MARITIME METAPHORICS IN MODERNIST LITERATURE

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English

Trinity Term 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No man is an island, and no one writes a thesis alone. I would like to thank the many sources of support, encouragement, and helpful critique I've had along the way.

I thank the Oxford-Thatcher Scholarship and its donors for their generous support of this project—I would not be in Oxford without them.

I thank my supervisor, Marina Mackay, for her grounding influence and generosity in providing feedback, encouragement, and critique of my work.

I thank Rebecca Beasley for making a historicist of me, and putting up with my theoreticist waffle as she guided me in those early overwhelming days when I went from having a ten-shelf selection of modernist materials to draw on at the University of Stellenbosch, to having an entire legal deposit library at my disposal.

I thank the various friends, fellow researchers, and interlocutors who have helped shape this thesis, especially my intellectual home base at the Modern and Contemporary Seminar, which furnished many stimulating conversations, gave me a social hub within modernist studies, and provided me with a wonderful sounding-board for unformed ideas. I thank Lillian especially, for teaching me the virtues academic of stubbornness and the necessity of trusting yourself.

I also thank my friends Devin, Harris, Felix, Vangelis, William, Christiaan, and Anja for an indescribable amount of love, kindness, and care throughout the course of this project. Imogen: thanks seem insufficient—I would not have reached the end without you.

I thank my own family for their belief in me and their encouragement in my academic pursuits, and I thank the Madsen, Fiddaman, and Thomas families who have stood in as a source of familial community during my long, Covid-induced absence from South Africa.

Mark and Freyja—again, thanks fall short. You have brightened my days and flooded my life with so much love and wonder. Thank you for so many hours and days of togetherness, silliness, and talking the world to rights.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the metaphoric role that the maritime world plays in modernist literature. Specifically, I make the case for a historically grounded modernist maritime metaphorics, by which authors draw on the material history of a pervasive maritime world in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in their engagements with signature topics such as the city (Joseph Conrad), perception (Virginia Woolf and H.D.), expatriation (T.S. Eliot), and right-wing politics (Ezra Pound). Combining perspectives from the New Modernist Studies and Oceanic Studies, my thesis focuses on a historicist turn in the critique of modernist literature's use of marine metaphors, tracing the ways in which naval competition, a global maritime economy, scientific innovation in marine biology, and maritime imperialism are reflected and interrogated in figurative language in the period. Reading the work of canonical authors such as Conrad, Woolf, H.D., Eliot, and Pound, I catalogue the ways in which differing and conflicting deployments of the sea, of the submarine, and of drowning are used, in their work, to reflect, interrogate, or advocate for a specifically maritime world order. This maritime world, I argue, constitutes an important and neglected context for the emergence and the development of Anglo-American modernism. This thesis thus offers a corrective to the occlusion of the maritime as a context for modernism, and provides an example of a historicist reading of maritime metaphors that have largely been dismissed as clichés or ahistorical flights of fancy.

In Chapter 1, I trace the maritime underpinnings of the modern imperial metropolis of London. Reading Joseph Conrad's city texts like *The Return* and *The Secret Agent*, I argue that metaphors describing the city as watery or oceanic register the maritime economy and colonial hinterland that shape an urban modernity.

Chapter 2 argues that the submarine metaphorics of Woolf and H.D. draws on the nexus of marine biology, visual culture, and optical science to interrogate the subjectivity and gendering of vision.

Chapter 3 contrasts the submarine metaphorics of the previous chapter with that of T.S. Eliot, tracing the horror and allure that he reads in images of drowning and watery ego-death.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I study the occluded world of maritime trade, focusing on the poetry and prose of Ezra Pound. I argue that the sea is a crucial economic exemplar in *The Cantos* and in Pound's prose, ranging throughout his work in the ancient maritime economies of Venice, Rome, and Athens, in the maritime contestations of the American Revolution by US president John Adams with the British and the French, and finally in the imperialist ideology of Italian Fascism.

Taken together, these chapters constitute evidence that the modernist sea, in its historically grounded metaphorics, provides authors with a powerful lens through which to interrogate conceptions of the urban, of perception, of the transatlantic, and of empire.

