses simile, metaphor, and literary allusion to compare the landmarks of the city to works of art so that the Arc de Triomphe, for instance, appears 'square and shadowy *like* Julius Caesar's dreams'. In the following passage, however, the simile is reversed:

> [T]he XIIIth Duchess of Alba
> Long long as the Eiffel Tower
> Fathoms deep in haschich
> With languid compelling finger
> Pointing invisible Magi
> To a little white Maltese:
>
> The back-ground gray and olive-green
> Like le Midi, the Louvre, la Seine. . . . (5)

Rather than comparing a real object to an imaginary object, Mirrlees opts instead to compare an imaginary object—the white A-line dress that the 13th Duchess of Alba wears in Francisco Goya's 1795 painting, *The White Duchess* (Figure 4.D)—to a real object (the Eiffel Tower). Not only does this simile have the effect of elevating the ontological status of Goya's painting so that its 'gray and olive-green' background appears as real as 'le Midi, the Louvre, [and] la Seine', but it also has the effect of bringing the Eiffel Tower to life through the power of personification. Of course, Mirrlees was not alone in spotting a resemblance between the Eiffel Tower and the human body. Delaunay, for instance, juxtaposed nude female figures with the Eiffel Tower in works like *La Ville de Paris* (c. 1911) and *La Ville de Paris, la Femme et la Tour Eiffel* (c. 1925). Recounting his many days spent with Delaunay, Cendrars similarly feminised the Tower as a woman with 'legs spread apart [and] neck tucked' in 'Eiffel Tower' (1924).[127] Ultimately, as Sonia Delaunay noted, 'the Tower was [Robert's] emancipating muse, his Eve future'.[128]

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[127] Blaise Cendrars, 'The Eiffel Tower', trans. by David Shapiro and Arthur A. Cohen, in *The New Art of Color: The Writings of Robert and Sonia Delaunay,* ed. by Cohen (New York: Viking Press, 1928), pp. 171-175 (p. 174).
[128] Sonia Delaunay quoted by Tag Gronberg in 'Deco Venus', in *Manifestations of Venus: Art and Sexuality,* ed. by Caroline Arscott and Katie Scott (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 142-155 (p. 146).



Figure 4.D. Francisco Goya, *The White Duchess,* 1795, oil on canvas,
Collection of the Duke of Alba, Liria Palace, Madrid

Given the Eiffel Tower's iconic status in early twentieth-century art and print culture, it should come as no surprise that the speaker of *Paris* goes on to conflate the structure with its aesthetic representation:

> The Eiffel Tower is two dimensional,
> Etched on thick white paper. (15)

Anyone familiar with the work of Apollinaire will readily recognise this couplet as an allusion to 'Salut monde' (Figure 4.E)—a concrete poem which was indeed 'etched' on 'thick white paper' in Mirrlees' personal copy of *Calligrammes* (1918).[129] Published just one year before *Paris* was composed, 'Salut monde' portrays the Eiffel Tower as a two-dimensional shape with a multi-dimensional message: 'I am the e / loqu /ent tongue / which pokes / from your mouth / O Paris / and will poke / for ever / at the / Germans'.[130] Here it's worth noting that the Eiffel Tower played a pivotal role in protecting Paris from German attacks in the spring of 1918, when the radio transmitter stationed at the top of the Tower intercepted a critical German radiogram now known as 'Le Radiogramme de la Victoire'.[131] As 'Salut monde' makes clear, the Eiffel Tower was not only postured against the Germans but it was also quite literally 'eloquent'—a 'steeple of sound waves' (to borrow Florent Fels' term) with the capacity to communicate across vast distances.[132]

If the couplet above is indeed an allusion to 'Salut monde'—a poem written by an enthusiastic proponent of the fourth dimension—the Eiffel Tower can hardly be described as 'two dimensional'.[133] It's important to remember, however, that objects which are typically described as

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[129] Mirrlees' lightly annotated first edition copy of *Calligrammes* was posthumously donated from Talbot Books to Oxford's Taylor Institution on 10 October 1981. The book is signed 'H. H. [Helen Hope] Mirrlees –' and all annotations are in Mirrlees' hand.
[130] Translation by Claudia Habergham. Cited by Kim Sichel in *Making Strange: The Modernist Photobook in France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), p. 35.
[131] See Sophie de Lastours, *La France gagne la guerre des codes secrets, 1914-1918* (Paris: Tallandier, 1998), pp. 107-108.
[132] Florent Fels, 'Preface to *Métal* by Germain Krull', trans. by Robert Erich Wolf, in *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940*, ed. by Christopher Phillips (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989), pp. 13-15 (p. 14).
[133] See Guillaume Apollinaire, *Les Peintres Cubists* (Paris: Eugène Figuière et Cie, 1913).

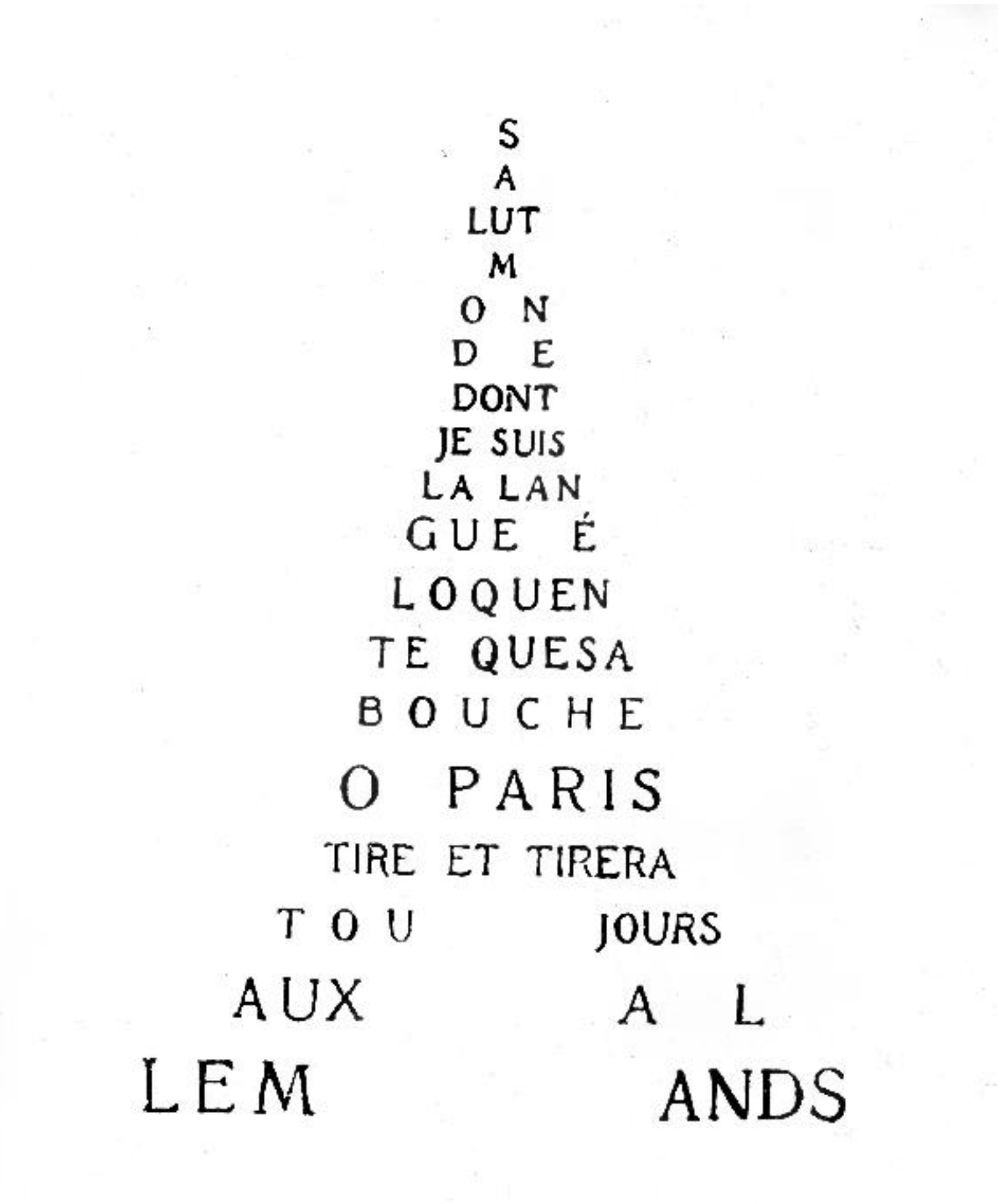

Figure 4.E. Guillaume Apollinaire, 'Salut monde',
Calligrammes: Poèmes de la paix et de la guerre (Paris: Mercure de France, 1918)

two-dimensional (the 'wall of the Salle Caillebotte', for instance) 'scorn the laws of solid geometry' in *Paris*. Not only should we re-evaluate the two-dimensionality of the Eiffel Tower, then, but we should also re-evaluate the two-dimensionality of the 'thick white paper' on which the words of *Paris* were printed. If the Eiffel Tower is 'etched on thick white paper', what does that say about the ontological status of written words? A partial answer to this question can be found in 'Bedside Books' (1928), where Mirrlees declared that a 'book must be like […] music for the unmusical – a volume of sound, a *tissue* of dreams'.[134] Similarly, in her preface to *Madeleine* and in *Paris,* the poet likened words to 'cells'. It is not just paintings and sculptures, then, that come to life in *Paris*. Alive and audible, Mirrlees' words share the same living materiality that the Russian futurists attributed to the written word in manifestoes like 'Poetic Principles' (1914), where Nikolai and David Burliuk announced their desire to 'endow letters with a third dimension […] sculptural shape', and 'The Letter as Such' (1913), where Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh personified the letters of post-Gutenberg books as 'prisoners' seeking liberation from the 'gray […] uniform' of standard type.[135] Not only did this sentiment resonate with Apollinaire (like the Russian futurists, he 'cleave[d] to the handwritten'),[136] but it also resonated with Remizov, who proclaimed that 'a word is a live being, and not a rattle or a leaden type-setting'.[137] Unlike Apollinaire and Remizov, Mirrlees did not publish handwritten versions of her poems. She did, however, share the Russian futurists' desire to revive the 'many signs, musical, mathematical, cartographical, etc. [which] lie in the dust of libraries'.[138] Indeed, as we shall see, *Paris* utilises a number of musical signs—clefs, minims, crotchets, and quavers—in an effort to spatialise sound.

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134 Mirrlees, 'Bedside Books', in *Collected Poems,* ed. by Parmar, pp. 102-110 (p. 106) [emphasis added].
135 Nikolai Burliuk and David Burliuk, 'Poetic Principles', in *Russian Futurism,* ed. by Lawton and Eagle, pp. 82-84 (p. 84); Victor Khlebnikov and Alexei Kruchenykh, 'The Letter as Such', in *Russian Futurism,* ed. by Lawton and Eagle, pp. 63-64 (p. 63).
136 Clive Scott, *Reading the Rhythm: The Poetics of French Free Verse, 1910-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 90; Unlike their Italian namesakes, the Russian Futurists were 'generally concerned with the integration of handwritten lettering with exuberant or even naïve illustrations, rather than with typographic experiment' according to Alan Bartram, *Futurist Typography and the Liberated Text* (London: British Library, 2005), p. 8.
137 Alexey Mikhailovich Remizov quoted in English by Friedman in *Beyond Symbolism and Surrealism*, p. 29.
138 Burliuk and Burliuk, p. 83.

Spatialising Sound

In the previous section of this chapter, we saw how Mirrlees' denigration of vision led her to depict some of the most visually pervasive landmarks of Paris (such as the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, the Palais-Royale, and the Hôtel de Ville) as flat, 'light', 'frail', and even 'transparent' (14). At the same time, however, Mirrlees went to great lengths to make seemingly transparent phenomena (like sound) visible on the space of the page. 'Crotchets and quavers', we are told, 'have the heads of [negroes] and / they writhe in obscene syncopation' (21).[139] Much like Stein, who 'exploit[ed] the semantic complexity of color in the language of race' (according to Nicholas Gaskill's reading of 'Melanctha'), Mirrlees adopted a derogatory and racialised language to describe the vibrancy of syncopated jazz music played at the Moulin Rouge in Montmartre.[140] Here, as William Shack explains, 'black American musicians spread the gospel of hot sounds in tiny cafes and a few sumptuous settings that attracted rich and famous British and American tourists and French socialites. In the Parisian music idiom, this era of the Roaring Twenties was often called the era of *lejazz-hot'*.[141] As opposed to symphonic jazz, which was typically associated with white musicians, 'hot' jazz was highly improvisational and rarely performed with the aid of sheet music due to its demonstrated inability to replicate the spontaneous spirit of hot jazz.[142] Once again, then, we find Mirrlees blurring the boundary between the printed page (of sheet music, in this instance) and sonic space. The word 'quaver', after all, denotes not only 'a note having a duration equal to half that of a crotchet' but also 'a shake or tremble in the voice' while the word 'crotchet' connotes 'a

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139 Mirrlees replaced 'niggers' with 'negroes' for the first republication of *Paris* in the *Virginia Woolf Quarterly* in 1973. Here I follow her revised wording.

140 Gaskill, *Chromographia,* p. 193. Pound similarly used 'racialized and derogatory language to describe the typographical blackness of printed music' according to Matore, p. 74.

141 William Shack, *Harlem in Montmartre: A Paris Jazz Story Between the Great Wars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. xvii.

142 Jeffrey H. Jackson, *Making Jazz French: Music and Modern Life in Interwar Paris* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 154; Ibid., p. 18; See also T. Austin Graham, *The Great American Songbooks: Musical Texts, Modernism, and the Value of Popular Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 128.

perverse conceit'.[143] Dancing perversely off the page, the sound of jazz 'scorn[s] the laws of solid geometry' and 'pump[s]', as Clive Bell noted in 'Plus De Jazz' (1921), 'so much hot air [into a multitude of empty heads] as to swell them to disquieting proportions'.[144]

The racist premises of 'Plus De Jazz' and *Paris* are undeniable. Also at work in Bell's and Mirrlees' personification of jazz notes, however, is the markedly modernist desire to 'realise a new kind of music that would be spatial'.[145] As Henderson notes, this desire was common among early twentieth-century avant-garde artists, musicians, and physicists.[146] Claude Bragdon, for instance, claimed in the name of 'experimental physics' that 'musical sounds create invisible geometrical figures in the air' in 1916—the same year that Malevich 'advised contemporary Russian musicians to create "musical masses" in space'.[147] It seems that these non-Euclidean musical masses also caught Mirrlees' eye, for the 'crotchets and quavers' of *Paris* are both spatially and temporally present on the page. Mirrlees maintained an interest in the visualisation and spatialisation of sound throughout her life. In an ekphrastic poem entitled 'Winter Trees' (1973), for example, we find her likening 'a line of tall, thin trees' to:

> Black crotchets, strong and perpendicular,
> Played by wood-winds, inaudibly, bat-high;
> Black with a blackness absolute yet manifold

And asking:

> [B]y what branch of trigonometry
> Could even Leonardo hope to trace
> The angles of the crossing twigs and boughs?
> Or hear the crotchets of the quavering tune? [148]

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143 Oxford English Dictionary Online, 'quaver, *n.*' (2023); 'crotchet, *n.*' (2023).
144 Clive Bell, 'Plus de Jazz', *New Republic*, 21 September 1921, pp. 92-96 (p. 95).
145 Henderson, *Fourth Dimension,* p. 355.
146 Ibid., pp. 354-357.
147 Claude Bragdon, 'Song and Light', *Architectural Review*, September 1916, pp. 169-171 (p. 170); Henderson, *Fourth Dimension,* p. 356.
148 Mirrlees, 'Winter Trees', in *Collected Poems,* ed. by Parmar, pp. 40-42 (pp. 40-41).

The answer, for Mirrlees, is not to be found in the Western 'trigonometry' of Renaissance artists like Leonardo da Vinci but rather in the ancient Japanese art of *suiboku-ga* (monochrome ink painting) as practiced by 'the saffron robed Sesshu'—Mirrlees' epithet for Sesshū Tōyō, the painter of *Winter Landscape* (Figure 4.F).[149] In the centre of Sesshū's c. 1470 ink painting, as H. Paul Varley notes, we find 'an abstract mosaic of surfaces that look startlingly like the work of a modern cubist painter'.[150] Here, dots are superimposed on top of the grid-like surface. These 'dots', as Saburo Hasegawa notes, 'are the most unique. Movements in all directions seem to gather and condense into each dot, and when these dots are scattered across the picture surface, a sense of depth and elastic rhythm surfaces around them'.[151] Like Hasegawa, the speaker of 'Winter Trees' attributes a musical quality to Sesshū's dots, going so far as to compare them to the heads of crotchets. Ultimately, for Mirrlees, Sesshū's 'subtly graded shades of *suiboku* ink' were solely capable of capturing the 'blackness absolute yet manifold' of crotchet-like trees as they sing 'bat-high'—*i.e.,* beyond the audible range of the human ear.[152]

Reading *Paris* in light of 'Winter Trees' reveals Mirrlees' continued interest in the spatial dimensions of printed music. Like Remizov, who envisioned a 'manuscript [that] approaches sheet music', Mirrlees sought to realise the musical power of the typographical page.[153] Which brings us to one of the most famous features of *Paris:* its eight bars of musical score taken from George Frideric Handel's 1711 opera *Rinaldo*. Here, Mirrlees follows in the footsteps of Picasso (who pasted a fragment of sheet music in his 1912 *Guitar and Wine Glass* collage) and Apollinaire (who embedded three bars of notes in *Calligrammes*). Whereas Picasso's bars belong to the realm of popular culture and Apollinaire's bars are unrecognisable, Mirrlees' bars are nothing short of

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149 Ibid., p. 41.
150 H. Paul Varley, *Japanese Culture,* 4th edn (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), p. 132.
151 Saburo Hasegawa, 'Sesshu, 1948', trans. by Haruko Kohno, in *The Saburo Hasegawa Reader,* ed. by Mark Dean Johnson and Dakin Hart (Oakland: University of California Press, 2009), pp. 60-70 (p. 69)
152 Mirrlees, 'Winter Trees', p. 40 [emphasis original].
153 Remizov quoted in English by Friedman in *Beyond Symbolism and Surrealism*, p. 28.



Figure 4.F. Sesshū Tōyō, *Winter Landscape,* c. 1470, ink on paper, Tokyo National Museum

symphony.[154] In this sense, *Paris* recalls the Poundian idea that 'the rhythm set in a line of poetry connotes its symphony, which, had we little more skill, we could score for orchestra'.[155] Here, as Matore notes, Pound's 'eccentric musicological conviction' is that 'the singular poetic line defined by conventional typography is an optical illusion, that encoded within it is the spatial breadth of a symphonic score'—a conviction that owes its origins to Mallarmé's 'Préface' to *Un coup de dés* (1897).[156] By literally embedding two staves into her poem, Mirrlees similarly challenges easy distinctions between the compact lines of poetry and the broad staves of music.

Not only do Mirrlees' embedded bars of music have typographical significance, but they also have philosophical significance when we consider them in light of Mirrlees' friendship with Karin Stephen (née Costelloe). Writing in *The Misuse of Mind: A Study of Bergson's Attack on Intellectualism* (1922), Stephen illustrated Bergson's theory that 'each note of a melody vaguely reflects the whole musical phrase' like this:

> Take the last bar of a tune. By itself, or following upon other sounds not belonging to the tune, this last bar would not be itself, its particular quality depends upon coming at the end of that particular tune. In a process of duration, then, such as tune, the "later" bars are not related externally to the "earlier" but depend for their character upon their position in the whole tune. In actual fact, of course, the tune progresses continuously, and not by stages, such as distinct notes or bars, but if, for the sake of description, we speak of it as composed of different bars, we must say that any bar we choose to distinguish is modified by the whole of the tune which has gone before it: change its position in the whole stream of sound to which it belongs and you change its character absolutely.[157]

In *Paris,* Mirrlees includes only the last eight bars of the soprano aria 'Lascia ch'io pianga' from the second act of *Rinaldo*. The final bar, with its single dotted minim marked '*ppp*' (*pianississimo*, or 'very very quiet'), is precisely as Stephen describes: dependent for its character upon its position in the

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154 Picasso's fragment of sheet music comes from Marcel Legay's *Sonnet* (1892).
155 Ezra Pound, 'Introduction' to the *Sonnets and Ballate of Guido Cavalcanti*, trans. by Ezra Pound (London: Stephen Swift, 1912), pp. 1-13 (p. 12).
156 Matore, p. 49. See Stéphane Mallarmé's 'Préface' to *Un coup du dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (Paris: Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française, 1914), n.p.
157 Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 148; Karin Stephen, *The Misuse of Mind: A Study of Bergson's Attack on Intellectualism* (London: Kegan Paul, 1922), p. 63.

whole tune. And while this tune is broken into bars, the word '*dim - - in - - u - en - do*' (growing softer) traverses across these bars, fusing them into a harmonic whole that culminates in a 'very very quiet' final bar. Taken out of their original context (Handel's *Rinaldo*), these eight bars of musical notation acquire a new character in the 'stream of sound' that is *Paris* even as they remind the musically inclined reader of the following libretto: 'let me weep for my cruel fate, and let me sigh for my liberty'.[158] For the unmusical reader, however, the notes carry little emotional weight. As Fry notes: 'a harmony in music cannot be perceived by a person who merely hears accurately the notes which compose it—it can only be recognised when the relations of those notes to one another are accompanied by emotion'.[159] In other words, the perception and recognition of sound depends upon the participation of an intelligent ear that contributes memories, meanings, and emotions to its sonic surroundings.

By necessity, musical notation involves the spatialisation of time as it converts sound into image, superficially breaking an indiscrete tune into separate and distinct notes. And while Stephen's illustration of this idea is indeed illuminating in light of Mirrlees' decision to excerpt a handful of bars from *Rinaldo,* it's also worth considering the matter in Bergson's own words:

> When we listen to music we have the purest possible impression of succession—an impression which is as far removed as possible from that of simultaneity—and yet it is the very continuity of the music, and the impossibility of dividing it up, that gives us this impression [Stephen's translation].[160] If we cut it up into distinct notes, into so many "befores" and "afters", we are bringing spatial images into it and impregnating the succession with simultaneity: in space, and only in space, is there a clear-cut distinction of parts external to one another [Andison's translation].[161]

Three years before Stephen quoted part of this passage in a 1915 article on Bergson, Harrison included it in *Themis,* where it appeared alongside the following quotation: 'Real duration is what

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158 Briggs, 'Commentary', p. 43.
159 Fry, p. 54.
160 Henri Bergson quoted in English by Stephen in 'Complexity and Synthesis', p. 275.
161 Bergson, 'The Perception of Change', p. 176.

we have always called time, but time perceived as indivisible'.[162] According to Harrison, 'we cannot understand' this kind of time 'through the eye' because it is 'trained to spatial perception'.[163] 'We can', however, 'imagine it through the ear' because sound, as Steven Connor notes, 'is omnipresent, non-directional and mobile, where vision is intermittent, separate and fixating'.[164] Thus understood, the ear is particularly suited to the task of perceiving the indiscrete nature of duration. No wonder, then, that the speaker of *Paris* so frequently gestures to auditory experience—sound defies and disintegrates the seemingly sovereign spatial dimensions of vision, giving the perceiver more direct access to the flux of duration.

Around the same time that Bergson, Stephen, and Harrison were calling attention to the indivisibility of 'real' duration, Russian Futurists like Benedict Livshits proclaimed their poetry to be 'indivisible'.[165] Mirrlees' poem, similarly, is not divided into sections. *Paris,* therefore, differs dramatically from *Tender Buttons, Sea Garden, Songs to Joannes,* and *Observations*—all of which are broken into separate sections each devoted to a single act of observation even as the observed object tends to extend beyond the spatiotemporal boundaries of the poem. *Tender Buttons,* for instance, is not only broken into sections (*i.e.,* 'Objects', 'Food', 'Rooms') but also into sub-sections (*i.e.,* 'A LITTLE BIT OF TUMBLER'), suggesting a degree of perceptual mastery that was unavailable to Mirrlees by virtue of her choice of form: the long poem. Proceeding from one ephemeral moment to another without pause, Mirrlees' long poem form fits with her conviction that 'the Present' is not something 'static and solid – a thing that one can turn round in one's hand and examine at one's leisure, dwelling lovingly on its details'.[166] Instead, 'the Present' of perception is 'perpetually shifting'—or at least this is how Stephen depicted it in the following passage from 1918:

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[162] Ibid., p. 176 [emphasis excised]. Quoted in the original French by Harrison in *Themis,* p. 477.
[163] Harrison, *Themis,* p. 477.
[164] Ibid., p. 477; Connor, p. 207; Harrison similarly described music as an 'unlocalized' form of art in *Ancient Art and Ritual,* p. 233.
[165] Benedict Livshits, 'The Liberation of the Word', in *Russian Futurism,* ed. by Lawton and Eagle, pp. 78-81 (p. 80).
[166] Mirrlees, 'Some Aspects', p. 80.

> What is often not clearly realized […] is the extent to which, even though there is no reason to suppose that there has been any change in the conditions, our experience is, nevertheless, in fact always changing owing to variations in the intensity and direction of our attention. If, for example, you try to fix your attention on, say, a sheet of foolscap, and notice what happens, you will soon find out that it is a complete mistake to imagine that, during the time your attention is supposed to be fixed upon it, you are continually aware of the same direct experience of, say, whiteness, parallel lines, oblong shape, and so on. Try as you may to steady your attention, it is perpetually shifting, now concentrating on a tiny part of the whole field presented to sight, now expanding to include much more of it; and if, by a great effort, you manage to check this straying of attention, your object seems to elude you altogether, and you find that you are no longer even succeeding in confining your attention to what is presented to sight, but that now you are listening, perhaps, or attending to your breathing or the sensations of your clothes, and not to the sheet of foolscap at all.[167]

Published just one year prior to the composition of *Paris*, this passage is significant for several reasons. First, Stephen seems to share Mirrlees' understanding of attentive perception as a kaleidoscopic phenomenon that shifts and swells 'even though there is no reason to suppose that there has been any change in [external] conditions'. Second, Stephen's choice of illustration—a sheet of foolscap—closely resembles a page of poetry. Any attempt to isolate attention on this sheet is futile: its visual properties ('whiteness, parallel lines, [and] oblong shape') are accompanied by a plethora of other visual and non-visual sensations. In tracing these other sensations, Stephen moves from sight to sound before finally invoking the multi-sensory nature of bodily experience. This movement, however, does not occur in 'clear-cut' stages and 'it would be a mistake', according to Stephen, to think that it does.[168] No wonder, then, that *Paris* is not divided into discrete sections: the 'ebbings and flowings of attention', as Stephen notes, 'shade off into each other so that it is often very hard to say, in the case of any given experience, just where acquaintance ends'.[169]

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[167] Karin Stephen, 'Thought and Intuition', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society,* 18.1 (June 1918), 38-74 (pp. 39-40) <doi:10.1093/aristotelian/18.1.38>.
[168] Ibid., p. 40.
[169] Ibid., p. 40.

Conclusion

While the chimerical concept of an 'aural kaleidoscope' serves as a seductive analogy for the Stephensian 'ebbings and flowings of attention' that we find in *Paris*, Mirrlees harboured doubts regarding the plausibility and power of this instrument: 'the written word', she 'fear[ed]', 'inadequate though it be, will never be superseded as the best means of telling us about the past'.[170] Nearly one hundred years after Mirrlees voiced this fear in 'Listening in to the Past', a plethora of new recording technologies (like electrical microphones, magnetic tape recording devices, and analogue-to-digital converters) have emerged.[171] With each new technological development, however, phoneticians have ventured further away from the graphically-inclined aural culture of *fin-de-siècle* France. From Scott de Martinville's phonautograph of 1857 to Rousselot's phonoscope of 1913, the period immediately preceding the composition of *Paris* was marked by a desire to visualise that which is verbal even as it paradoxically coincided with a denigration of vision among avant-garde writers, painters, and philosophers in continental Europe. *Paris,* as we have seen, emerged from within this paradox. Throughout the poem, Mirrlees blurs the boundary between the verbal and the visual—not with the aim of registering synaesthetic experience (as was the case in *Tender Buttons*) but in an effort to call attention to the fragile ontological boundary between that which is typically regarded as real (*i.e.,* empirically perceived with the eyes) and that which is typically regarded as unreal (*i.e.,* imaginatively perceived by the ears). This, for Mirrlees, is the unparalleled power of the 'written word': it is neither purely visual like painting, nor purely auditory like music. Instead, as Mirrlees' manuscript notebooks make clear, 'poetry […] includes whatsoever of painting can be made visible to his mind's eye, and whatsoever of music can be conveyed by sound and proportion'.[172] In other words, poetry combines and extends the perceptual powers of

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[170] Mirrlees, 'Listening', p. 86.
[171] See George Brock-Nannestad, 'The Development of Recording Technologies', in *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music,* ed. by Nicholas Cook and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 149-176.
[172] Hope Mirrlees Papers, 6/4/1. Here, Mirrlees is quoting from Leigh Hunt's *Imagination and Fancy* (1844).

the ear and the eye—both of which lend intelligibility to an otherwise unintelligible shower of sights and sounds.

This is particularly true of *Paris* as a poem which renders the written word in a typographically playful manner so that each page bears resemblance to a painted canvas or symphonic score. Ontologically, these graphic art forms enjoy a privileged status in *Paris* while the 'laws of solid geometry' are met with 'scorn'. Following in the footsteps of French and Russian artists and thinkers like Cézanne, Apollinaire, Remizov, and Blavatsky, Mirrlees abandoned the laws of solid geometry to create a multi-dimensional play space that is both flexible (*i.e.,* capable of expansion and contraction) and frail (*i.e.,* liable to disintegration and transformation). Perception, in this framework, is precisely as Bergson described it: a dynamic and durational activity that works to reveal the unseen and unheard phenomena lying at the periphery of practical life. In order to perceive these Keatsian realities, the narrator of *Paris* became 'unpractical' even as she remained pragmatic in her quest for a Harrisonian holophrase that would express 'the hot intimacy of personal experience' rather than the disembodied sublimity of Romantic omniscience. Ultimately, the narrator's quest proves successful: she remains submerged in 'the stream of warm, full, human consciousness' throughout the entirety of *Paris,* including the poem's famous last line.[173] Here, the Great Bear (Ursa Major) constellation is typographically rendered with seven asterisks akin to the 'seven stars' that Jesus Christ held 'in his right hand' according to the Book of Revelation.[174] Perceived and presented from Mirrlees' sociocultural position in Paris, Ursa Major holophrastically conveys the multi-layered nature of durational experience.

That Mirrlees ends *Paris* with such a visually striking image is significant, for it epitomises how the denigration of vision tends to result in a preoccupation with pictorialism. In his reading of Jay's *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (1993), Steven Connor picked up on this paradox: 'the suspicion of sight', he observed, 'often takes the more

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[173] Harrison, *Aspects,* p. 17.
[174] Revelation 1.16; Briggs, *Reading,* p. 88.

abstract form of an intensified scrutiny of vision, a scrutiny which amounts to a kind of vision raised to a higher power'.[175] Similarly, in *Paris,* Mirrlees cannot help but return to vision—not as a sovereign power but as a perceptual faculty to be scrutinised, manipulated, and re-envisioned. Even Mirrlees' 'aural kaleidoscope', after all, is not strictly aural. Instead, it serves as a visual analogy for the way in which sound defies the spatiotemporal dimensions of vision. Ultimately, as the last line of *Paris* attests, Mirrlees does not cast her eyes down but rather up to the sky in pursuit of something that will fulfil the demands of art ('which makes the image') and literature ('which crystallizes attributes and functions')—both of which have the power to 'arrest and fix' the 'shifting kaleidoscope' of Harrisonian reality.

[175] Connor, p. 204.

CHAPTER FIVE

Marianne Moore's *Observations:*

Piercing Glances

Three years before Scofield Thayer approached Marianne Moore with the prospect of publishing a collection of her poems with the Dial Press, the poet settled upon a title. 'I should have used *Observations* I think, as a title', Moore wrote to H.D.'s partner Bryher upon receiving a copy of *Poems* (1921)—a collection of 24 verses published by the Egoist Press without Moore's formal consent.[1] Lawrence Rainey has hypothesised that the title of Moore's first authorised collection, *Observations* (1924), gestures to T.S. Eliot's first collection, *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917).[2] Given that Moore's initial reaction to *Prufrock* was one of great ambivalence, however, it is unlikely that Eliot was the sole source of inspiration for the poet as she set about naming her early work.[3] Long before the publication of *Prufrock*, Moore was encouraged to cultivate a perceptually rich practice of observation in almost every sphere of her life. As I have argued elsewhere, Moore's study of the Bible, coupled with her enrolment on undergraduate biology courses expressly designed 'to encourage the habit of exact observation', informed her observational practice of attending to the particular properties of individual organisms.[4] Yet Moore's conceptual study of observation as a perceptual phenomenon—'the action […] of observing, watching, or noticing'—is yet to be fully explored in relation to *Observations.*[5]

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[1] Moore, *Selected Letters,* ed. by Costello, p. 164.
[2] Lawrence Rainey (ed.), *Modernism: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p. 646.
[3] See Marianne Moore, 'A Note on T.S. Eliot's Book', in *Complete Prose,* ed. by Willis, p. 35; Other possible sources of inspiration include Kant's *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764) and Johann Reinhold Forster's *Observations Made During a Voyage Round the World* (1778).
[4] *Bryn Mawr College Program, 1905-1906,* p. 144; Emma Felin, 'A Peculiar Kind of Particularity: Plants and Animals in Marianne Moore's Early Poetry', *Modernist Cultures,* 18.1 (2023), 43-67 <doi:10.3366/mod.2023.0386>.
[5] Oxford English Dictionary Online, 'observation, *n.*'.

Moore's formal study of observation can be traced back to a 1908-1909 general psychology class taught by James Leuba at Bryn Mawr College.[6] During class, Moore took 130 pages of notes in her psychology notebook, where the words 'observation', 'perception', and 'percept' appear on nearly every page.[7] Such repetition suggests that to study psychology at Bryn Mawr in the early twentieth century was, at least to some degree, to study perception. And while Moore never explicitly distinguished between perception and observation, the latter has long been used to describe the more formal act of looking for scientific and artistic purposes. Having advocated 'for the necessity in the artist, of exact science' in a 1921 article for *The Dial,* Moore was well-positioned to draw on the dual authority that the word 'observation' affords when she published her first authorised collection under that name in 1924.[8]

When it came to the scientific practice of observing, Moore was influenced not only by her professors at Bryn Mawr, but also by scientists like Charles Darwin, William Whewell, William James, Walter P. Taylor, G.B. Longstaff, and Edward B. Poulton—all of whom deviated from the ideal of a detached and dispassionate scientific observer. As Tiffany Watt-Smith notes, 'passionate and gestured acts of looking' were pervasive in the latter half of the nineteenth century—particularly in the fields of biology and psychology, where we find the likes of Darwin and James finding facts 'exciting' thanks to the hypotheses, interests, and questions that they formed in advance of the act of observation.[9] Indeed, for James, that which was observed was 'always in close connection with some *interest* felt by consciousness to be paramount at the time'.[10] And 'interest', according to Moore, enables an observer to perceive 'different things [within] the one topic under observation'.[11] As this chapter makes clear, the capacity to perceive subtle differences

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[6] Moore's course record can be found in Patricia C. Willis (ed.), *The Marianne Moore Newsletter,* 5.1 (Spring 1981), pp. 13-14.
[7] See RML, Lecture Notebook (1908-1909), VII:11:07.
[8] Marianne Moore, 'The Sacred Wood', in *Complete Prose*, ed. by Willis, pp. 52-55 (p. 53).
[9] Tiffany Watt-Smith, *On Flinching: Theatricality and Scientific Looking from Darwin to Shell Shock* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 37; William James, 'What is an Emotion?', *Mind,* 9.34 (April 1884), 188-205 (p. 189) <doi:10.1093/mind/os-IX.34.188>.
[10] James, *Principles,* I, p. 139 [emphasis original].
[11] RML, VII:11:07.

with an educated eye became crucial for early twentieth-century scientists studying a range of hidden phenomena like cryptic colouration, electromagnetic radiation, skeletal anatomy, consciousness, and volition. Like Loy, Moore located such phenomena 'just […] below' the *limen* (or threshold) of sensation—a level that she sought to apprehend with the same 'x-raylike inquisitive intensity' that she associated with modern scientific methods of observation.[12] Placing *Observations* in conversation with these methodologies, this chapter examines how Moore's educated eye contributed to her ability to observe seemingly unobservable phenomena. What roles, I ask, did science, technology, art, and culture play in Moore's perceptual training? What are the origins, implications, and effects of Moore's 'x-raylike inquisitive intensity'? And finally, what kinds of perceptual, aesthetic, and poetic strategies did Moore employ in order to achieve a poetic that was 'lit with piercing glances into the life of things' (51)?