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INTRODUCTION

'Humans live their lives and build their institutions on dry land. Nevertheless they seek to grasp the movement of their existence above all through a metaphorics of the perilous sea voyage' (*Shipwreck with Spectator* 7).

This is how the philosopher Hans Blumenberg opens his 1979 essay *Shipwreck with Spectator.*[1] In this seminal essay, he proceeds to trace the various incarnations and transformations of a Lucretian image from *De Rerum Natura,* where a man stands on the rocky shore watching the destruction of a ship at sea (*De Rerum Natura II* lines 1-6; *Shipwreck with Spectator* 16-17, 26-28). Throughout his essay, Blumenberg stresses how authors transform and adapt this image in accordance with their culturally and historically specific attitudes surrounding how we know the world and how we exist in it, from the blasphemy of seafaring for the ancients and the early church fathers, as a transgression of one's naturally-imposed boundaries (8-11), to its valorisation during the Enlightenment as the pursuit of knowledge and progress (40-41), to the point in the nineteenth century, where, as Blumenberg puts it, 'the spectator loses his position' (59), and in an increasingly modern and self-reflexive consciousness, authors like Schopenhauer and Nietzsche find that 'there is no longer any "land"' (65, 19; *The Gay Science* 180-181).

Blumenberg's reading of the image of shipwreck-with-spectator, through its various historical metamorphoses, makes it an example of what he elsewhere calls an 'absolute metaphor,' that is, a figurative expression that cannot be translated back into 'ordinary' or

[1] With foreign language texts, like those of Blumenberg, Friedrich Nietzshche, and Walter Benjamin, I have made use of English translations where these are readily available. Otherwise, where I have consulted texts in the original language, I have provided both the foreign text and my own translations.

conceptual language, but tells us something important and intractable about the world we live in and how we relate to it (*Paradigms for a Metaphorology* 3-4). These are not, for Blumenberg, merely decorative constructions, but the only means available to us to think through or attempt to express what our reason cannot: the perplexities of our historical context and the aporias in our conceptual thinking (*Metaphorology 3*-5). In this, he aligns himself with thinkers like Giambattista Vico, contending that 'poetic wisdom' and creative fictions can help humans live in the world, giving them breathing room (*Metaphorology* 2, 4, Vico 114-115): a comprehensible human world that prevents them from being overwhelmed by the 'absolutism of reality' (*Work on Myth* 3-4).

This study was inspired by *Shipwreck with Spectator*, and in it I intended to read modernist authors' incarnations of the sea voyage metaphor, of shipwreck, and of the perspective of the observer. As my research progressed, however, chapters took on a life of their own, refusing to remain within the bounds of the sea voyage. Of my four chapters, only the third retains clear relations to voyaging, in the ideological and future-oriented performances of T.S. Eliot in *Four Quartets*. The reason for this is hinted at in Blumenberg's own *terminus ad quem* cited above: the sea voyage metaphor undergoes a radical and perhaps final change when, in the nineteenth century, thought begins to think itself, and the spectator loses their ground. In Schopenhauer, this self-consciousness is still a preserving force, if a fragile one, when the sailor becomes his own spectator:

> Just as the boatman sits in his small boat, trusting to his frail craft in a stormy sea that is boundless in every direction, rising and falling with the howling, mountainous waves, so in the midst of a world full of suffering and misery the individual man

> calmly sits, supported by and trusting the *principium individuationis*, or the way in which the individual knows things as phenomenon. (*The World as Will and Representation I* 352-353; *Shipwreck with Spectator* 65)

Yet despite the saving powers of the *principium individuationis*,[2] there is a shift in the security of the spectator: no longer observing maritime peril from the safety of land, but at sea amid the waves. In a writer like Jacob Burckhardt, 'we ourselves are these waves' on which we sail,[3] so that 'objective knowledge is not made easy for us' (*Geschichte des Revolutionszeitalters* 8; cited in *Shipwreck with Spectator* 69-70). Or, as Blumenberg glosses this passage, 'the historian is confronted by an unprecedented problem of objectivity,' and 'there is no longer a firm standpoint from which the historian could be a distanced spectator. He can gain no view of the whole of the epoch' (*Shipwreck with Spectator* 70) Pascal hints at what is to come when he writes: '*vous êtes embarqués*,' or 'you are embarked' (*Pensées* 162). I suggest that, in the modernist writers discussed in what follows, freighted with a cargo-weight of drowned bodies, it might be more fitting to write: 'you are engulfed.'