Of course, it was visual art and not science that Moore had in mind when she wrote that 'pictures […] must be "lit with piercing glances into the life of things"'. As I have already intimated, scientific and artistic methods of observation share many similarities in Moore's thought—a point that Linda Leavell made in *Marianne Moore and the Visual Arts: Prismatic Color* (1995), where she noted how 'Moore show[s] that scientific methods and technical language are fundamental to artistic vision'.[13] More recently, in *Pound, Frost, Moore, and Poetic Precision: Science in Modernist American Poetry* (2020), Barry Ahearn instead called attention to the ways in which scientists and artists diverge in Moore's thought.[14] According to Ahearn, 'the scientist selects an area of specialization and treads that narrow ground' but 'the artist […] casts a broad net and finds nothing unworthy of attention'.[15] And while Ahearn recognises this distinction as a 'general' one of 'less importan[ce]' to Moore, his unsettled insistence upon it is typical of what I have identified elsewhere as an

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[12] Ibid.; Marianne Moore, *New Collected Poems,* ed. by Heather Cass White (London: Faber and Faber, 2017), p. 56. All further references to this edition will be given after quotations in the text of this chapter.
[13] Linda Leavell, *Marianne Moore and the Visual Arts: Prismatic Color* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), p. 9.
[14] Barry Ahearn, *Pound, Frost, Moore, and Poetic Precision: Science in Modernist American Poetry* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 220.
[15] Ibid., p. 220.

outdated critical tendency to define Moore's perception as 'aimless' and 'inclusive' at the expense of recognising how she employed 'inquisitive intensity' in *Observations* and beyond.[16] The Moorean artist does not have a 'broadly ranging eye' as Ahearn contends.[17] Instead, as Leavell notes, Moore shared Alfred Stieglitz's conviction that '*the esthetic basis of all art is selection*'.[18] Of course, selection is not just the basis of art but also the basis of science—a point that Moore made when she asked: 'do the poet and scientist not work analogously?' and answered: 'Each is attentive to clues, each must narrow the choice, must strive for precision'.[19] Eager to identify the aesthetic origins of Moore's precision, critics like Lisa M. Steinman, Linda Leavell, and Mark Goble have placed the poet in conversation with precisionist painters and straight photographers like Charles Sheeler, Charles Demuth, Paul Strand, and Alfred Stieglitz.[20] And while their scholarship has contributed to a greater understanding of the relationship between art, science, and technology in Moore's poetry—particularly when it deals with the same urban scenes depicted by Sheeler, Demuth, Strand, and Stieglitz—precisionist painters and straight photographers were not the only artists that Moore associated with scientific values like precision and selection.

With a particular emphasis on the natural world that is so often the focus of Moore's 'piercing glances', this chapter places *Observations* in conversation with nature painters who adopted the same 'inquisitive intensity' as their scientific peers—Abbott Handerson Thayer, Sir Edwin Landseer, and John Ruskin—all of whom were known to Moore. These painters were not associated with precisionism, but they did share Stieglitz's desire for 'sharp focus and little if any manipulation'.[21] Their writings and works reinforced Moore's sense, first articulated in her psychology notebook, that a perceiver must actively 'attend to' her surroundings if she hopes to

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16 Ibid., p. 221; Felin, 'A Peculiar Kind of Particularity', pp. 44-45.
17 Ahearn, p. 221.
18 Leavell, *Marianne Moore and the Visual Arts,* p. 125 [emphasis original].
19 Marianne Moore, 'The Art of Poetry', in *The Paris Review Interviews,* 4 vols (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2007-2009), IV (2009), pp. 19-48 (p. 47).
20 Lisa M. Steinman, *Precisionism in America, 1915-1941: Reordering Reality* (New York: Harry Abrams, 1994), pp. 68-75; Leavell, *Marianne Moore and the Visual Arts,* pp. 169-170; Mark Goble, *Beautiful Circuits: Modernism and the Mediated Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 233-234.
21 Leavell, *Marianne Moore and the Visual Arts,* p. 34.

perceive more than '1/10 of what [she] could perceive if [she] paid attention'.[22] In other words, only 10% of what is perceptible rises above the *limen*. In order to perceive the other 90%, attention—defined in Moore's notebooks as 'the physiological ground of the narrowness of consciousness'—is required.[23] Given how much is at stake in this formulation, it should come as no surprise that Moore identified 'the selective attentive activity' as the 'most important' faculty of the mind.[24] For Moore, a key part of attention's importance was its power to actualise that which is only possible without it. Unlocking this power, however, wasn't always easy for the poet, who noted that '[we] can't pay attention to the same thing for a long time [unless] we are constantly changing the aspect'.[25] 'The secret of attention', therefore, is 'the ability to vary the aspects'—an ability that artists like Thayer, Landseer, and Ruskin cultivated and advocated.[26] Much like their scientific contemporaries, these artists adopted an active, educated, and inquisitive eye in an effort to apprehend natural phenomena ordinarily located below the *limen*. Ultimately, as we shall see, the motivation behind Moore's adoption of 'x-raylike inquisitive intensity' in *Observations* was much the same insofar as the poet was 'striving always for that wh[ich] is unseen' with the same 'piercing glances' that she associated with her favourite artists and scientists.[27]

Concealing Colouration

In *The Variation of Animals and Plants Under Domestication* (1868)—Moore's 'best-thumbed volume of Darwin's work' according to Robin G. Schulze—Charles Darwin 'made the fundamental mistake of ascribing [an animal's] conspicuousness to the very thing that opposes it'.[28] Or at least

[22] RML, VII:11:07 [emphasis original].
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] RML, Religion Notebook 1252/25 (c. 1913-1915), VII:08:03.
[28] Robin G. Schulze, *Degenerate Muse: American Nature, Modernist Poetry, and the Problem of Cultural Hygiene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 176; Gerald Handerson Thayer and Abbott Handerson Thayer, *Concealing*

this is how Abbott Handerson Thayer described Darwin's *Variation* in *Concealing Coloration in the Animal Kingdom* (1909), a book that Moore read in the winter of 1914-1915.[29] Contrary to the Darwinian idea that patterns like zebra stripes or cheetah spots make their wearer conspicuous, Thayer held that animals 'are almost all colored and marked in a way most potent to conceal them'.[30] As Elisa Tamarkin notes, Thayer's theory was controversial for its time because it 'downplay[ed] sexual selection as the cause of an animal's appearance'.[31] Even so, as Edward B. Titchener pointed out in his 1910 review of *Concealing Coloration*, Darwin and Thayer agreed that small chance variations yield large changes in coloration over time—a point that Thayer himself made in an early (1896) article on the subject of protective coloration.[32] But the evolutionary cause of coloration wasn't Darwin and Thayer's only point of agreement.

Despite their differing views on the evolutionary impact of colour markings, Darwin and Thayer were both interested in investigating which aspects of the perceptual environment become visible when approached by an 'educated eye'. Darwin, for example, observed that 'variations' in a breed are 'often so slight as to be imperceptible by the uneducated eye' in *The Variation of Animals and Plants*.[33] Whereas Darwin used the word 'educated' to describe an eye that is scientifically trained in the field of natural history, Thayer used the word 'trained' to describe an eye with an aesthetic background in the visual arts. According to Thayer, 'all persons of trained sight, such as artists, perceive [the gradation of shading and of colouring] everywhere among wild creatures' while 'other people'—including scientists—'supplement their underdeveloped sight-sense by their

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Coloration in the Animal Kingdom: An Exposition of the Laws of Disguise Through Color and Pattern, Being a Summary of Abbot H. Thayer's Discoveries (New York: Macmillan, 1909), p 12.

[29] See RML, Reading Notebook 1250/1 (1907-1915), VII:01:01.

[30] Thayer and Thayer, p. 13.

[31] Tamarkin, p. 207.

[32] Edward B. Titchener, 'Psychological Literature', *The American Journal of Psychology,* 21.3 (July 1910), 500-504 (p. 500) <doi:10.2307/1413355>; Abbott H. Thayer, 'Further Remarks on the Law Which Underlies Protective Coloration', *The Auk,* 13.4 (October 1896), 318-320 (p. 320) <doi:10.2307/4068343>; It is also worth noting Gerald's promise that his father's 'color-law' would 'ultimately be recognized as the most wonderful form of Darwin's great law' in *Concealing Coloration,* p. 16.

[33] Charles Darwin, *The Variation of Animals and Plants Under Domestication,* 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1868), I, p. 4.

other senses, and if they *know* an animal *is* solid, think he *looks* solid'.[34] As we have seen in previous chapters, the tendency to privilege one's own perceptual education above that of others was not uncommon among artists, poets, and scientists working and writing in the early twentieth century. When asked what distinguishes the poet from the 'ordinary man' in a 1934 interview for *New Verse*, however, Moore departed from this norm.[35] 'Nothing', she replied in her characteristically democratic manner, 'unless it is an exaggerated tendency to visualize; and on encountering manifestations of life—insects, lower animals, or human beings—to wonder if they are happy, and what will become of them'.[36] Without privileging the aesthetic education of her own eye, then, Moore confessed that she had certain perceptual 'tendencies' ranging from visualisation to wonder—tendencies that shaped which aspects of her environment were most salient.

The idea that an individual might possess a particular perceptual predisposition is one that Moore encountered during Leuba's psychology class. 'Some of us make use of visualization', wrote Moore in her notebook, 'in some of us vis[ual] terms [are] much more predominant'.[37] As numerous critics have noted, 'visual terms' are 'predominant' in Moore's poetry. 'Despite its verbal medium', as Leavell notes, 'Moore's is an art of *seeing*'.[38] Indeed, Moore's prose reveals that she understood 'language' as 'a special extension of the power of seeing', a medium that 'can make visible not only the already visible world, but through it the invisible world of relations and affinities'.[39] Like the other poets in this thesis, Moore used language to push and play with the boundaries of what can and cannot be made aesthetic (*i.e.,* empirically perceptible to the senses). More than any other poet in this thesis, however, Moore understood aestheticisation as a predominantly visual act whereby seemingly imperceptible phenomena are made sensible *to the eye*. Vision and visuality take priority in *Observations*; language extends the power of the educated eye

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[34] Thayer and Thayer, p. 15 [emphasis original].
[35] Moore, 'Answers to an Enquiry', p. 674.
[36] Ibid., p. 16.
[37] RML, VII:11:07.
[38] Leavell, *Marianne Moore and the Visual Arts,* p. 9 [emphasis original].
[39] Howard Nemerov quoted by Marianne Moore, 'Answers to Some Questions Posed by Howard Nemerov', in *Poets on Poetry,* ed. by Nemerov (New York: Basic Books, 1966), pp. 8-16 (p. 11).

by giving form, substance, and permanence to the observation of visible and invisible phenomena that might otherwise remain unseen.

In recent chapters we saw how 'the unseen' was often used synonymously with the unperceived—*i.e.,* anything that has not yet been perceived by the senses. When Moore writes that 'we are striving always for that wh[ich] is unseen' in her c. 1913-1915 Religion Notebook, however, it is specifically the unseen—*i.e.,* anything that has not yet been *visually* observed—that she has in mind. This category includes not only 'the invisible world of relations and affinities' but also those visible phenomena that go unnoticed (or 'neglected', to borrow a term from Stein) due to their inconspicuousness. With this definition of the unseen in mind, we will now consider how Moore used her educated eye to gain and give visual access to the unseen in 'An Octopus' (1924)—a poem in which Moore's 'tendency to visualize […] manifestations of life' is at its most 'exaggerated'. Emulating Thayer's painterly portrayal of animals that are able to disappear 'in many situations and from many view-points' thanks to their 'fragmentary background-matching',[40] Moore depicted a North American mountain goat (*Oreamnos americanus*) standing in the peaks of Mount Rainier National Park like this:

> And farther up, in stag-at-bay position
> as a scintillating fragment of these terrible stalagmites,
> stands the goat,
> its eye fixed on the waterfall which never seems to fall—
> an endless skein swayed by the wind,
> immune to force of gravity in the perspective of the peaks. (73)

The passage above is a prime instance of what Margaret Holley has called 'the fundamentally spatial orientation of [Moore's] imagination'.[41] Having traversed 'blue forests thrown together with marble and jasper and agate' in the preceding lines (73), Moore carefully situates the goat in a snowy space 'farther up' the mountain—a description that closely resembles Walter P. Taylor's

[40] Thayer and Thayer, p. 79 [emphasis excised].
[41] Margaret Holley, *The Poetry of Marianne Moore: A Study in Voice and Value* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 6.

suggestion that the goats of Mount Rainier live 'at or above timberline' in the summer.[42] According to Taylor, a biologist who contributed to the Mount Rainier National Park brochure that Moore read, annotated, and quoted from, 'any mountaineer who is vouchsafed the sight of a mountain goat in the park may consider himself fortunate'.[43] Whether or not Moore was fortunate enough to see the goat in person during her visit to Mount Rainier in July 1922, her poem affords the reader with an aesthetically rigorous visualisation of its form. Like butterflies, which '"blend" inextricably with the gleaming and scintillating, labyrinthine-shadowed world of wind-swayed leaves and flowers' in *Concealing Coloration*, however, the goat vanishes into a 'scintillating fragment' of its natural habitat soon after it is spotted.[44]

Biologists working on cryptic colouration today would cite the goat's disappearance as a perceptual consequence of disruptive coloration—'a set of markings that creates the appearance of false edges and boundaries and hinders the detection or recognition of an object's, or part of an object's, true outline and shape'.[45] 'In part through Thayer's influence', as Roy R. Behrens notes, 'disruptive coloration was widely used for military camouflage during World War I'.[46] Thanks to the United States Navy's adoption of 'razzle-dazzle', a black and white pattern that made it difficult for German submarines to target merchant ships (see Figure 5.A), Moore would have been familiar with the principle of disruptive coloration when she composed the passage above. It should come as no surprise, then, that the speaker is only just able to make out the contours of the goat's 'stag-at-bay position' before its black and white body becomes one with the 'terrible stalagmites' that

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[42] Walter P. Taylor, 'Twelve Characteristic Mammals of the Park', in *Mount Rainier National Park: Rules and Regulations* (Washington: Department of the Interior, n.d.), pp. 27-30 (p. 27).
[43] Ibid., p. 27.
[44] Thayer and Thayer, p. 87.
[45] Martin Stevens and Sami Merilaita, 'Animal Camouflage', in *Animal Camouflage: Mechanisms and Function,* ed. by Stevens and Merilaita (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 1-16 (p. 5).
[46] Roy R. Behrens, 'Nature's Artistry', in *Animal Camouflage,* ed. by Stevens and Merilaita, pp. 87-100 (p. 92).

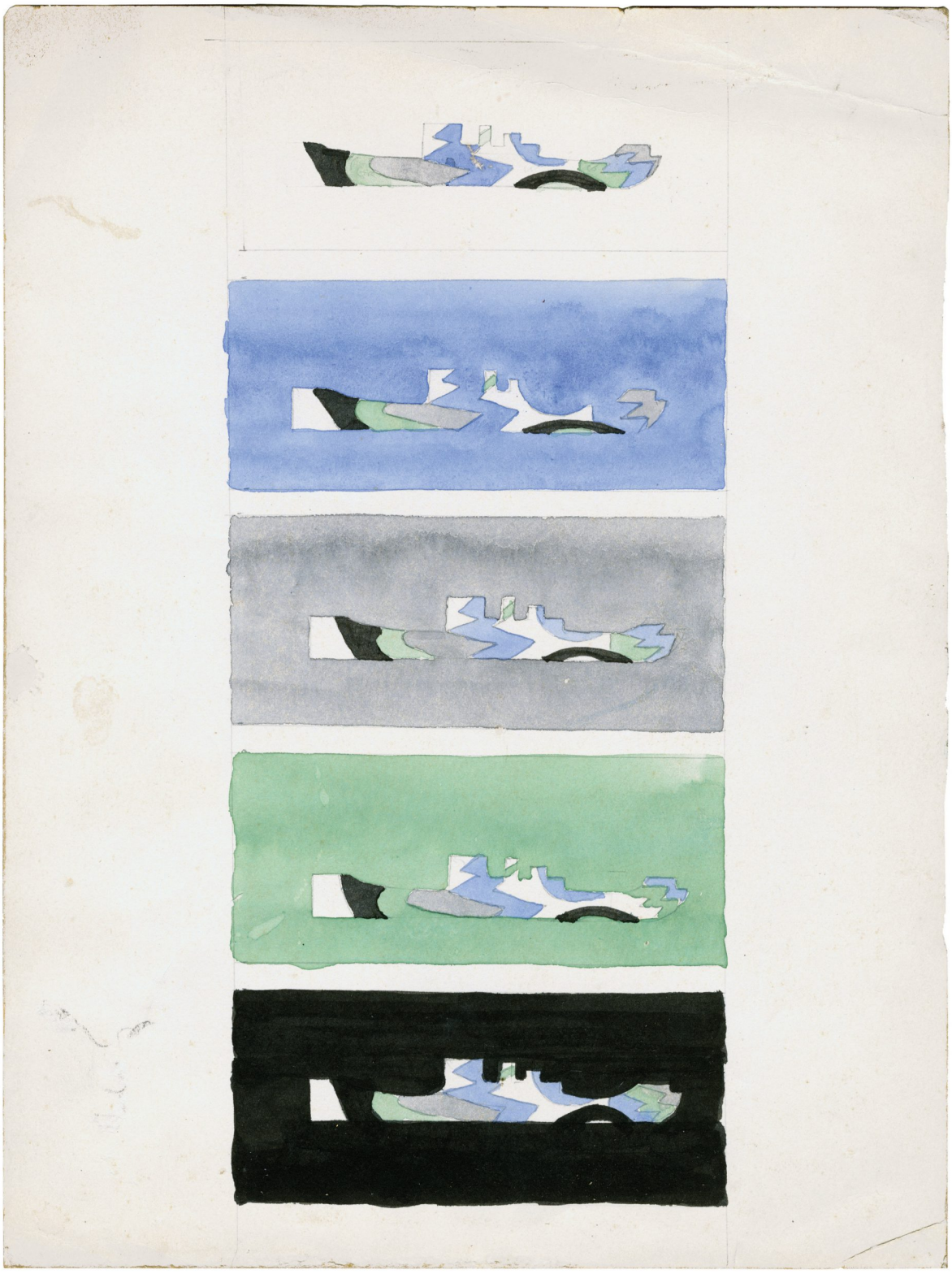

Figure 5.A. Abbott Handerson Thayer, *Study of Ships with Five Colors,* c. 1915, watercolour, Family and Estate of Abbott Handerson Thayer

surround it. Crypsis ultimately prevails, precluding the possibility of prolonged empirical observation in the seemingly sublime 'perspective of the peaks'.

The speaker's loss of empirical access to the goat compels her to rely on her memory and imagination—both of which are culturally mediated by paintings, brochures, and books. The phrase 'stag-at-bay', for instance, was undoubtedly inspired by Sir Edwin Landseer's widely circulated *Stag at Bay* painting of 1846 (Figure 5.B). Moore's audience would have been familiar with Landseer's painting, with its highly detailed depiction of an anatomically accurate stag vehemently standing its ground between two hounds against the epic background of a violent storm. Just as the eye of Landseer's stag stays still as it looks into the distance, the eye of Moore's goat remains visibly 'fixed' upon a distant 'waterfall which never seems to fall'—a line that recalls Marie Borroff's observation that Moore 'sees more meaning in fixity than in flux'.[47] The rest of the goat's body, however, fluctuates in every sense of the word. As the speaker gazes up at the goat, for example, it morphs into an antelope with a chameleon-like ability to change colour:

> A special antelope
> acclimated to "grottoes from which issue penetrating draughts
> which make you wonder why you came,"
> it stands its ground
> on cliffs the color of the clouds, of petrified white vapor—
> black feet, eyes, nose, and horns engraved on dazzling ice-fields,
> the ermine body on the crystal peak;
> the sun kindling its shoulders to maximum heat like acetylene, dyeing them white—
> upon this antique pedestal— (73)

Due to overhunting and habitat destruction, American antelopes of the *Antilocapra* (literally 'antelope-goat') genus were locally extinct by the time Moore visited Mount Rainier with her

[47] Marie Boroff, *Language and the Poet: Verbal Artistry in Frost, Stevens, and Moore* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 101. I discuss flux in relation to 'A Jelly-Fish' (1909) in 'A Peculiar Kind of Particularity', pp. 46-52.



Figure 5.B. Sir Edwin Landseer, *The Stag at Bay,* 1846, oil on canvas, Guinness Family Collection, Farmleigh House and Estate, Dublin

mother and brother in 1922.[48] We can safely assume, therefore, that Moore's description of the antelope in the passage above is an extension of her preceding portrait of the North American mountain goat, which had a 'special' status at Mount Rainier. According to Taylor, 'the mountain goat [is] unquestionably the most interesting animal in the park' due to 'his size, sure-footedness, conspicuousness, herding habit, and unapproachability'.[49] Despite the goat's apparent 'conspicuousness', however, Taylor noted that 'one must hunt with exceeding great care to see him at all'—a passage that Moore underlined in her personal copy of the brochure.[50] With 'exceeding great care', then, Moore proceeded to describe the colour of the goat. Eschewing the easy option of simply quoting Taylor's description of the goat's 'shaggy white hair', Moore opted instead to demonstrate Thayer's law of counter shading: 'if an object be colored so that its tones constitute a gradation of shading and of coloring *counter* to the gradation of shading and of coloring which light thrown upon it would produce […] such object will appear perfectly flat' (see Figure 5.C).[51] Putting this law into practice, the goat's hair isn't simply 'the color of clouds, of petrified white vapour'. Instead, the sun 'dye[s]' the goat's shoulders 'white' from above, thereby reversing the dark colour of the goat's top half, shading the light colour of its bottom half, and ultimately making the goat's body appear as 'ermine' as its surroundings.

As the goat's hair blends with the white cliffs and crystal peaks upon which it stands, its body assumes the status of a flat surface 'engraved' with small details like the 'nose and horns [that] appear black' according to Taylor's description of the goat.[52] The two colours, black and white, contrast one another so that the white surface 'dazzl[es]' like 'acetylene'—a colourless gas used for the illumination of carbide lamps in the early twentieth century.[53] Upon reading *Concealing*

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[48] See R. Lee Lyman, 'The Holocene History of Pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*) in Eastern Washington State', *Northwest Science*, 81.2 (March 2007), 104-111 (pp. 109-110) <doi:10.3955/0029-344X-81.2.104>.
[49] Taylor, p. 27.
[50] Ibid., p. 27.
[51] Ibid., p. 27; Thayer and Thayer, p. 15 [emphasis original].
[52] Taylor, p. 27. Moore underlined this passage in her personal copy of the brochure.
[53] Oxford English Dictionary Online, 'acetylene, *n.*'

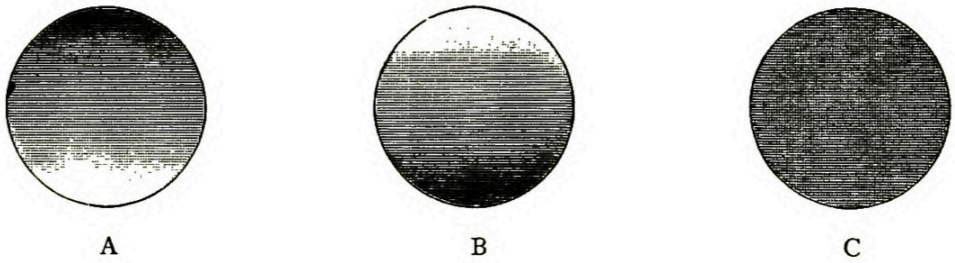

Figure 5.C. 'Animals are colored by Nature as in A, the sky lights them as in B, and the two effects cancel each other, as in C' according to Gerald Handerson Thayer and Abbott Handerson Thayer's 'Diagram in the Text' of *Concealing Coloration in the Animal Kingdom: An Exposition of the Laws of Disguise Through Color and Pattern, Being a Summary of Abbot H. Thayer's Discoveries* (New York: Macmillan, 1909)

Coloration, Titchener 'realize[d] that black is conspicuous against white, and white against black, but […] neither is conspicuous in and for itself'.[54] Such was the effect, it seems, that Thayer's book had on Moore, for the goat's black marks, engraved onto the white surface, transform that surface from a mere background into a raised 'pedestal' that begins to shine conspicuously in the perceiver's eye.

Moore's decision to engrave the goat's 'black feet, eyes, nose, and horns' upon '*dazzling* ice-fields' seems to have been informed by Thayer's theory of 'dazzling coloration' in the following passage from *Concealing Coloration*:

> Almost all [snow-land animals] have a few sharp black markings in their mainly immaculate white costumes. These evidently serve as what may be called 'distractive' or 'fixed dazzling' marks. They are, in most cases, too small to show except in a very near view—when, by their sharp but isolated and noncommittal conspicuousness, they tend to draw and hold the eye's attention—in a sense, to dazzle it, so that it less readily discerns the faintly shown snow-white body of their wearer.[55]

Having read Taylor's description of the goat's 'shaggy white hair' and black 'nose and horns', Moore expected to see—in fact, may have been actively looking for—both the 'sharp black markings' and the 'snow-white body' that characterise most snow-land animals. Had her eye been untrained, however, it would have been 'dazzled' by the 'fixed' black eye of the goat which, at least in Thayer's theory, momentarily distracts viewers from noticing the rest of the animal's body. Famously, Theodore Roosevelt was not convinced by Thayer's view. In his 110-page critique of *Concealing Coloration* for the *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History*, Roosevelt argued that 'the white goat is an extraordinarily conspicuous animal all through the summer months, and even in winter it is quite conspicuous, as the cliffs among which it dwells are rarely completely snow covered, and the black horns and muzzles make points of dark which can be seen a long way'.[56]

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[54] Titchener, p. 504.
[55] Thayer and Thayer, pp. 151-152. Thayer's theory of distractive markings is 'still controversial' after two recent experiments 'produced conflicting findings' according to Stevens and Merilaita, p. 11.
[56] Theodore Roosevelt, 'Revealing and Concealing Coloration in Birds and Mammals', *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History,* 1911, pp. 119-232 (p. 174).

From Roosevelt's anthropocentric view (he frequently cites his human experience as a 'hunter-naturalist'), the goat is entirely conspicuous to 'trained hunters' and, by extension, to animal predators.[57] For both Thayer and Moore, however, it is precisely those conspicuous 'points of dark' that counterintuitively contribute to the inconspicuousness of the goat's white body as it moves along the snowy timber line of the mountain. The reason for this is that to notice any one thing, as Harrison taught in the last chapter, comes at the expense of noticing other things.[58] As one aspect is 'blazon[ed]', wrote Thayer, others are 'reduced', 'eclipsed', or 'neutralized'.[59] To put the matter in James' words: 'we find [consciousness] always doing one thing, choosing one out of several of the materials so presented to its notice, emphasizing and accentuating that and suppressing as far as possible all the rest'.[60] In such an unstable perceptual environment consisting of competing stimuli, to suppress that which dazzles in favour of that which is dull requires a trained eye and an awareness that nothing is intrinsically conspicuous.

Is the Real the Actual?

Moore's letters to Bryher reveal that she returned to reading *The Variation of Animals and Plants* just one year before she first visited Mount Rainier.[61] Here, Darwin speculated that 'the dappling of the horse […] is a modification or vestige of a tendency to become striped'.[62] Striped or spotted, Darwin described all patterned horses as 'conspicuous'—a word that Moore employed to a different end in her poetic depiction of 'spotted ponies with "glass eyes"':

> these conspicuously spotted little horses are peculiar;
> hard to discern among the birch trees, ferns, and lily pads,
> avalanche lilies, Indian paintbrushes,
> bears' ears and kittentails,

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[57] Ibid., pp. 193, 210.
[58] See p. 185 of this thesis.
[59] Thayer and Thayer, p. 226.
[60] James, *Principles,* I, p. 139 [emphasis original].
[61] Moore cites Darwin's book in a letter to Bryher dated 7 July 1921 in *Selected Letters*, ed. by Costello, p. 164.
[62] Darwin, *Variation,* I, p. 56.

> and miniature cavalcades of chlorophylless fungi
> magnified in profile on the mossbeds like moonstones in the water;
> the cavalcade of calico competing
> with the original American "menagerie of styles"
> among the white flowers of the rhodendron [sic] surmounting rigid leaves
> upon which moisture works its alchemy,
> transmuting verdure into onyx. (74-75)

Having consulted W.D. Wilcox's *The Rockies of Canada* (1900), Moore would have been aware that 'spotted ponies' are not native to the Pacific Northwest region (306). 'Introduced by the Spaniards in the conquest of Mexico', as Wilcox notes, the 'Indian pony, or cayuse' was often used for commercial expeditions (or 'cavalcades', to use Moore's term) in the Cascade mountain range before the breed was driven to the brink of extinction by habitat destruction.[63] Though 'conspicuously spotted', the horses are still 'hard to discern' (*i.e.,* inconspicuous) among 'the original American "menagerie of styles"'—that is, the biological diversity of a place that existed long before colonisers introduced new species of plants and animals (often to the detriment of native species). According to the speaker of 'An Octopus', it is not the native species but rather the recently-introduced species, 'the cavalcade of calico', that must 'compet[e]' for attention if it is to be noticed in what was known as 'the region of the greatest floral beauty'.[64] Ultimately, as one cavalcade ('chlorophylless fungi' in this case) is 'magnified', another ('little horses') becomes 'hard to discern'—'conspicuously spotted' or not.

Long before she composed the passage above, Moore learned about perceptual competition in a philosophy class taught by her favourite professor at Bryn Mawr, Theodore De Laguna.[65] Praising John Stuart Mill's 'misappreciat[ed]' philosophy as a better 'alternative' to American pragmatism in *Dogmatism and Evolution* (1910), De Laguna wrote:

> In addition to the sensations actually present to consciousness, there are associated a whole group of other possible sensations, some of which a more careful attention

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[63] Walter Dwight Wilcox, *The Rockies of Canada* (New York: G.P Putnam's Sons, 1903), p. 130. Moore cites this edition in her notes to *Observations* (306).
[64] J.B. Flett, 'Notes on the Wild Flowers', in *Mount Rainier National Park,* pp. 22-23 (p. 23).
[65] In her senior year, Moore told her mother that De Laguna was her 'favorite teacher' according to Charles Molesworth, *Marianne Moore: A Literary Life* (New York: Athenaeum, 1990), p. 54.

> would serve to make actual, others of which would enter the field of consciousness by a slight shift of bodily position, etc.[66]

For both Mill and Moore, the word 'actual' had important philosophical implications. In *Utilitarianism* (1861), for example, Mill wrote that 'the only proof capable of being given that an object is visible, is that people *actually* see it'.[67] According to Mill, any object that is not 'actually' empirically seen in this manner is simply 'possible'—an instance of external 'matter' belonging to the 'Permanent Possibility of Sensation'.[68] Moore's philosophy notes from 1908 correctly attribute Mill's distinction to Aristotle, who similarly distinguished between potentiality (*dunamis*) and actuality (*entelecheia*) in *Metaphysics Zeta.*[69] Approximately five years later, in a Bible class taught by Rev. E.H. Kellogg, Moore re-encountered the distinction. This time, however, the Aristotelian 'potential' was replaced with 'the real', which, according to Moore quoting P.T. Forsyth in her religion notebook, is 'the eternal power'.[70] 'The actual', by contrast, is 'the present hour'—that is, in De Laguna's words, the 'sensations actually present to consciousness'.[71] And while it is tempting to assume that Moore's poetic catalogue of the flora and fungi that obfuscate Mount Rainier's fauna is solely comprised of actual percepts, the competition that ensues between these percepts suggests that what Moore actually perceived during her trip to Mount Rainier was only a small sample of what was really perceptually possible. In this sense, the actual is always in competition with a real 'group of other possible sensations'—sensations which require only 'a slight shift of bodily position' or 'more careful attention' in order to become 'actual'.

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[66] Theodore De Laguna and Grace Andrus De Laguna, *Dogmatism and Evolution: Studies in Modern Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), pp. 174-176, 185.
[67] John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism,* 3rd edn (London: Longmans, Green, and Dyer, 1867), p. 52 [emphasis added].
[68] John Stuart Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1865), p. 200.
[69] During a December 1908 class on Aristotelian metaphysics, Moore noted that 'MATTER means potentiality—possibility' and that 'reality [is] potentiality actualized' in RML, Lecture Notebook (1908), VII:11:05.
[70] RML, VII:08:03; P.T. Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (London: Independent Press, 1960), p. 118.
[71] Ibid.

When Moore lamented that 'the preoccupation to-day is with the actual' in a 1922 article aptly entitled 'Is the Real the Actual?', she might have been thinking of Thayer, who repeatedly claimed to have painted 'the first scientific paintings ever published of animals lighted *as they actually are* in Nature'.[72] And while Thayer's theory of dazzling colouration suggests that the author had at least some awareness of the Millian concept that 'what we see is a very minute fragment of what we think we see', Thayer ultimately refused to acknowledge that there were real percepts beyond those included in his paintings.[73] In his 1904 *Cotton-Tail Rabbit among Dry Grasses and Leaves* (Figure 5.D), for example, the presence of minute details coupled with the general absence of chiaroscuro yields a composition that is highly detailed but impossibly flat. 'The landscape', as Maggie M. Cao notes, 'is pushed upward, offering the viewer a quasi-aerial view of a bleak, autumnal forest floor, and the figure, though bright-eyed, is contourless, as if steamrolled flat into the dry earth'.[74] And while it is tempting to associate Thayer's abandonment of chiaroscuro with the flatness one finds in early cubist experiments, his commitment to absolute realism made him one of the greatest American critics of the European avant-garde artists that exhibited their so-called 'awful spectacle[s]' in the 1913 Armory Show.[75] Moore, on the other hand, was influenced by both the European avant-garde and American natural history—the latter informing her aesthetic commitment to actuality while the former balanced this commitment with a heightened reverence for real perceptual possibilities. Writing in praise of Alfeo Faggi, the modernist sculptor whose 'real' work constituted 'a complete contrast to the fifty-fathom deep materialism of the hour', Moore noted that 'a reverence for mystery is not a vague, invertebrate thing'.[76] Rather, 'the realm

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[72] Marianne Moore, 'Is the Real the Actual?', in *Complete Prose,* ed. by Willis, pp. 73-75 (p. 73); Thayer and Thayer, p. viii [emphasis added].
[73] Mill, *Examination,* p. 191.
[74] Maggie M. Cao, 'Abbott Thayer and the Invention of Camouflage', *Art History,* 39.3 (June 2016), 486-511 (p. 491) <doi:10.1111/1467-8365.12210>.
[75] Ibid., p. 506; Thayer to Dwight Tryon, 7 December 1914, Abbott Handerson Thayer Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institute, D 201 frame 374.
[76] Moore, 'Is the Real the Actual?', p. 74.