It is these modernists' various modes of being engulfed that interest me, and this thesis reads their immersions alongside the historical contexts of the maritime world that inform their watery performances. In Joseph Conrad, I will explore a city and an urban order that is flooded with time and is always at risk of dissolving into a chaotic and maddening sea; at the same time, I will show how this liquid city of Conrad's fiction comes into view at a time

[2] And what happens, we might ask, when this *principium individuationis* disintegrates, as Edgar Allan Poe (for example, in 'The Man of the Crowd'), Charles Baudelaire ('Les Sept Vieillards'), and Virginia Woolf (for example, in 'Street Haunting') effect by means of the impact of crowds upon the individual consciousness, and as a multitude of modernist authors effect by means of madness?

[3] '*Wir möchten gerne die Welle kennen, auf welcher wir im Ocean treiben, allein wir sind diese Welle selbst*.' (*Geschichte des Revolutionszeilalters* 8)

when the modern metropolis was underpinned by the maritime world that surrounded and supported it. In Virginia Woolf and H.D., I will read how the writers transform themselves into creatures at home in the sea, and I will show how their metaphors of jellyfish, anemones, and octopuses coincide with the increasing popularity of the public aquarium and with widespread interest in the undersea world. Discussing Eliot, I will show how he transfers a final, hoped-for land beyond the boundaries of this world into a messianic afterlife, and I will read this as an adaptation of an Anglo-American foundation myth of sea-crossing that resurfaces powerfully in Eliot's transatlantic experiences. Discussing the writing of Ezra Pound, I will show how his own poetic-political messianic project founders with the death of Mussolini, tracing the maritime ideology of Italian Fascism and Pound's own engagements with maritime economics and politics.

This thesis, then, argues that the world of the modernist writers was an engulfed one, haunted by maritime history, supported by maritime trade and economics, and animated by maritime politics and its national ideologies, as well as by marine science and discovery; what is more, it argues that this thoroughly flooded, maritime world finds its way into modernist literature in creative formulations that are both metaphorical and historically highly specific. Throughout this thesis, but particularly in the opening chapters, I draw on the theories of Walter Benjamin, who is germane to my argument both as a central theorist of urban modernity, and because, himself a thinker writing in the 1930s, there is a remarkable consonance between his sense of the metaphoric, and the way in which the modernist authors I will study deploy maritime metaphors.

In this introductory chapter, I will outline the existent criticism on the sea in Anglo-American literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, sketching out critical strands that either dismiss the metaphoric potential of the sea in favour of a narrow historicism, or embrace metaphor and figurative language at the expense of a historicist approach. This thesis seeks to reconcile these two poles, comprising a rigorously historicist study of maritime metaphorics in modernist literature. I will then outline the two major terms of this thesis—'metaphorics' and 'modernism'—and will clarify my own position within these contested fields.

Contrary to the assertions of many literary critics (none of them modernists) there are plenty of sea voyages in modernist literature. Nonetheless, they do not seem to me to reflect the most interesting ways, especially in terms of imagery, in which the sea appears in the writing of this period. This will not be a study of 'sea literature' or the sea voyage narrative: as John Peck writes in the introduction to his *Maritime Fiction: Sailors and the Sea in British and American Novels, 1719-1917*, 'a novel does not need to include a sea voyage in order to have something interesting to say about a country's maritime economy and culture' (3). On the one hand, such voyages have been admirably studied by David Adams in his *Colonial Odysseys: Empire and Epic in the Modernist Novel* (2003), which addresses texts by Joseph Conrad, E.M. Forster, and Virginia Woolf (especially *The Voyage Out).* On the other, my primary interest is how the maritime world filters into language and literature in both conscious and subconscious ways in metaphors, and my focus is therefore on figurative language rather than on representations of life and travel at sea. In this respect, my work engages with but departs from recent critical debates that characterise the maritime turn in the