Figure 5.D. Gerald Handerson Thayer and Emma Thayer, *The Cotton-Tail Rabbit among Dry Grasses and Leaves,* 1904, watercolour and graphite on smooth-textured paper-surfaced pulpboard, Brooklyn Museum, New York City

of the spirit is the only realm in which experience is able to corroborate the fact that the real can also be the actual'.[77] Contrary to Thayer, then, real possibilities—like the 'moisture [that] works its alchemy, / transmuting verdure into onyx' in 'An Octopus'—await to be perceived and thereby made actual.

Moore's commitment to balancing the actual with the real helps to explain the gap between the perceptual 'alchemy' that one finds in 'An Octopus' and the aesthetic actualism that one finds in Thayer's illustrations of the natural world. Whereas Thayer lacked a 'reverence for mystery', Moore revered 'complexities which still will be complexities / as long as the world lasts' (76). The ontological actuality of the aforementioned mountain goat, for instance, is not as straightforward as it initially seems. Like H.D.'s 'Sea Iris', Moore's mountain goat occupies an ontologically unstable ground between lived experience, mythology, visual art, and science.[78] Some 80 lines after its initial introduction, the goat reappears in relation to a real (albeit not actual) figure from Greek mythology:

> […] "Calypso, the goat flower—
> that greenish orchid fond of snow"—
> anomalously nourished upon shelving glacial ledges
> where climbers have not gone or have gone timidly (75)

Notwithstanding Moore's idiosyncratic use of quotation marks in the first two lines of this passage, 'the goat flower' is, as Patricia C. Willis points out, 'an epithet purely of Marianne Moore's making'.[79] 'Named for / the goddess who fell in love w[ith] Ulysses' in Homer's *Odyssey* (according to Moore's manuscript drafts for 'An Octopus'),[80] the calypso orchid (*Calypso borealis*) is linked with the mountain goat only insofar as the goat can also be read as a figure from Greek mythology—

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[77] Ibid., p. 620.
[78] See p. 123 of this thesis.
[79] See Patricia C. Willis, 'The Road to Paradise: First Notes on Marianne Moore's "An Octopus"', *Twentieth Century Literature,* 30.2/3 (1984), 242-266 (p. 260) <doi:10.2307/441116>.
[80] Marianne Moore Digital Archive, 'Notebook 07.04.04', ed. by Cristanne Miller, p. 69 recto <https://moorearchive.org/custom/notebooks/#doc=07-04-04&page=nb07_04_04_0069-recto> [accessed 30 September 2024].

Pan, 'the dear son of Hermes, with his goat's feet and two horns'—as it stands upon an 'ancient pedestal' akin to the bases used for ancient Greek statues.[81] For the purposes of this discussion, it is important to note that the name Calypso derives from the Greek word *καλύπτω* (*kalyptō*), meaning 'to cover, to conceal' and that the *Calypso borealis* species was so named because the flower's 'stigma is totally covered' (see Figure 5.E).[82] Thanks to her reading of John Muir's *Our National Parks* (1901), Moore certainly would have been aware of the orchid's reputation as 'the lovely hider of the north'.[83] Despite the Greek etymology of its name, however, 'Calypso the goat flower refut[es] / oracles of Greece to speak of / how we tend in N[orth] America to rough it' in Moore's manuscript drafts for 'An Octopus'.[84] Whereas 'the Greeks liked smoothness, distrusting what was back / of what could not be clearly seen' (76), both Calypso and the mountain goat favour roughness over smoothness, concealment over clarity.

Moore's reading notebooks reveal that her antipathy towards ancient Greek philosophy was partially influenced by her reading of *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius* (1891), where S.H. Butcher noted that 'cautious reverence […] is rarely met with in Greek literature'.[85] And while Moore's poetry has not yet been read alongside Butcher's book, it's worth noting with Jennifer L. Leader that a number of other thinkers also had a part to play in shaping her philosophical opposition to Greek idealism. As Leader explains, Moore's favourite theologians (P.T. Forsyth, George Adam Smith, and Alexander Gordon) felt that ancient Greek philosophers like Plato 'rendered the material world as inherently base and sense perceptions as illusory, thus privileging

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[81] Moore seems to have learned the origin of the orchid's name from Wilcox, p. 74; Hesiod, *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica,* trans. by Hugh G. Evelyn-White (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1914), p. 443; Willis was the first to suggest a link between Moore's mountain goat and Pan in 'The Road to Paradise', p. 260.
[82] Filippomaria Pontani, 'Speaking and Concealing: Calypso in the Eyes of Some (Ancient) Interpreters', *Symbolae Oslenses,* 87.1 (2013), 30-60 (p. 45) <doi:10.1080/00397679.2013.822722>.
[83] John Muir, *Our National Parks* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1901), p. 23.
[84] Marianne Moore Digital Archive, 'Notebook 07.04.04', ed. by Miller, p. 81 recto <https://moorearchive.org/custom/notebooks/#doc=07-04-04&page=nb07_04_04_0081-recto> [accessed 30 September 2024].
[85] S.H. Butcher, *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius* (London: Macmillan, 1891), p. 4. RML, Reading Notebook 1250/2 (1916-1921), VII:01:02.



Figure 5.E. William Hooker, *Calypso borealis,* in *The Paradisus Londinensis* (London: D.N. Shury, 1805), Tab 89, cropped to convey detail

ideal forms over the imperfections of the physical world'.[86] According to Forsyth writing in *Christ on Parnassus* (1911), for example, the Greeks favoured 'absolute and exact accuracy of detail in the representation of each object' and thereby failed to 'convey also that constant yet invisible flux of change which science tells us is for ever going on in the world'.[87] By contrast, Moore's poetic visualisation of *Calypso borealis* 'anomalously nourished upon shelving glacial ledges' suggests that she valued anomalies resulting from the 'constant yet invisible flux of change' that occurs in even the stillest of lives.

Given that *Calypso borealis* is technically neither 'greenish' nor 'fond of snow', Vicki Graham cites the passage above as an instance of the many 'misrepresentations and inaccuracies' that can be found in 'An Octopus'.[88] Condemning Moore for 'deliberately alter[ing] botanic facts for poetic ends', Graham concludes that 'we need to perceive the world we live in as accurately as possible […] otherwise we risk misunderstanding our environment'.[89] Such a statement is typical of the critical tendency to confuse Moore's investment in precision with a fear of false or facile perceptions.[90] But the problem with demanding a Thayerian 'truth of representation' from Moore is that her 'exaggerated tendency to visualise' was not synonymous with a tendency to 'represent' in any traditional sense of the word.[91] To assert with Graham that Moore's 'words are deceptive, throwing up screens between us and the world around us', is to miss one of the most fundamental aspects of her poetic,[92] set down explicitly by the poet herself in 'Qui S'Excuse, S'Accuse' (1910):

> Art is exact perception;
> If the outcome is deception
> Then I think the fault must lie

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[86] Jennifer L. Leader, '"The Teacher Was Speaking of Unrhymed Verse": Marianne Moore, E. H. Kellogg, and the Poetry of Modernist Hermeneutics', in *Twenty-First Century Marianne Moore*, ed. by Elizabeth Gregory and Stacy Carson Hubbard (London: Macmillan, 2018), pp. 113-128 (p. 119).
[87] P.T. Forsyth, *Christ on Parnassus: Lectures on Art, Ethic, and Theology* (London: Independent Press, 1911), pp. 119-120. Moore cites this book in 'Novices' (1923).
[88] Vicki Graham, '"The Best Wild Music of the Forest": Marianne Moore's "An Octopus of Ice"', *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment,* 10.1 (Winter 2003), 167-184 (p. 177) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44086092> [accessed 21 March 2023].
[89] Ibid., p. 182.
[90] See Ahearn, p. 218.
[91] Graham, 'The Best Wild Music of the Forest', p. 182.
[92] Ibid., p. 182.

> Partly with the critic's eye,
> And no man who's done his part
> Need apologize for art.[93]

First published in *The Lantern* alongside 'My Senses Do Not Deceive Me' (1910), 'Qui S'Excuse, S'Accuse' constitutes an outline of the poetic project that Moore went on to accomplish in *Observations*: to make an art that would fulfil its highest function as 'exact perception'. And 'art as exact perception', as Holley notes, 'must admit also the unnoticed and the imperceptible'—not to mention the real and actual anomalies that emerge when an artist embraces her own perceptual tendencies.[94] And while 'it is permissible that the / critic should know what he likes' according to Moore writing in 'Picking and Choosing' (1920), the 'critic's eye' must take the education and tendencies of the artist's eye into account, trusting that 'art is exact perception' and accepting that 'deception' pervades throughout the ecosystem (48).

Inquisitive Intensity

The same book that taught Moore about Greek literature's lack of 'cautious reverence' also taught her that 'the greater the genius of the writer, the more responsive will the book be to its environment'.[95] And while Moore was less concerned with gaining a reputation for 'genius' than the likes of Stein and Loy, Butcher's description of a genius book aptly fits *Observations* as a collection that showcases Moore's expert capacity to respond to her perceptual environment through the medium of poetry. Indeed, the question of what constitutes a 'genuine' response to the environment was one of Moore's main concerns in *Observations*—particularly when it came to writing 'Poetry' (1919), where we find '[h]ands that can grasp, eyes / that can dilate, [and] hair that

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93 Marianne Moore, 'Qui S'Excuse, S'Accuse', *Lantern,* Spring 1910, p. 103.
94 Holley, p. 56.
95 Butcher, p. 187. Quoted by Moore in RML, VII:01:02. Peter Howarth mistakenly attributed this quotation to W.H. Hudson's *Introduction to the Study of Literature* (1910) in 'Marianne Moore's Performances', *ELH,* 87.2 (Summer 2020), 553-579 (p. 569) <doi:10.1353/elh.2020.0018>.

can rise' (27) as examples of the physiological responses that 'must' occur if James is correct that 'bodily changes follow directly the PERCEPTION of [an] exciting fact'.[96] Yet facts, according to James, cannot be exciting 'without a pre-existing question in the mind'.[97] And sometimes, as in the poem 'People's Surroundings' (1922), that question sets a perceptual response circuit in motion.

'People's Surroundings', the poem begins, 'they answer one's questions' (56). After a long description of those surroundings, the speaker goes on to describe the perceptual exchange that ensues when a perceiver approaches her environment with 'x-raylike inquisitive intensity':

> In these noncommittal, personal-impersonal expressions of appearance,
> the eye knows what to skip;
> the physiognomy of conduct must not reveal the skeleton;
> "a setting must not have the air of being one"
> yet with x-raylike inquisitive intensity upon it, the surfaces go back;
> the interfering fringes of expression are but a stain on what stands out
> there is neither up nor down to it;
> we see the exterior and the fundamental structure— (56)

Here, as in 'An Octopus', the ability for anything to 'stand out' is predicated on the 'inquisitive intensity' of a perceiver whose eye is educated in the sense that it 'knows what to skip' as it searches for salience. But it is not just the perceiver's eye that moves: 'the surfaces go back' in deference to the perceiver's 'x-raylike inquisitive intensity', revealing 'the exterior and the fundamental structure'. Prior to this exchange, the speaker personifies the environment by drawing a distinction between its 'physiognomy' (a physiological synonym for what is otherwise described as an 'appearance', 'air', 'surface', or 'exterior') and its 'skeleton' (an anatomical synonym for the 'fundamental structure'). Whereas Cristanne Miller reads the personified passage above as a form of self-portraiture, I share Schulze's conviction that 'the language that Moore uses is that of diagnostic medicine—the doctor examining an X-ray, the lab technician looking at a slide that holds a slice of an organism prepared with a stain'.[98] In other words, the perceptual environment

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[96] James, 'What is an Emotion?', p. 189 [emphasis original];
[97] Ibid., p. 204 [emphasis excised].
[98] Cristanne Miller, *Marianne Moore: Questions of Authority* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 36; Schulze, p. 229.

transforms into a living, breathing patient while the perceiver becomes a diagnostician who must ask the right questions and use the right technology in order to arrive at the right diagnosis (in both the medical and the biological sense of the word).[99]

Before we proceed, it's worth briefly noting that Moore went on to develop a short-lived antipathy to inquisitiveness, and even listed it as one of four 'dislikes' in a 1929 interview with *The Little Review*.[100] Writing in *The Dial* that same year, Moore equated 'inquisitiveness' with 'predatoriness'—both of which can 'degrade' the 'desire to see good things'.[101] And while it is tempting to read *Observations* in light of these remarks, their time of publication is confined to a one-year period, starting with Moore's July 1928 proclamation in favour of 'appreciation which is truly votive' over that which is 'gapingly inquisitive' and ending with her May 1929 interview with *The Little Review*.[102] It is not clear what provoked these remarks, but Moore clearly embraced inquisitiveness as an observational method before this period. Indeed, the poems of *Observations* use inquisitiveness as Leuba taught Moore to use it—as a tool to perceive 'different things [within] the one topic under observation'.[103] Thanks to the likes of John Dewey for emphasising the power of 'a *working hypothesis,* as something to guide investigation and bring to light new facts', 'inquisitive intensity' was widely recognised as an important aspect of modern scientific methodology by the time Moore published 'People's Surroundings' in 1922.[104] Prior to the twentieth century, however, the scientific role of inquisitive intensity was a matter of enduring controversy. To provide a full account of this controversy would require an entire book, so we will stick to the story as it is told in Moore's philosophy notebooks. According to Moore, Aristotle's 'work on scientific method [was] the most distinctive work he accomplished [and] remained unmodified for several thousand

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[99] See Oxford English Dictionary Online, 'diagnosis, *n.*'. Discussing 'People's Surroundings', Miller similarly observes how 'questions frame the kinds of answers possible' in *Marianne Moore,* p. 35.
[100] Marianne Moore, 'Confessions—Questionnaire', in *Complete Prose*, ed. by Willis, p. 673.
[101] Marianne Moore, 'Comment', in *Complete Prose*, ed. by Willis, pp. 214-215 (p. 215).
[102] Marianne Moore, 'Comment', in *Complete Prose*, ed. by Willis, pp. 203-204 (p. 204).
[103] RML, VII:11:07.
[104] John Dewey, *How We Think* (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1910), p. 81 [emphasis original]; See p. 99 of this thesis for more on the role of the hypothesis.

years'—that is, until Francis Bacon critiqued the Aristotelian method for 'hurry[ing] on rapidly from the senses and particulars to the most general axioms […] and their supposed indisputable truth' in *Novum Organon* (1620).[105] Bacon's method, according to William Whewell's history *Of Induction* (1849), was one of 'successive generalizations' whereby 'general propositions' can be gradually inferred from 'particular cases'.[106] This is the 'Logic of Induction', but it cannot begin without 'the *hypothesis* of deductive reasoning'.[107] Much to Mill's dismay, Whewell placed the hypothesis at the centre of his deductive methodology in works such as *Novum Organon Renovatum* (1858), thereby anticipating James' insight that 'nothing ever is noticed without a pre-existing question in the mind'.[108]

In *Observations,* Moore's 'inquisitive intensity' is very often directed at the intertwined anatomy of a perceiving organism and her perceptual environment. When it comes to 'People's Surroundings', Moore's decision to write an anatomical portrait of her surroundings is not surprising given the extent to which she was exposed to new medical and scientific technologies during her early life. Indeed, not only was Moore x-rayed by an orthopaedic surgeon on numerous occasions, but she also learned how to stain brain and cord sections for microscopic observation under Joseph W. Warren's direction in the biology laboratory at Bryn Mawr.[109] Taken together, the x-ray and the microscope contributed to Moore's awareness of the same reality of the unseen that H.D. gestured to in *Sea Garden.* Unlike H.D., who only ever used the microscope as an analogy for the artist's ability to access unseen, Moore embraced imagery originating from an aided eye. From the 'chlorophylless fungi' of 'An Octopus' to the 'extra sense cells in the skin' of 'People's Surroundings' (56), Moore's poetry is exactly as Eliot described in his introduction to her *Selected*

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105 RML, VII:11:05; Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum,* ed. by Joseph Devey (New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1902), p. 15; Moore cites Bacon's book in RML, VII:11:06.
106 William Whewell, *Of Induction, with Especial Reference to Mr. J. Stuart Mill's System of Logic* (London: John W. Parker, 1849), pp. 68-69. For more resonances between Moore's poetry and Whewell's philosophy, see Felin, 'A Peculiar Kind of Particularity', pp. 53-54.
107 William Whewell, *Novum Organon Renovatum* (London: John W. Parker, 1858), p. 114 [emphasis original].
108 James, 'What is an Emotion?', p. 204 [emphasis excised].
109 Linda Leavell, *Holding on Upside Down: The Life and Work of Marianne Moore* (London: Faber and Faber, 2013), p. 106; RML, Lecture Notebook 1251/25 (c. 1908), VII:05:05.

Poems (1935): illuminated with 'the fascination of a high-powered microscope'.[110] According to Eliot, Moore 'succeeds at once in startling us into an unusual awareness of visual patterns' thanks to her 'precision'—an adjective that Moore later defined as 'both impact and exactitude, as with surgery'.[111] Yet 'surgery', as Moore notes in 'Those Various Scalpels' (1917), 'is not tentative' (53). It should come as no surprise, then, that the speaker of 'People's Surroundings' describes her own inquisitive intensity as 'x-raylike' rather than surgical—the x-ray affords the diagnostician with 'piercing glances' of the 'skeleton' without the need to pierce through the fleshy 'physiognomy' with a scalpel.

Moore's 'x-raylike inquisitive intensity' in the passage above recalls Thayer's claim to present 'not theories, but revelations, as palpable and indisputable as radium or X-rays'.[112] Yet the veracity of x-ray photographs, as Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison note, was hardly 'indisputable' when Moore started writing 'People's Surroundings' in 1919.[113] Indeed, within a few years of Wilhelm Röntgen's invention of the x-ray in 1895, it became 'clear that there were systematic mismatches between macroscopic anatomy and the x-ray image of the human body'.[114] Having been diagnosed with scoliosis in her early teens, Moore was likely x-rayed on numerous occasions and therefore familiar with the 'enormous variation of image' that could result from 'a movement of the x-ray tube or a rotation of the body part under scrutiny'.[115] When it comes to literary modernism, x-ray technology has primarily been discussed in relation to Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* (1924).[116] Yet 'People's Surroundings', published two years prior to Mann's

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110 T.S. Eliot, 'Introduction' to Marianne Moore's *Selected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1935), pp. 5-12 (p. 8).
111 Ibid., p. 232; Marianne Moore, 'Feeling and Precision', in *Complete Prose*, ed. by Willis, pp. 396-402 (p. 396).
112 Thayer and Thayer, p. 3.
113 Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, 'The Image of Objectivity', *Representations,* 40 (Autumn 1992), 81-128 <doi:10.2307/2928741>; Moore's first notes towards 'People's Surroundings' can be found in RML, Conversation Notebook 1250/24 (1914-1921), VII:10:07, p. 33.
114 Daston and Galison, p. 106.
115 Leavell, *Holding on Upside Down,* pp. 60-61; Bethany Hicok also notes that Moore attended appointments with a chiropractor at Bryn Mawr in *Degrees of Freedom: American Women Poets and the Women's College, 1905-1955* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2008), pp. 33-34; Daston and Galison, p. 106.
116 See Danius, pp. 55-90; See also Julian Nelson, 'Modernism and the Technologies of Insight', in *Modernism,* ed. by Astradur Eysteinsson and Vivian Liska (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2007), pp. 419-430.

novel, is one of the first works of literature to engage with questions of the kind posed by Umberto Boccioni in 'Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto' (1910): 'Why should we continue to create works that don't take into account our growing visual powers which can yield results analogous to those of X rays?'[117] Similarly equating the 'visual powers' of an educated eye with the perceptual powers of technology, Moore proclaimed that 'inquisitive intensity' is '*like'* an x-ray—*i.e.,* able to perceive that which is ordinarily invisible. In so doing, she dispensed with the need for technological apparatus like x-rays, trusting her own 'inquisitive intensity' as more capable of seeing past 'the physiognomy of conduct'.

Moore's inquisitive intensity not only produces 'results analogous to those of X rays', but it also produces a refined awareness of exterior patterns and appearances. And while the (in)visible exteriors of various organisms clearly preoccupied the likes of Darwin and Thayer, patterns and appearances were increasingly dismissed by biologists studying the molecular and atomic structures of organisms at the turn of the twentieth century. Take, for example, Jacques Loeb—a prominent biologist who sought to 'conceive [higher level processes] through reducing them—in the sense of modern physics—to [their] molecular or atomic structure' (according to an 1888 letter that Loeb wrote to William James).[118] Unlike Loeb, who left his position at Bryn Mawr in 1892, Moore's teacher David Hilt Tennent combined emerging practices from molecular biology with traditional descriptive morphology to describe organismal behaviours to his students.[119] Years after she graduated from Bryn Mawr with a minor in biology, Moore re-encountered Tennent's approach in her reading of *Modern Painters* (1843-1860), where John Ruskin proclaimed that it is 'as much a fact' that organisms 'produce such and such an effect upon the eye or heart […] as that

[117] Umberto Boccioni and others, 'Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto', in *Futurism: An Anthology,* ed. by Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 64-67 (p. 65).
[118] Jacques Loeb to William James, 10 June 1888, William James Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, MS Am 1052 (509).
[119] Felin, 'A Peculiar Kind of Particularity', p. 47.

they are made up of certain atoms or vibrations of matter'.[120] In other words, an organism cannot be factually understood without recourse into both its interior makeup and its exterior appearance.

Of course, the scientific distinction between surface appearance and interior makeup has long played out in gendered terms. As Londa Schiebinger notes in her study of gender in modern scientific culture, men were traditionally associated with a penetrative form of scientific inquiry that sought, à la Loeb, 'to uncover the causes underlying appearances and to discover laws in life and nature'.[121] Women, by contrast, were associated with the same 'sharp renderings of exterior beauty' that Moore attributed to H.D.'s novel *Hedylus* (1928).[122] The idea that women's perception is more suited to surface appearances is one that Moore likely encountered in her reading of Edward Thomas' *The Feminine Influence on the Poets* (1910), a survey of women's influence on the development of poetry from Shakespeare to Shelley.[123] The following quotation from M. Maulde la Clavière appears near the beginning of Thomas' book:

> You must not ask [women] to pry and delve into the stubborn heart of things; they look at the bright surface and penetrate what yields to the touch. And by this simple method they perceive things that escape the microscope, things that defy analysis, thanks to an intuitive impressionability which enables them to see rather than to know, and which would be wholly admirable if it were never misused.[124]

Here we have another iteration of the essentialist idea that 'woman-sense is in touch with some of Nature's subtlest secrets'.[125] Women, in Clavière's version, are associated with an unmediated 'method' of perception that is penetrative only insofar as objects 'yield' to their gentle touch. Contrary to what 'men say' in 'Sojourn in the Whale' (1917)—that the 'feminine / Temperament'

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[120] John Ruskin, *Modern Painters III,* in *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. by Cook and Wedderburn, V (1904), p. 387. While *Modern Painters* does not appear among the nine Ruskin books in Moore's library, the poet quoted *Modern Painters* in 'An Octopus' (72) and frequently recorded passages from the series in her notebooks.
[121] Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 4.
[122] Ibid., p. 4; Marianne Moore, 'Briefer Mention', in *Complete Prose,* ed. by Willis, pp. 224-262 (p. 260).
[123] Moore cites *The Feminine Influence on the Poets* (London: M. Secker, 1910) in her notes to *Observations* (303). While Thomas devotes one chapter of his book to 'Women as Poets', this chapter begins with the major caveat that 'it would not be easy to show that women have had any great influence upon English poetry by their own practice of the art' (p. 49).
[124] M. Maulde la Clavière quoted by Thomas, p. 6.
[125] Kenealy quoted by Stead, p. 67.

is 'Circumscribed by a / Heritage of blindness' (35)—Thomas depicted women as 'the veiled sisters of all the great things we do not see'.[126] Thanks to the powers of the 'feminine keen eye', a phrase Moore encountered in her reading of Conrad Aiken's *Preludes for Memnon* (1931), the quintessential woman can 'perceive things that escape the microscope'.[127]

Certainly Clavière's portrayal of women as hesitant to 'pry and delve into the stubborn heart of things' is fitting for Moore—a poet who was critical of dissection and observed only as closely and as constantly as the natural world allowed. It is also the case, however, that Moore valued the 'piercing glances' made possible by an eye that is keen, inquisitive, and educated. Much like the addressee of 'To a Snail' (1924), Moore possessed 'a knowledge of principles' disallowed by Clavière's depiction of women as observers who 'see rather than […] know' (19). Moore's eye sees *because* it knows: it 'knows what to skip' and it brings its 'knowledge of principles' (like concealing colouration) to bear upon the observation of outer appearances and inner structures.

In light of Moore's commitment to perceiving both 'the exterior' *and* 'the fundamental structure' with her educated eye, it's worth examining how 'People's Surroundings' pairs piercing glances with carefully crafted observations of surface appearance. Moore's x-ray view of 'the skeleton' in the passage quoted above, for instance, is almost immediately preceded by the following surface-level depiction of cryptically coloured organisms:

> […] mocking-birds, fringed lilies, and hibiscus,
> […] black butterflies with blue half circles on their wings,
> tan goats with onyx ears […] lizards glittering and without thickness
> like splashes of fire and silver on the pierced turquoise of the lattices
> and the acacia-like lady shivering at the touch of a hand,
> lost in a small collision of the orchids—
> dyed quicksilver let fall
> to disappear like an obedient chameleon in fifty shades of mauve and amethyst (57)

[126] Maurice Maeterlinck quoted by Thomas, p. 7.
[127] Moore quotes this phrase in 'If a Man Die', in *Complete Prose*, ed. by Willis, pp. 283-286 (p. 284).

Here, the 'black butterflies with blue half circles on their wings' closely resemble the butterflies from the final chapter of *Concealing Coloration,* where Thayer noted that the minor *ocelli* (eye-spots) on a butterfly's wings might be 'imitative of gleaming dewdrops […] surrounded by shadows' or could be designed to 'look like holes in leaves'.[128] According to Thayer, when butterflies flap their wings, their *ocelli* elicit a 'quicksilver-like intershifting of many lights and colors' akin to the 'quicksilver' dye that befalls the 'acacia-like lady' in the passage above.[129] In the larger context of the poem, this lady is the infamous seventh wife of Bluebeard from Charles Perrault's *Le Barbe Bleue* (1697)—a French folk tale in which 'the supernatural is subordinated to logic'.[130] And 'logic', according to Moore drawing on W.B. Yeats' distinction between eagle and butterfly in a 1934 article for *The Westminster Magazine*, stands in opposition to the butterfly's 'zigzag of imagination'.[131] Whereas the eagle follows the 'straight line of logic', 'the zigzag of the butterfly becomes a geometry of spiritual activity' which causes the 'acacia-like lady' to 'shiver' in Bluebeard's 'tower above the coral reefs' on the Caribbean island of St. Thomas (57).[132]

In addition to butterflies, Bluebeard's tower contains a number of other 'supernatural' organisms including 'lizards glittering and without thickness'. Once again, Moore's words are reminiscent of *Concealing Coloration,* where G.B. Longstaff and Edward B. Poulton noted how a *Chameleon pumilus* under observation in Cape Town 'appeared flat' because its 'bright green harmonized wonderfully with the young leaves'.[133] Given that the chameleon would 'stand out among the leaves as an object of conspicuous solidity and thickness' without 'adjustable countergrading', Longstaff and Poulton classified the creature as 'a dynamic manifestation of the principle discovered in its static form by Mr. Abbott H. Thayer'.[134] Like *Chameleon pumilus,* the

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128 Thayer and Thayer, p. 230.
129 Ibid., p. 87.
130 Marianne Moore, 'Of Miracles and Kings', in *Complete Prose*, ed. by Willis, pp. 489-491 (pp. 490-491).
131 Marianne Moore, 'The Hawk and the Butterfly', in *Complete Prose*, ed. by Willis, pp. 312-316 (p. 313).
132 Ibid., p. 313.
133 G.B. Longstaff and Edward B. Poulton, 'A Few Notes on South African Chameleons', *The Journal of the Linnean Society: Zoology,* 30.196 (14 October 1907), 45-48 (p. 47). Extracts reprinted in Appendix A of *Concealing Coloration,* pp. 241-243.
134 Longstaff and Poulton, p. 48.

'obedient chameleon' in 'People's Surroundings' 'disappear[s]' thanks to its capacity to gradate into 'fifty shades of mauve and amethyst'. These 'closely valued colors', as Ellen Levy notes, 'are a favorite trope of Moore's'.[135] In 'Marriage' (1923), for instance, we find 'ivory white, snow white, / oyster white and six others' (64). Similarly, in 'Radical' (1919), a carrot is 'fused with intensive heat to / color of the set- / ting sun' (43). According to Levy, 'this trope is linked to [Moore's] utopian bent in that the differences between colors may be said to be purely a matter of aesthetic judgment, but insofar as Moore's colors tend to blur into one another, they also represent her tendency, when anxious, to revert to a state of unmeaning'.[136] Levy's hypothesis might be true in the case of someone diagnosed with a neural disorder, where 'sensations are sep[arate]d fr[om] their meaning' (according to Moore's psychology notebook).[137] As I have discussed elsewhere, however, the tendency to pathologise Moore's perception is all too common among critics of her poetry.[138] And while Leavell has offered convincing evidence to suggest that Moore occasionally suffered from 'high level[s] of anxiety', it doesn't necessarily follow that she also endured 'an endless struggle to make meaning out of unmeaning'.[139] Ultimately, for Moore, 'the meaning of sensations' emerges from 'the connection between consciousness and sensation'—a connection that was integral to Moore's practice of observing subtle perceptual distinctions.[140]

That 'fifty shades of mauve and amethyst' are differentiated from one another in the first place is testament to Moore's 'genius for differences'—a genius that she explicitly attributed to 'the chameleon's eye' in a 1927 'Comment' for *The Dial*.[141] Notably, Moore repeatedly likened her own perceptual powers to those of a chameleon who uses a 'selective nomenclature' in order to

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135 Ellen Levy, *Criminal Ingenuity: Moore, Cornell, Ashbery, and the Struggle Between the Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 61.
136 Ibid., p. 61.
137 RML, VII:11:07.
138 Felin, 'A Peculiar Kind of Particularity', pp. 50, 60.
139 Leavell, *Holding on Upside Down,* p. 60; Levy, p. 56.
140 RML, VII:11:07 [emphasis original].
141 Marianne Moore, 'Comment', in *Complete Prose*, ed. by Willis, pp. 182-184 (p. 183).

distinguish between 'analagous [sic] dissimilarities'.[142] Not only does this analogy help to explain why Moore preferred somewhat obscure colour terms (such as 'onyx', 'turquoise', 'mauve', and 'amethyst') to a more basic chromatic nomenclature, but it also helps us to make better sense of her tendency to catalogue the perceptual environment down to the most subtle details and distinctions. In the 12-line list of people 'in their respective places' at the end of 'People's Surroundings', for example, 'dukes, princes and gentlemen' are distinguished from one another, as are 'castles, palaces, dining-halls, theatres and imperial audience-chambers' (58). As Wordsworth notes in the following passage from *The Prelude* (1850), such distinctions are imperceptible to the 'unwatchful eye':

> By silent inobtrusive sympathies,
> And gentle agitations of the mind
> From manifold distinctions, difference
> Perceived in things, where, to the unwatchful eye,
> No difference is, and hence, from the same source,
> Sublimer joy;[143]

Here, as in Moore's psychology notebooks, attention unlocks that which evades the 'unwatchful eye'. The watchful eye is an attentive one that perceives 'difference' among analogous things like the colours 'mauve' and 'amethyst' in 'People's Surroundings'. Having learned that 'ether waves of a specific length produce [the] sensation of color', and that the length of those waves can vary by billions of vibrations per second, Moore knew that 'fifty shades of mauve and amethyst' exist even if they go unnoticed by the inattentive observer.[144] With the help of her 'inquisitive intensity', Moore focused her attention on the same 'manifold distinctions' that gave Wordsworth 'sublimer joy'. Yet, as we shall see, there is no Wordsworthian sense of sublimity to be found in Moore's 'poetry of frog grays, / duck-egg greens, and eggplant blues' (101), for Moore acknowledged that

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142 Ibid., p. 183; For more on Moore's tendency to describe herself as a chameleon, see Felin, 'A Peculiar Kind of Particularity', p. 60.
143 William Wordsworth, *The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet's Mind* (London: Edward Moxon, 1850), p. 45; I am indebted to Levy for calling my attention to the similarities between this passage and the 'central thrust' of *Observations* in *Criminal Ingenuity,* p. 53.
144 RML, VII:11:07.

the watchful eye is rooted in a body whose 'experience is not to / be exalted into epic grandeur' (38).

The Span of Consciousness

In *Observations,* the perceptual scope of Moore's educated eye is not limited to the physical and physiological aspects that we have just encountered in 'An Octopus' and 'People's Surroundings'. In other poems, Moore directs her piercing glances at psychological states, philosophical predicaments, and social situations that play out against the backdrop of a natural world that mirrors the impermeability and complexity of the mind. Nowhere are these natural and human phenomena more masterfully combined and observed than in 'A Grave'—a poem composed in 1918 as a response to 'a man who placed himself between [Moore's] mother and [Moore], and the surf [they] were watching from the middle ledge of rocks on Monhegan Island after the storm'.[145] The poem begins like this:

> A Grave
>
> Man looking into the sea,
> taking the view from those who have as much right to it as you have to it yourself,
> it is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing
> but you cannot stand in the middle of this:
> the sea has nothing to give but a well excavated grave. (52)

If we take the title as the first line, the poem reads as a portrait of 'A Grave / Man' who not only has what Moore called a 'literal origin' (the man who placed himself between Moore and her mother) but also a biological origin ('man' in the sense of 'humankind') and a philosophical origin (an imperious 'human nature' that 'stand[s] in the middle of a thing' in order to gain epistemic

[145] Moore's commentary on the 'literal origin' of the poem can be found in *Fifty Poets: An American Auto-Anthology,* ed. by William Rose Benét (New York: Duffield & Green, 1933), pp. 84-85.

mastery over it). The man's task is a 'grave' one indeed—to look 'into the sea', 'tak[e] the view', and 'exalt' it into the 'epic grandeur' of the Wordsworthian sublime.

In light of our discussion of the tension between interior makeup and exterior appearance in *Observations*, it is significant that the man of 'A Grave' looks '*into* the sea' and not 'at' its surface. The man's gaze is penetrative—or 'rapacious', to use Moore's word—as is the gaze of the 'men' who 'lower nets, unconscious of the fact that they are desecrating a grave' (52). As Jeredith Merrin notes, these 'men' were ungendered 'people' in Moore's early drafts of 'A Grave'.[146] That Moore so intentionally gendered these fishermen in subsequent revisions of the poem reinforces a point I made earlier about the scientific distinction between surface appearance and interior makeup as one that has long been construed in gendered terms. Acting in accordance with gender norms, the men of 'A Grave' penetrate the sea with their eyes and nets, yet they fail to catch sight of its 'most obvious characteristic'—that it 'is a collector, quick to return a rapacious look' (52). Looking *at* and not 'into' the sea, the speaker can see both that 'look' and other surface qualities including 'contours' and 'expression[s]'. Yet 'repression', an expressly inconspicuous 'characteristic' that sits below the surface, is visible to her, too. Here, as in 'People's Surroundings', the speaker is committed to balancing interior makeup and exterior appearance and thus defies gendered distinctions between different forms of looking.