humanities.[4] This turn has tended to dismiss maritime metaphorics (though critics within it often resort to these metaphors in their own writing). In her field-defining essay 'The Prospect of Oceanic Studies' (2010), Hester Blum provocatively claims that 'The sea is not a metaphor' (670), and the prevailing trend within the field has indeed been a turn away from the figural valences of the sea, which are dismissed as abstract and ahistorical, in favour of texts written by sailors or that deal specifically with sea voyages and with the materialities of life at sea. Critics like Blum and Margaret Cohen explicitly state their aims as the recuperation of labour at sea (Blum 670, 675; Cohen 12), and they have made valuable contributions to doing so. Cohen, especially, in *The Novel and the Sea* (2010), has convincingly shown how the genres of sea voyage narratives and adventure writing have contributed to the development and reception of the novel (12).

That said, Cohen's claims are rather broader than are warranted by her arguments. While her discussions of the importance of adventure fiction and of the practical wisdom of craft in seafaring accounts address a neglected aspect of the sea in literature, she uses this focus to dismiss more metaphorical engagements with the maritime as immaterial, ahistorical constructions that rob the maritime world of its actuality. Nor is she very consistent in what

[4] Recent broad-ranging histories of the human interaction with the ocean include Helen Rozwadowski's *Vast Expanses: A History of the Oceans* (2018), David Abulafia's *The Boundless Sea: A Human History of the Oceans* (2019), and Steve Mentz's *Ocean* (2020). The past decade has also seen increasing interest in the oceanic from within Anglo-American literary criticism, including Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun's *Sea-Changes: Historicising the Ocean* (2004), Steve Mentz and Martha Elena Rojas's edition of a collection of essays entitled *The Sea and Nineteenth-Century Anglophone Literary Culture* (2017), and two further edited collections that have explored the aesthetics and literature of being submerged: Will Abberley's *Underwater Worlds: Submerged Visions in Science and Culture* (2018), and Margaret Cohen and Killian Quigley's *The Aesthetics of the Undersea* (2019). Strikingly, not one of these books focusses on modernist Anglo-American literature, with most attention focussed on the nineteenth-century maritime world, and only a passing chapter dedicated to an emergent modernism. The only work that engages with the maritime dimensions of Anglo-American modernist literature, specifically, is *Modernism on Sea: Art and Culture at the British Seaside* (2009), a collection of essays exploring interwar artistic productions at the seaside.

she allows to constitute the important activity of 'craft' (15-17): the Romantic poets, the modernists, Baudelaire and Rimbaud are designated as construing what Cohen calls a 'sublimated sea,' stripped of craft and human labour (117-118), yet J.M.W. Turner, Melville, and Conrad are construed as continuing the tradition of craft in that they draw attention to their respective painterly and writerly techniques (the heavy brushstrokes of Turner's paintings thus become part of the practical wisdom and human labour Cohen valorises) (128-129, 187, 212). Cohen's expertise lies in the history of the novel and in eighteenth-century literature, but the insufficiency of her treatment of modernist engagements with the sea is highlighted when she remarks offhandedly that 'Ezra Pound was unsympathetic to the ocean as a territory of modernity' (118), and limits her treatment of Eliot to a single sentence on 'the fourth section of *The Wasteland* [sic]' (118). Shortcomings of this kind of argument are best illustrated, to my mind, when John Mack, in his similarly anti-metaphorical *The Sea: A Cultural History* (2013), writes regarding Shakespeare that 'his use of nautical language is not in itself any indication of an engagement with the sea since the English language is replete with phraseology which derives from seafaring' and clinches his dismissal: 'Indeed there is no evidence that Shakespeare himself ever went aboard ship' (25). On the contrary, I argue that this pervasiveness of the maritime in the English language is under-explored and constitutes evidence of a genuine cultural engagement with the sea that persists into the twentieth century. If Benjamin's arcades are the repositories of several modern myths, and the subliminal preoccupations of the modern metropolis, so too, I argue, are the maritime layers in the English language.