It is no accident that Moore includes both 'repression' and 'expression' in 'A Grave', for the entire poem can be read as an interplay between that which is expressed on the surface and that which is repressed below it. The last sentence of the poem exemplifies this interplay:

> The wrinkles progress upon themselves in a phalanx—beautiful under networks of foam,
> and fade breathlessly while the sea rustles in and out of the seaweed;
> the birds swim through the air at top speed, emitting cat-calls as heretofore—
> the tortoise-shell scourges about the feet of the cliffs, in motion beneath them
> and the ocean, under the pulsation of lighthouse and noise of bell-buoys,
> advances as usual, looking as if it were not that ocean in which dropped things are bound to sink—

[146] Jeredith Merrin, *An Enabling Humility: Marianne Moore, Elizabeth Bishop, and the Uses of Tradition* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), p. 75.

in which if they turn and twist, it is neither with volition nor consciousness. (52)

Spanning the length of seven lines, this sentence strikes a delicate balance between expression and repression. The 'wrinkles' that are typically expressed on surfaces, for example, appear '*under* networks of foam'. Likewise, the 'tortoise-shell' is situated '*beneath'* the cliffs and the ocean is observed '*under* the pulsation of lighthouse'. Such careful, short-lived glances at concealed objects anticipate the 'piercing glances' that Moore would go on to cast in 'People's Surroundings' and 'An Octopus'. In an early draft of 'A Grave', Moore even associates the ocean's surface with the patterned skin of a giraffe: 'the foam', she writes, 'wrinkles itself into a diamond spotted octagon of giraffe skin'.[147] Like a cryptically coloured giraffe, whose 'pattern always maintains its potency for obliteration' according to Thayer, the ocean's appearance is deceptive: it 'look[s] *as if* it were not that ocean in which dropped things are bound to sink' thanks to the 'bell-buoys' that float upon its surface.[148] And while Moore occasionally pierces past that surface, her gaze does not venture farther than a few feet until the penultimate line of the poem, when we finally get a glimpse (albeit a hypothetical one) of an ocean floor that is the epitome of repression in both the physical and the psychological sense of the word.

Much like Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog* (1818), another work of art featuring a man looking into the sea, 'A Grave' straddles the genres of seascape and portraiture. Most obviously, the speaker of 'A Grave' performs a topographical survey of the sea, complete with many of the features one might expect to find in a seascape: trees, animals, boats, and lighthouses. This seascape, however, is personified in ways that recall Moore's earlier portrait poem, 'Those Various Scalpels'. Like 'Scalpels', 'A Grave' is scattered with body parts and processes. 'The firs', for example, 'stand in a procession', the cliffs have 'feet', the water has 'wrinkles' that form a 'phalanx' (either a bone in the hand or foot *or* a military formation akin to

[147] RML, A Grave: TMs and AMs, I:02:14.
[148] Thayer and Thayer, p. 134.

the earlier procession of firs), and the lighthouse has a pulse. The sea/see homophone works to establish the sea as a subject that *sees*, 'quick to return a rapacious look'. In this moment, the sea serves as an expression of the perceiving subject. As the seascape comes to life, however, the 'Grave / Man' from the beginning of the poem is rendered into a 'breathless' object, 'bound to sink', 'turn and twist […] neither with volition nor consciousness' in an aquatic cemetery of the kind Moore envisaged when she first published her poem under the title of 'A Graveyard' in *The Dial* in 1921. The poet-portraitist thus performs a post-mortem examination at the site of death—a stormy seascape that has taken hold of 'volition' and 'consciousness' alike.

Moore's psychology and philosophy notebooks reveal that she was thoroughly aware of contemporary debates regarding the relationship between volition and consciousness. 'Acc[ording] to the aut[omaton] theory', wrote Moore, 'cons[ciousness] has no func[tion], no role in life'—it is simply 'an epi-phenomenon of neural activity' devoid of volition.[149] As James notes in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), a book frequently cited in Moore's notebooks,[150] Thomas Henry Huxley 'gave great publicity' to this doctrine in 1874 when he proclaimed:

> [A]ll states of consciousness […] are immediately caused by molecular changes of the brain-substance […] it follows that our mental conditions are simply the symbols in consciousness of the changes which take place automatically in the organism; and that, to take an extreme illustration, the feeling we call volition is not the cause of a voluntary act, but the symbol of that state of the brain which is the immediate cause of that act. We are conscious automata.[151]

To put the matter briefly, James vehemently disagreed with Huxley's theory. According to James, *'the particulars of the distribution of consciousness* […] *point to its being efficacious'*.[152] Moore's Bryn Mawr notebooks place her firmly on James' side of the debate. According to Moore writing in her

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[149] RML, VII:11:07 [emphasis original].
[150] For more on Moore's reading of James, see Linda Leavell, 'Marianne Moore, the James Family, and the Politics of Celibacy', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 49.2 (2003), pp. 219-245 <doi:10.2307/3176002>; See also Felin, 'A Peculiar Kind of Particularity', pp. 50-51.
[151] James, *Principles,* I, p. 130; Thomas Henry Huxley, 'On the Hypothesis that Animals are Automata, and Its History', in *Collected Essays,* 9 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), I, pp. 199-250 (p. 244).
[152] James, *Principles,* I, p. 138 [emphasis original].

psychology notebook, volition—defined as 'the attention of the subject and his effort' and used synonymously with 'intention', 'will', and 'agency'—is one of the three main components of 'psychic life' (along with intellect and affect).[153] One week later, under De Laguna's instruction, Moore described the will as 'the central essential element in [any] act of consciousness' in her philosophy notebook.[154] 'Attention', Moore continued, 'is will'—a point that she went on to reiterate in her psychology notebook, where we learn that 'willing simply means steadfast attention'.[155]

While Moore embraced a volitional theory of consciousness and even went on to proclaim that 'the future of time is determined by the power of volition' (38) in 'Reinforcements' (another poem from 1918), Elisa New has interpreted 'A Grave' as an endorsement of the automaton theory. According to New's interpretation, 'the will is a contrivance' with a 'merely formal or representational existence' and 'the sapping of volition is the sea's profoundest law'.[156] It is certainly true that the sea has the power to 'sap' volition in 'A Grave'—this much is obvious from the last line of the poem. As long as the speaker continues to attend to her environment, however, her volition remains alive and intact. Instead of reading 'A Grave' as a poem that 'testifies' to the 'insignificance' of volition, then, I read it as an effort to delineate the limits of volition and consciousness in the face of a natural world that can only ever be partially perceived.[157] The titular man of 'A Grave' experiences a loss of volition and consciousness because he abuses their powers. He does so not only by 'taking the view from those who have as much right to it' (and thus hindering the perceptual volition of others) but also by seeking to inhabit a perceptual position that will allow him to conquer 'the view' by 'looking into the sea' with an all-seeing eye. Standing 'in the middle', the 'Grave / Man' is blind to the fact that his 'rapacious look' will result in

153 RML, VII:11:07.
154 RML, Lecture Notebook (1908-1909), VII:11:06.
155 Ibid.; RML, VII:11:07.
156 Elisa New, *The Line's Eye: Poetic Sight, American Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 140-141.
157 Ibid., p. 141.

'nothing'—a point that Moore makes in the following passage from the unpublished opening stanza of 'A Grave':

> […] everything everywhere
> Yet nothing, because nowhere; infinity defined at last, still infinity because there
> Where nothing is.[158]

This passage was likely influenced by Moore's reading of *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* (1650), where Richard Baxter proclaimed that 'infinit[y]' must remain 'a mystery to finite capacity'.[159] In her psychology notebook, Moore similarly noted how the 'span of consciousness'—that is, 'the number of things you can perceive at once, in one conceptual system'—is limited by the body's particular position in space and time.[160] To perceive 'everything everywhere' is to transcend these limitations and ultimately to perceive 'nothing', neither 'volition nor consciousness', in 'a well excavated grave' that exists 'nowhere'.

Like so many of the poems that comprise *Observations,* 'A Grave' is a poem about looking—about different ways of looking at 'a thing' that has the capacity to change its looks, return a look, and look 'as if' it is something other than it is. Not only does the poem simultaneously look like a post-mortem portrait and a stormy seascape, but it also teaches *how to* look at expression and repression without transcending the limits of the perceiving body. Read as the apostrophic poem that it is, 'A Grave' constitutes a (female) speaker's effort to educate the eye of her (male) addressee, to bring him to an understanding of what Donna Haraway calls 'situated knowledge'—the partial knowledge that derives not from 'standing in the middle' and seeing 'everything everywhere' but from situating the perceiving body in a particular place and time.[161] In this sense, the speaker of 'A Grave' not only imparts empirical insight but epistemic insight, too. In a

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158 RML, I:02:14.
159 Moore's manuscript drafts for 'Marriage' (in Notebook VII:04:04) include the following quote—'infinite love [must needs be] a mystery to finite capacity'—from Richard Baxter, *The Saints' Everlasting Rest,* ed. by William Young (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1909), p. 51.
160 RML, VII:11:07 [emphasis original].
161 Haraway, p. 575.

biographical interpretation, the speaker draws authority from her training in natural history—the greatest of 'the true and great sciences' (according to Ruskin writing in *Precious Thoughts*, another book in Moore's library)—which 'make[s] men gentle and modest in proportion to the largeness of their apprehension and just perception of the infiniteness of the things they can never know'.[162] The 'Grave / Man' lacks this training, and the (imagined) consequences of his naivety are fatal. Together with Ruskin, Moore teaches that 'no human capacity ever yet saw the whole of a thing'.[163] 'But', according to Ruskin, 'we may see more and more of it the longer we look […] Every advance in our acuteness of perception will show us something new'.[164] Yet in 'A Grave', as in 'To an Intra-Mural Rat' (1915), the natural world is 'too brisk to be inspected' (5)—wrinkles 'fade breathlessly', the sea is only 'out of the seaweed' intermittently, birds fly 'at top speed', and the light of the lighthouse 'pulsat[es]'. In such an environment, the speaker's looks are not prolonged examinations but short-lived glances cast with 'inquisitive intensity', intelligence, volition, and consciousness. Ultimately, any perceptual advances that take place in the poem are circumscribed by the spatiotemporal limitations of an embodied perceiver whose anatomy is inextricably entangled with the body of water she perceives.

Conclusion

Renowned for her humility, Moore would have been reluctant to accept the title that Elizabeth Bishop bestowed upon her in 1949: 'The World's Greatest Living Observer'.[165] Even so, Bishop's epithet closely approximates Moore's own understanding of her responsibility as a poet. Indeed, Moore's writings are peppered with declarations of the poet's role as an exact observer with 'a sort

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[162] John Ruskin, *Precious Thoughts* (New York: H.M. Caldwell, 1909), p. 396. This edition of *Precious Thoughts* is located in Marianne Moore's personal library at the RML, G1.12.
[163] Ibid., p. 163.
[164] Ibid., p. 163.
[165] Elizabeth Bishop, 'As We Like It: Miss Moore and the Delight of Imitation', *Quarterly Review of Literature*, 1949, pp. 129-135 (p. 129).

of heightened consciousness' (29). Taking notes from Shelley's 'A Defence of Poetry' (1821) in 1923, for example, Moore noted that '(the poet) is sensible to pain & pleasure, both his own & that of others in a degree unknown to them (other men)'.[166] In another notebook, she quoted Ruskin's proclamation that 'the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in a plain way […] to see clearly is poetry, prophecy and religion, all in one'.[167] As the title of *Observations* makes clear, Moore took the charge 'to see clearly' so seriously that poetry and observation appear synonymous in her oeuvre.

For Moore, 'the writer's object [was] "to render the highest kind of justice to the visible world"'.[168] In poems like 'An Octopus', 'People's Surroundings', and 'A Grave', Moore employed several strategies in order to accomplish this objective. Inspired by a modern scientific methodology that placed emphasis on the perceptual power of questions, hypotheses, and interests to make seemingly invisible phenomena visible, Moore adopted an 'x-raylike inquisitive intensity' that afforded 'piercing glances into the life of things' without the need for the 'rapacious looks' that she associated with men. Moore's 'inquisitive intensity' was active, conscious, and made possible by 'the power of volition'. Like P.T. Forsyth, one of her favourite religious writers, Moore felt that 'artists […] must call their will into play. They must use a selective, creative judgment'.[169] Throughout *Observations,* we find Moore 'picking and choosing' between different aspects of her environment with an educated eye that 'knows what to skip' with 'a sense of the really significant'.[170] Moore's perceptual training took place in a variety of contexts including the biology laboratory, the philosophy classroom, the doctor's office, the outdoors, and the imagined worlds of mythology, visual art, and literature. Thanks to her encounters with perceptual technologies,

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166 Marianne Moore Digital Archive, 'Notebook 07.01.04', ed. by Cristanne Miller and Claire Nashar, p. 77 recto <https://moorearchive.org/custom/notebooks/#doc=07-01-04&page=nb07_01_04_0077-recto> [accessed 30 September 2024].
167 See Sherod Santos, *A Poetry of Two Minds* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000), p. 124. Moore used the latter part of this quotation to open a short piece of writing on Blake in 1927 (see *Complete Prose,* ed. by Willis, p. 184).
168 Here, Moore quotes Howard Nemerov quoting Joseph Conrad in 'Answers to Some Questions', p. 11.
169 Forsyth, *Christ on Parnassus,* p. 286.
170 Marianne Moore, 'Idiosyncrasy and Technique', in *Complete Prose,* ed. by Willis, pp. 506-518 (p. 515).

evolutionary theories, guidebooks, poems, and paintings, Moore's mind was rich with real and actual imagery that made it possible for her to extend the *limen* (or threshold) of perception to see a wide range of hidden phenomena in a natural world full of subtlety, complexity, mystery, and deception.

In nature poems like 'An Octopus', 'People's Surroundings', and 'A Grave', Moore's understanding of natural history and evolutionary biology contributed to her ability to see both surface appearances and inner structures with what Ruskin called a 'just perception of the infiniteness of the things [she could] never know'. Read in light of the naturalist aesthetic of Thayer, Landseer, and Ruskin and not the urbanism of precisionist painters and straight photographers, *Observations* emerges as an attempt to discern naturally occurring surface processes and their underlying causes. Yet it is difficult to discern between the natural and the human worlds in Moore's poetry—especially in poems like 'People's Surroundings' and 'A Grave', two poems that straddle the genres of nature poetry and portraiture. It should come as no surprise, then, that even the most urban poems in *Observations*—'Is Your Town Ninevah?' (1916), 'Dock Rats' (1920), and 'New York' (1921)—are not lifeless but full of 'piercing glances into the life of things' like 'fishes' (13), 'a parrakeet [sic] / from Brazil' (47), and 'deer-skins' (55). Much like the more obvious nature poems of *Observations*, these poems push the scope of perception and the span of consciousness by calling attention to the existence of unseen possibilities and realities waiting to be made actual through the medium of language. From the 'plain to see' (44) and 'very noticeable' (49) to the 'partly hid' (53) and 'obscured' (62), *Observations* holds the world 'up for us to see' (16), lifted above the threshold of sensation and 'lit with piercing glances' of both 'the exterior and the fundamental structure'.

Conclusion

In Mirrlees' second novel, *The Counterplot* (1923), one of her characters hesitantly hypothesises that 'modern poetry is getting nearer to—to—er—processes'.[1] The preceding chapters lend weight to this hypothesis by showing how Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore respectively encountered, critiqued, and created new technological, philosophical, and formal means of 'getting nearer to' perceptual processes ranging from synaesthesia to extramission. Thanks to their embrace of the body and its spatiotemporal limitations, coupled with their distance from institutional policies and prejudices, these five poets got 'nearer' to perceptual processes than the poets that came before them. Their poetry is poised at the threshold of perception—it places pressure on the boundary between the perceptible and the imperceptible and produces an aesthetic materialisation of sensory and non-sensory processes. In this concluding word, I would like to briefly consider how the five poets explored in this thesis anticipated later developments in philosophy, focusing specifically on the mid-century phenomenological interventions of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Simone de Beauvoir—two philosophers who sought to get nearer to perceptual processes by describing the concrete character of the perceiving subject. By placing Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore within a broader historical context that encompasses the philosophical interventions following the period examined in this thesis, the impulses and implications of their perceptual aesthetics will become clearer to see. As these poets got 'nearer to' the processes of perception, they anticipated Merleau-Ponty's embrace of the body, his philosophy of 'attentiveness', 'wonder', and 'awareness',[2] his effort to 'awaken perception',[3] and his idea that perceivers 'encounter depth through an

[1] Mirrlees, *Counterplot*, p. 36.
[2] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* trans. by Donald Landes (London: Routledge, 2012), p. lxxxv.
[3] Ibid., p. 57.

"animating", "investing", and "penetrating" gaze'.[4] At the same time, they also anticipated Beauvoir's feminist rejection of perceptual passivity, her embrace of sex and sexual anatomy, her investment in perceptual possibility, and her exploration of expression. My conclusion will address each of these themes in turn, identifying directions for further research along the way.

The Phenomenology of Perception

About three decades after Wyndham Lewis proclaimed that 'THE ACTUAL HUMAN BODY BECOMES OF LESS IMPORTANCE EVERY DAY' in *BLAST* (1914), Maurice Merleau-Ponty published his *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945)—a book that 'insisted', as Louise Westling notes, 'on taking our existence as bodies seriously'.[5] During the period explored in this thesis, spanning from Stein's matriculation at Radcliffe College in 1893 to the publication of *Observations* in 1924, Lewis' sentiment was echoed by a number of writers including Giovanni Papini and Ezra Pound. Not all men, however, were on the same page as Lewis. Henri Bergson, for example, urged his readers to 'narrow the universe to the surface of the living body'.[6] Yet Bergson's understanding of the body, as my chapter on Loy makes clear, failed to account for the abject, subversive, and visceral aspects that Merleau-Ponty went on to embrace. For Bergson, according to Merleau-Ponty, 'the body remains […] what we have called the objective body'—a Husserlian 'bearer of sensations', 'a thing "inserted" between the rest of the material world and the "subjective" sphere'.[7] For Merleau-Ponty, by contrast, 'the body is the vehicle of being in the world'.[8] It is this latter approach to the body—as the very basis for perception and not just as a mere intermediary—that

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[4] Glen Mazis, 'Depth', in *Understanding Merleau-Ponty, Understanding Modernism,* ed. by Ariane Mildenberg (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), pp. 234-235 (p. 235).
[5] Lewis, p. 141; Louise Westling, *The Logos of the Living World: Merleau-Ponty, Animals, and Language* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), p. 18.
[6] Bergson, *Matter and Memory,* p. 52.
[7] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* p. 514; Edmund Husserl quoted in English by Taylor Carman in 'The Body in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty', *Philosophical Topics,* 27.2 (1999), 205-226 (p. 212) <doi:10.5840/philtopics199927210>.
[8] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* p. 84.

modernist women poets adopted, sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly. Loy, for example, was in tune with the Merleau-Pontian idea that 'the body sees and is seen; it touches and is touched'.[9] In Moore's writings we find a poetic portrayal of bodily proprioception—'that constant flow of biofeedback from sensory, musculoskeletal, and vestibular systems that gives us at each moment an inner sense of our bodily posture as well as the relation of one body part to another'.[10] 'Hands that can grasp, eyes / that can dilate, hair that can rise'—as 'Poetry' (1919) makes clear, 'these things [were] all [as] important' to Moore as they were to Merleau-Ponty.[11] And finally, H.D.'s *Sea Garden*—with its naked eye aesthetic and extramissionist angle—anticipates Merleau-Ponty's observation that 'when I find again the actual world such as it is, under my hands, under my eyes, up against my body, I find much more than an object: a Being of which my vision is a part'.[12] Here and throughout this thesis, the body is not a mere receptor of sensations. Instead, it precedes and participates in perception, action, and creation.