At the opposite critical pole, which foregrounds metaphor, there is, conversely, a dearth of historically specific detail. There is a tendency, here, to stress the elemental materiality of the sea and the figurative potentialities this provides, yet despite nods to historical context, more often than not the specifically maritime history surrounding this imagery goes underexamined. Samuel Baker's *Written on the Water: British Romanticism and the Maritime Empire of Culture* (2010) provides a welcome contrast to Cohen's dismissal of the sublimated sea, examining how maritime metaphors as well as the specifically maritime world inhabited by the Romantic poets bleed into and constitute their formulations of and meditations on culture and empire (3). The maritime formulations of culture he analyses are, he writes, both descriptive and normative (11), and his explorations of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Byron give their maritime metaphorics a welcome situatedness and specificity within the nineteenth-century maritime world. Baker is careful to stress the limitations of his project, including the contrasting treatments of the seas and the aquatic in the writings of the Shelleys (15), and his book's 'lack of more detailed accounts on the connections between Romantic writers and period events in maritime history' (14). While he does gesture beyond his specific focus on Romanticism in his treatment of Matthew Arnold, in chapters touching on Geoffrey Hartman and Lionel Trilling, and in a coda on Walter Benn Michaels, there is a notable gap in his jump from British Romanticism to Cold War and contemporary critics. I take my cue from Baker in arguing, contra Blum and Cohen, that maritime metaphors are a crucial indicator of the centrality of the sea, and that they need not be abstractions removed from historical specificity. Baker's study might be enriched, however, as he himself acknowledges (14), by a more thorough historicism. He convincingly demonstrates the

cultural salience in nineteenth-century England of the metaphors he discusses, but he neglects the maritime history surrounding them.

In a more recent article on mermen and mermaids in modern literature, Baker again stresses what he calls 'the functionality of marine imagery for mediating thought about culture, thought about the nature of human society' ('The Forsaken Merman' 97-98). He is interested, he writes, in 'figures of dissociation and dissolution that surface in these authors' virtualised marine environments,' particularly as these constitute 'main figures in the repertoire of tropes through which culture has been thought, felt, imagined, and otherwise experienced' (97). On this, I am in agreement with Baker, and agree, too, that diffuse and distinct concepts like Freud's 'oceanic feeling' and J.G. Herder's 'ocean of human fancies and dreams' participate in this maritime metaphorics (97; Freud 11; Herder 201). Baker explains the salience of a marine and particularly submarine metaphorics in reference to the inhuman materiality of the ocean, given that the undersea is a space where 'no human there long survives' (98). This intractability thus makes the ocean at times an apt image for 'the observing, and thence representing,' of 'pure nature,' but at the same time, Baker notes, it makes the sea 'a convenient domain for imaginative social speculation,' or 'a blank screen on which to project fantasias that reorganise and process the everyday materials of terrestrial life' (98). While I do find Baker's speculations compelling, I seek to show in this thesis what can be added to such a study of sea metaphorics when it is viewed in light of the historical specificities of the maritime world within which it emerges.

Another important facet of these debates, specifically within the historicist school, is the acknowledgement of the maritime as a space of radical potential, and perhaps by

extension the avant-garde. The so-called Red Atlantic has been admirably recuperated by critics such as Markus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh. Within this school, the landmark text engaging with the maritime worlds of modernity—one that anticipates works like those of Cohen and Blum—is Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993). Gilroy argues that we should take the Atlantic world as a whole as a field of analysis, rather than focussing on the nation state and ideas of cultural purity, and he explores how the Atlantic constitutes a contact zone for many diverse cultures, and a space of hybridisation for both hegemonic whiteness and for black cultures (15). He notes the particular revolutionary or countercultural potential in the maritime world, tracing the involvement of black radicals like Robert Wedderburn and William Davidson both in the Royal Navy and then in radical political and working-class movements in England (12-13), and drops tantalising hints as to 'how radical ideologies articulated the culture of the London poor before the institution of the factory system to the insubordinate maritime culture of pirates and other pre-industrial workers of the world' (13). While this is not the primary focus of his work, Gilroy reminds us of activists like Frederick Douglass's maritime exposure, contending 'that he learnt of freedom in the North from Irish sailors while working as a ship's caulker in Baltimore' (whether Douglass himself would accept this pronouncement is doubtful) (13). He speculates on this entanglement of race, the maritime world, and radical politics, writing that 'it has been estimated that at the end of the eighteenth century a quarter of the British navy was composed of Africans for whom the experience of slavery was a powerful orientation to the ideologies of liberty and justice' (13). As critics like Blum and Cesare Casarino have pointed out, when we add to these contexts the disproportionately high rate of literacy among sailors relative to

the rest of the working-class population, as well as the fact that wage labour was common on ships long before it was implemented elsewhere, we start to see what a powerful political and cultural microcosm these ships and the people who worked on them must have been (Blum 672; Casarino 5). Gilroy summarises the appeal of the ship as a radical chronotope as follows:

> ships were the living means by which the points within that Atlantic world were joined. They were mobile elements that stood for the shifting spaces in between the fixed places that they connected. Accordingly they need to be thought of as cultural and political units rather than abstract embodiments of the triangular trade. They were something more—a means to conduct political dissent and possibly a distinct mode of cultural production. The ship provides a chance to explore the articulations between the discontinuous histories of England's ports, its interfaces with the wider world. Ships also refer us back to the middle passage, to the half-remembered micro-politics of the slave trade and its relationship to both industrialisation and modernisation. (16-17).

That is, as he summarises elsewhere, the image of the ship is 'a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion' (4). Ships are cultural reminders of diaspora, oppression, and redemptive possibilities, and embody 'the circulation of ideas and activists as well as the movement of key cultural political artifacts: tracts, books, gramophone records, and choirs' (4). Historically, the ship and the maritime world have been incredibly central to cultural formation, exchange, and revolution, and it would be hard to separate the landed world and its cultural productions from its maritime motors.

Perhaps because of the radical and countercultural elements present within the maritime world, it also becomes, for several critics, a crucial field for novel and avant-garde literary production. For Casarino, as for Gilroy, the ship is an important unit of analysis. Casarino's elegant and theoretically erudite study argues that the sea narrative constituted an important 'laboratory' for the crisis of modernity in the nineteenth century (1), registering what he terms 'the synchronicity of the nonsynchronous' (6): the residual forms of an old order along with newly emergent forms that will supersede them (6-7). His 'temporal axes,' as he calls them, are distinctly Marxist (2), and the salient events he focuses on are the transition from sail to steam and the homologous transition from mercantile to industrial capitalism (3-5). Whereas Baker chooses Trafalgar as his watershed moment (1), Casarino singles out the abolition of the Corn Laws between 1815 and 1846 as his symbolic event (3). Casarino, like Gilroy, points out the important historical realities of life at sea: the fact that the maritime world was an international, multi-ethnic one, and the fact that wage labour was invented at sea (5). His primary interest, however, is what he calls the modernist sea narrative, and he is concerned with narrative and representation—representation that, when it becomes self-conscious in its attempts to capture a world and a world system, becomes, for Casarino, 'modernist':

> the modernist sea narrative constitutes that modern event in the history of an ancient form of representation when this form folds back upon itself so as to problematise and to question—in short, to think—its foundation. Under astounding historical pressures, the sea narrative in the nineteenth century folds back upon itself in the attempt to think its floating and itinerant foundation that had gone unnoticed for so long, thereby

> putting itself into question as a form of representation—and the modernist sea narrative is the name of this fold. If one is to follow Foucault's account, however, the heterotopia of the ship constitutes not only the foundation of the sea narrative but also the heterotopia par excellence of Western civilisation since at least the Renaissance: with the modernist sea narrative, in other words, the sea narrative questions not only its own foundation but also reaches beyond itself to question the foundation of a world that for several centuries had been run in all sorts of ways by ships—in questioning itself, it questions the whole world. (13)

This formulation aligns closely with my own project. That is, I seek, firstly, to acknowledge the various historically specific ways in which the modern world is founded upon and has been run by ships and the sea. Secondly, however, I am interested in the representational potential of this historically specific maritime world, as it is invoked by modernist authors seeking to think through and question the world in which they live, via the sea. While for Casarino, this questioning occurs primarily through the modernist sea narrative—that is, a narrative constructed on the heterotopic space of a ship at sea that in turn holds up a mirror to an emergent modern world—I contend that these questions are asked, simultaneously, when representations of the modern world and of spaces that are not the sea get evoked in maritime terms, revealing the centrality of the sea to a seemingly landed modernity.