While Merleau-Ponty's work on the phenomenology of the body is rightfully hailed as revolutionary, his philosophy as a whole is deeply informed by the intellectual currents of modernism. In the Preface to *Phenomenology of Perception,* Merleau-Ponty called attention to the continuities between his philosophical approach and modernism:

> [Phenomenology] is as painstaking as the works of Balzac, Proust, Valéry or Cézanne—by reason of the same kind of attentiveness and wonder, the same demand for awareness, the same will to seize the meaning of the world or of history as that meaning comes into being. In this way it merges into the general effort of modern thought.[13]

Men like Balzac, Proust, Valéry, and Cézanne clearly had a direct influence on Merleau-Ponty's project. Yet the statement above works just as well if we replace their names with the names of

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[9] Ann V. Murphy, 'Flesh', in *Understanding Merleau-Ponty,* ed. by Mildenberg, pp. 217-218 (p. 217).
[10] Jonathan Hale, 'Body Schema', in *Understanding Merleau-Ponty,* ed. by Mildenberg, pp. 224-225 (p. 225)
[11] Moore, *New Collected Poems,* ed. by White, p. 27.
[12] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible,* ed. by Claude Lefort, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 123.
[13] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* p. lxxxv.

the women explored in this thesis. Loy's understanding of modernism, for example, closely resembles Merleau-Ponty's. According to Loy, 'Modernism says Why not each one of us, scholar or bricklayer, pleasureably [sic] realize all that is impressing itself upon our subconscious, the thousand odds and ends which make up [our] sensery [sic] everyday life?'.[14] It is fitting that this statement appears in Loy's essay, 'Gertrude Stein' (1924), for it was Stein who searched and spied with 'the same kind of attentiveness and wonder, the same demand for awareness' that Merleau-Ponty calls for in the passage above. In *Paris,* Mirrlees' efforts of attention similarly made it possible for her to seek and make sense of sounds in media res. This is what Merleau-Ponty meant when he stressed the modernist's power to 'seize' meaning as it 'comes into being'. Not only is this power discernible in *Paris,* but it is also made palpable in *Sea Garden.* As discussed in Chapter Two, each of H.D.'s imagist poems is poised at a singular moment of transformation that occurs in the lyric present. And while *Observations* often lacks this sense of immediacy owing to its carefully crafted quality, both Moore's wonder at and awareness of perceptual possibility is discernible in every line of her collection.

Together, the five poets explored in this thesis performed what Merleau-Ponty called 'the fundamental philosophical act'—'to rediscover phenomena [… and] awaken perception'.[15] Their poetry sought to expand both the breadth and the depth of perception. As detailed in my introduction, their desire for perceptual breadth can be seen as a continuation of the Romantic ideal articulated in the subtitle of Wordsworth's *Prelude* (1850): the 'growth of the poet's mind'. Over the course of this thesis, however, we have also witnessed modernist women poets critiquing the Romantic tendency to transcend the spatiotemporal limitations of the perceiving body. In particular, H.D., Mirrlees, and Moore placed pressure on the Shelleyan idea of an 'everlasting universe of things [that] flows through the mind' without the use of a body that is limited by its position in space and time.[16] Their awareness of the limited breadth of the perceiving body led

[14] Loy, 'Gertrude Stein', p. 430.
[15] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* p. 57.
[16] Shelley, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour,* p. 175.

them to pursue new notions of perceptual depth long before Merleau-Ponty sought to discover 'the originality of depth' decoupled from breadth.[17] In Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, as Glen Mazis notes, 'depth […] renders perception as having a latent and inexhaustible dimension [that is] at odds with previous philosophical descriptions that characterize perception as comprised by superficial inputs of sensation that require other faculties of the mind to give them structure and significance'.[18] Likewise, in modernist women's poetry, an inexhaustible depth of perceptual possibilities awaits to be made sensible by a perceiver who brings meaning, structure, and significance to a world otherwise devoid of these qualities. The most obvious examples from this thesis are Loy and Mirrlees—both of whom explored the idea of a fourth dimension that is only perceptible to those who search for it with the ear and not the eye. Other examples include Stein's combination of aural and visual dimensions to render depth, H.D.'s gestures to unseen depths beneath surface appearances, and Moore's 'piercing glances into the life of things'—all of which are made possible by the same 'animating', 'investing', and 'penetrating' gaze that precedes depth in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy.[19]

While the desire for perceptual and dimensional depth was not exclusive to modernist women writers (men like Duchamp and Apollinaire explored the idea of a fourth dimension, too), it marks a significant departure from the traditional understanding of women as surface-orientated perceivers. As outlined in my Introduction, studies of modernism and perception tend to feature Virginia Woolf as the token woman among an exclusively male demographic of modernists.[20] A sole focus on Woolf, however, has resulted in an over-emphasis on surface perception. In 'Street Haunting' (1930), Woolf presents an understanding of perception in which 'the eye is not a miner, not a diver, not a seeker after buried treasure'.[21] Instead, it 'glid[es] smoothly on the surface' and thus reinforces a stereotypical understanding of women as surface-orientated perceivers in

[17] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* p. 267.
[18] Mazis, p. 234.
[19] Moore, *New Collected Poems,* ed. by White, p. 51.
[20] See pp. 13-14 of this thesis.
[21] Virginia Woolf, *Street Haunting* (San Francisco: Westgate Press, 1930), p. 6.

possession of the same 'intuitive impressionability' that Edward Thomas ascribed to women in *The Feminine Influence on the Poets* (1910).[22] The preceding chapters have painted a dramatically different picture of perception—not only in their emphasis on depth but also in their emphasis on the active role played by the eye and other perceptual organs. Stein's eye played 'I spy' and emitted 'research',[23] H.D.'s 'super-feelers' extended 'out and about',[24] Loy's eye 'illuminate[d] the earth',[25] Mirrlees' intelligent ear actively tuned into nearly inaudible sounds, and Moore's eye performed 'piercing glances'.[26] In all of these examples, the perceiver-poet departs dramatically from the Woolfian model of passive impressionism by actively asserting her own agency in the act of perception.

The Second Sex

The philosophical and social implications of women's apparent passivity formed the subject of Simone de Beauvoir's feminist treatise, *The Second Sex* (1949). Women, according to Beauvoir, are 'doomed to passivity' that is not innate but socially imposed.[27] The perceptual result of this passivity, wrote Beauvoir, is that '[women's] eyes no longer perceive, they reflect'.[28] Against this passive model of perception, Beauvoir envisioned an active woman with the potential to perceive unseen and 'unexpected' realities.[29] 'Woman is not a fixed reality', wrote Beauvoir, 'but a becoming; she has to be compared with man in her becoming; that is, her *possibilities* have to be defined […] the question concerns her capacities'.[30] In many ways, the poets explored in this thesis were

[22] Ibid., pp. 5-6; Thomas, p. 6.
[23] Stein, *Tender Buttons,* pp. 52, 11.
[24] H.D., *Notes,* p. 19.
[25] Loy, 'Psycho-Democracy', p. 15.
[26] Moore, *New Collected Poems,* ed. by White, p. 51.
[27] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* trans. by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), p. 408.
[28] Ibid., p. 426.
[29] Ibid., p. 431.
[30] Ibid., p. 68 [emphasis original].

grappling with this same question—the question of their capacities, both as women and as perceivers. 'Leave off looking to men to find what you are not—seek within yourselves to find what you are', was Loy's Beauvoirian advice to 'Women' in her 'Feminist Manifesto' (1914).[31] When it came to discovering their own identity as active perceivers, some women portrayed their perceptual abilities as superior to men's. H.D., for example, privileged women's perception in *Notes on Thought and Vision* (1919), where she questioned: 'is it easier for a woman to attain [a heightened state of consciousness] than for a man?'.[32] Her answer—'For me, it was before the birth of my child'—is affirmative (albeit diplomatic), and thus anticipates Beauvoir's essentialist idea that the perceptually and sexually active woman possesses a 'singular sensitivity' distinct from men.[33]

While twentieth-century women writers like H.D. and Beauvoir operated in a cultural environment that favoured essentialist views of gender and perception, it would be mistaken to assume that their experiences with gender expectations did not contribute to the awakening of their 'singular sensitivity'. Unlike the Beauvoirian 'man', who 'vainly forgets that his anatomy includes hormones and testicles', the women explored in this thesis were regularly reminded of their seemingly subordinate status as 'earth-bound being[s]' with 'physical limitations'.[34] Yet instead of seeing the body as the Beauvoirian man sees it—as 'an obstacle, a prison, burdened by everything that particularizes it'—modernist women poets used the body's finite point of view to their perceptual advantage.[35] H.D., for example, used her body's limitations to perceive that which is only perceptible under certain spatiotemporal conditions—the ripening of fruit, the crashing of waves, and the nyctitropic movement of petals. The body, in *Sea Garden*, functions precisely as H.D.'s *Notes* prescribe: as 'a means of approach to ecstasy'.[36] Similarly, in *Observations,* Moore rejects

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[31] Loy, 'Feminist Manifesto', p. 153 [emphasis original].
[32] H.D., *Notes,* p. 19.
[33] Ibid., p. 19; Beauvoir, p. 861.
[34] Beauvoir, p. 25; Weininger, p. 29.
[35] Beauvoir, p. 25.
[36] H.D., *Notes,* p. 45.

the Romantic desire to perceive 'everything everywhere' in favour of the 'particular profiles' and 'unexpected metamorphoses' that are accessible only to women in *The Second Sex*.[37]

Unlike many of their contemporaries, modernist women poets were not afraid to explore the perceptual potentiality of sex and sexual anatomy. In *Songs to Joannes*, for example, Loy celebrates the erotic body for its ability to bring about novel perceptual experiences previously denied to women due to their perceived lack of libido. Loy's juxtaposition of sexual and perceptual processes anticipates Beauvoir's appeal for a revaluation of the perceptual potential of sexuality:

> Reality would be better delineated if, instead of defining the libido in vague terms of 'energy', the significance of sexuality were juxtaposed with that of other human attitudes: taking, catching, eating, doing, undergoing, and so on; for sexuality is one of the singular modes of apprehending an object.[38]

Positioning herself somewhere between Bergson's evolutionary view of sexual generation and Beauvoir's philosophical reappraisal of sex and sexual anatomy, Loy called for the 'mental demystification of sexual impulses' and even juxtaposed (hetero)sexual activities with other kinds of activities in *Songs to Joannes*.[39] There, sexuality is a powerful mode of apprehension, a major part of the 'myriad phenomenality' of the mind.[40] Of course, the same could be said of *Tender Buttons*—that sexuality is 'one of the singular modes of apprehending an object' for Stein. Yet the significance of sexuality, in *Tender Buttons,* is not so much 'juxtaposed with that of other human attitudes' as it is layered into Stein's language. Because sexuality is just one of many linguistic layers, and because other ways of reading *Tender Buttons* have been neglected in favour of this one, my discussion is primarily devoted to the non-sexual perceptual dynamics of Stein's prose poems. In this chapter, as in my chapters on H.D., Mirrlees, and Moore, the question of how sexuality relates to perception is a notable omission. I discuss it on occasion, but it is not a central issue despite the fact that Stein and H.D. were in relationships with women while Mirrlees and Moore explored

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[37] RML, I:02:14; Beauvoir, p. 431.
[38] Ibid., p. 83.
[39] Mina Loy Papers, YCAL MSS 6, Box 1, Folder 6.
[40] Loy to Van Vechten, YCAL MSS 1050, Box 76, Folder 1082, l. 27.

and obscured non-normative sexual identities. The topic of sexuality, modernist poetry, and perception would require a separate study, at the very least. Such a study would be a valuable contribution to scholarship on modernism and perception.

Sexuality aside, the inextricable connection between femininity and the flesh carries profound poetic significance both for Beauvoir and for the poets examined in this thesis. According to Beauvoir's interpretation of André Breton, 'woman is poetry' because 'poetry is objectively present in things, and woman is unequivocally a being of flesh and bones'.[41] 'Woman appears to us as *flesh*', writes Beauvoir, she 'is akin to *nature,* she embodies it […] she can hold the keys to *poetry* [and] can be *mediator* between this world and beyond'.[42] 'We are not told' by men like Breton, however, 'whether she is poetry for herself too'.[43] When it comes to Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore, all evidence points to the contrary—that these women saw themselves not as poetry but as *poets*; not as passive objects onto which poetic meaning is projected, but as the creators of poetic meaning. Stein's defiant response to Henri-Pierre Roché's critique of her poetic excess, penned in 1912, showcases this self-understanding: 'You are a man and I am a woman', wrote Stein, 'but I have a much more constructive mind than you have'.[44] Mirrlees similarly made use of 'the constructive force of human consciousness' in *Paris*.[45] Here and throughout this thesis, woman is not 'an eminently poetic reality' (as she appears in Beauvoir's interpretation of Breton) but is instead a constructor of poetic realities both seen and unseen.[46]

Contrary to Beauvoir's caricature of the passive woman who 'rarely feels a creative urge, and all too often […] lacks the techniques that would allow her to express herself',[47] the poets explored in this thesis had a plethora of expressionist techniques at their disposal thanks to their

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41 Beauvoir, p. 289.
42 Ibid., p. 306 [emphasis original].
43 Ibid., p. 295.
44 Gertrude Stein quoted by Linda Wagner-Martin in *Favored Strangers: Gertrude Stein and Her Family* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), p. 104
45 Mirrlees, *Madeleine,* p. vii.
46 Beauvoir, p. 235.
47 Ibid., p. 431.

elite educational backgrounds and their relatively privileged position in avant-garde art circles.[48] In these circles, as Peter Bürger notes in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974), 'the totality of artistic means [became] available as means'.[49] Unfettered by the poetic conventions of the past, modernist women poets experimented with subject matter, rhyme, rhythm, vocabulary, punctuation, and typography. Language, for these women, was not just 'a special extension of the power of seeing' (as Moore described it), but also an extension of listening, feeling, and acting—of inhabiting a body that is 'not a *thing*', as Beauvoir notes, but 'a situation' that affords a 'grasp on the world'.[50] The multisensory nature of this situation demands a multisensory medium. Poetry, by virtue of its visual, verbal, and material dimensions, has the capacity to engage the senses in ways that prose cannot. 'The prose arts', as Mikel Dufrenne notes, 'treat the work as an instrument of meaning without paying too much attention to the sensuous qualities which the work manifests when it is uttered'.[51] Poetry, by contrast, situates its readers 'in the real world where the sensuous is displayed' not just for the eye (as in painting), nor just for the ear (as in music), but for the entire perceiving body.[52] Contrary to Merleau-Ponty's conviction that 'there is no fundamental difference between the various modes of expression', then, poetry possesses a special phenomenological affordance: the ability to aestheticise multiple modes of perceiving; to give form, expression, substance, sense, and permanence to sensory and non-sensory experiences that are otherwise prone to fade into formlessness.[53]

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[48] By 'relatively privileged', I mean to register the racial and economic privilege of Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore while acknowledging the marginalisation they were subjected to in male-dominated spaces.
[49] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde,* trans. by Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 18.
[50] Nemerov quoted by Moore in 'Answers to Some Questions', p. 11; Beauvoir, p. 68 [emphasis original].
[51] Mikel Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience,* trans. by Edward S. Casey and others (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 52. While modernist novels like Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1913-1927) and Woolf's *The Waves* (1931) challenge Dufrenne's assessment of prose as a non-sensuous medium, his distinction between poetry and prose remains a useful framework for understanding the divergent priorities of poets and prose writers.
[52] Ibid., p. 52. See also Eva Zettelmann, 'Apostrophe, Speaker Projection, and Lyric World Building', *Poetics Today,* 38.1 (February 2017), 189-201 (p. 198) <doi:10.1215/03335372-3716316>.
[53] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* p. 455. See also Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei, 'The Phenomenology of Poetry', in *Language and Phenomenology,* ed. by Chad Engelland (New York: Routledge, 2020), pp. 149-174.

Modernist women poets recognised, maintained, and augmented the phenomenological powers of poetry. The five poets selected for this study—Stein, H.D., Loy, Mirrlees, and Moore—were uniquely placed to do so by virtue of their familiarity with other art forms, their elite educational backgrounds, their embrace of the body, their distance from institutional policies and prejudices, and their willingness to depart from formal, social, and intellectual conventions. Often writing in conversation with one another, these poets cultivated aesthetic systems to complement the perceptual and psychological expansion that they claimed to experience. Their claims were limited by the bounds of the body, but not by the scientific standards that dynamic psychologists like Bergson, James, and Myers were bound to uphold. Operating outside of scientific circles, modernist women poets were free to pursue epistemologies dismissed as too 'heretical'—too esoteric, sexual, or Romantic—in higher education institutions like Harvard, Bryn Mawr, and Cambridge. With epistemic authority of their own, they pushed and probed the boundaries of perception and expression. *Tender Buttons, Sea Garden, Songs to Joannes, Paris,* and *Observations* address and embrace the long-forgotten limitations and new-found liberties of the senses. The perceptual power of poetry, in these works, is both gestural and generative—it gestures to the aesthetic richness of perceptual experience and generates phenomenological insight along the way.

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