In part because he focusses on how the sea voyage mirrors modernity's landed orders, rather than on how these landed orders are soaked with salt water, Casarino contends that while the sea constitutes a remarkable laboratory for representation, it does so exclusively in the nineteenth century, at the precise moment when the world of sail is disappearing and life

at sea becomes routinised (16-17). Like Peck and Cohen, his *terminus ad quem* is Conrad, the final representative of the modernist sea narrative. In contrast, it is with Conrad that this thesis begins, because contra Casarino, I contend that the maritime world of the nineteenth century persists in the first half of the twentieth century and continues to haunt the modernists and to constitute a central presence in the social and cultural fabric of twentieth-century modernity.

Conrad indeed marks a crucial threshold in maritime history, and one during which seafaring and modernity's engagement with the sea undergo irrevocable changes. Nonetheless, I contend that there is a marked continuity of culture and importance between late-nineteenth-century Anglo-American engagements with the maritime and those of the early twentieth century. As I shall briefly indicate, this importance comprises world commerce, technological innovation, warfare, scientific research, leisure, emigration, and ideology.

The most thorough transformation in the maritime world over the course of the long nineteenth century was the transition from sail to steam. The first fully steam-powered Atlantic crossing was made in 1937. Over the next half of the century, steam power increasingly came to replace sailing ships, though this was an uneven and protracted transition, with certain routes and certain navies still dominated by sail as late as the third quarter of the nineteenth century (Williams and Armstrong 44-45). In part, this was due to the unsuitability of steamships for the heavy seas and roaring forties of the Southern Hemisphere; even after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 offered an alternative route to rounding the Cape of Good Hope for trading and passenger vessels between Europe and Asia or Australia,

high tax rates and heavy traffic meant that sailing ships were able to compete with steam power, specifically on trade routes between London and Australia, until quite late in the century (Larabee 53-54). Conrad memorialises certain aspects of this competition in the hell-for-leather speed demanded by Captain Alistoun in *The Nigger of the Narcissus*: the viability of sailing ships in a maritime world increasingly dominated by steam depended on their ability to make quick passages (Larabee 56-58). Nonetheless, steam power gradually rendered sail obsolete. In the United Kingdom in 1871, 66.2% of total tonnage of entrances into port with cargo and ballast was carried by sailing ships, as opposed to 33.8% carried by steamships (Williams and Armstrong 48). In 1881, these figures were turned on their heads, with sail comprising 37% of total tonnage and steam comprising 63% (Williams and Armstrong 48). By 1891 these figures were 17.2% to 82.8%, and in 1911 only 2.9% of the total tonnage of shipping in the UK was still conducted by sail (Williams and Armstrong 48).

While professional sailors like Conrad mourned the decline of the age of sail, this should not lead us to imagine that the importance of the maritime world waned with the obsolescence of sailing ships. On the contrary, British maritime triumphalism embraced steam power as heralding the ascendency of Victorian technology (Burgess 94-95).[5] The last decade of the nineteenth century saw the publication of multiple biographies of Lord Nelson (Lambert 340), as well as Alfred Thayer Mahan's influential book, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History* (1890), and J.A. Froude's triumphalist claim, in *Oceana: Or, England and her Colonies* (1886), that 'the sea is the natural home of Englishman' (18). Mahan, like Froude, emphasized that the success of the British Empire was based on its maritime

[5] The construction, launching, and disastrous sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912 is a striking rehearsal of this triumphalism and its perils (see Burgess 92-119).

ascendancy, and he argued that the development, control, and expansion of naval trade routes was 'the key to much of the history, as well as of the policy, of nations bordering upon the sea' (28). Indeed, though the fortunes of the Port of London fluctuated around the turn of the century, by the time the dock companies were nationalised in 1909 under the Port of London Authority (PLA), they were collectively the largest employer in the city of London, and the PLA continued to expand its workforce and the port itself (Stone 163, 166-167). In 1910 the PLA's Chief Engineer Frederick Palmer proposed to spend some £14,426,700 on repairs and improvements to various London docks (169). Fiona Rule notes the prosperity the PLA brought to London: just three years after its establishment, foreign trade was valued at £400 million per annum (306). In 1913, around 25,470 ships entered the Port of London, with a tonnage of 20,000,000 (Miller 37); by 1938, this number had not dropped, but rose to 29 835 ships, with a tonnage of around 31,000,000 (Miller 38). Michael B. Miller summarises that in 1914, 'out of a world steamship fleet of approximately 45,000,000 grt, about two-fifths were British,' or up to '45 percent if its imperial holdings are included' (218). In the years building up to the First World War, he estimates that

> Britain imported 100 percent of its sugar, cocoa, and chocolate; 79 percent of its grain; 64.5 percent of its butter; and 40 percent of its meat. Nearly two-thirds of the British people's caloric intake came from abroad. Supplies of industrial materials such as cotton, oil, or rubber were completely dependent on imports. Imports provided a large share of the ore, metals, and wool worked or woven by British factories. (218)

This extraordinary dependence on maritime trade meant that the World Wars and the disruptions they imposed on maritime networks, especially with the threat of submarine

warfare, posed an enormous threat to Great Britain. In April 1914, T.H. Manners Howe explicitly voices this threat in a piece in the *Pall Mall Gazette* entitled, 'The War Loaf: Our Hungry Millions and the Price of Empire.' Anticipating the coming war, Manners Howe remembers the disruptive effects of the London Dock Strike of 1889 and warns of a much more thoroughgoing disaster should Britain lose the security of its overseas supply channels due to war (468). 'The sea,' he writes 'which we are wont to regard as our peculiar protection, would … prove in a few weeks the walls of a foodless prison-house' (467). Emphasising the social upheaval and the food shortage that would be caused by the loss of supplies kept in circulation by the mercantile marine, Manners Howe describes this anticipated state of affairs in terms of a destructive tide, writing of 'the swollen tide of rising prices' (469), the 'ominous multitudes … swollen every day' with new waves of the unemployed or newly poor (470), and of resurgent 'subterranean forces of crime and disorder, which at normal times are kept beneath the surface' (471). The anticipation of the breakdown of maritime networks and of destruction at sea thus becomes curiously overlaid onto an anticipated social crisis. The social and the maritime worlds become metaphorically indistinct: if the social structures of Empire are upheld by the sea, then instability of maritime networks equate to instability at home.

It is easy to forget the centrality of the maritime to the First World War. While its only major naval battle, the Battle of Jutland, was indecisive, the Dardanelles Campaign relied heavily on naval support, both to provide cover fire for landing troops, and to evacuate the wounded (Benbow 111, 136-137). In England, seaboard towns like Scarborough and Lowestoft were bombed by German warships (Benbow 70, 142). More importantly, the wartime disruption of the maritime networks that supported imperial infrastructures had

wide-reaching effects, and it is Miller's contention that the preservation of these networks, and particularly 'the ability to manage the complex logistics of merchant shipping was central to the outcome' of the war (3). On 7 May 1915, the sinking of the unarmed ocean liner *RMS Lusitania* resulted in the death of 1,200 people, and caused considerable cultural trauma (H.D. ascribed the stillbirth of her first child to the shock caused by the news) (Benbow 97-98; 'Advent' 116). The international controversy that surrounded such sinkings, combined with the USA's threat to break off diplomatic relations with Germany, resulted in temporary restrictions in submarine warfare, but this was resumed again without restrictions in 1917 (Miller 217).

Yet, despite this maritime crisis, the Allies were able to avoid a thoroughgoing economic disaster through a careful financing of mercantile shipping. In August 1914, Britain introduced the State Insurance Scheme, whereby, Miller writes, 'the British government assumed 80 percent of the risks on every voyage' (216).[6] Such state action enabled the mercantile marine to remain in operation in a way that would not have been viable if it depended solely on the finance of insurance companies like Lloyd's of London, for which, in the interests of naked profit and loss, the risks of financing sea trade in wartime would have been too great (Miller 216). At the same time, companies like Lloyd's gathered data pertaining to any vessels to put into Allied ports, and the dissemination of such intelligence through wireless communication allowed for the rapid circulation of warnings and directives, and for the compilation of a Blacklist and blockade that stifled German overseas trade (Miller 158-159, 216).

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[6] Howe advocated for this particular state-sponsored insurance scheme, in partnership with Lloyd's, in his April 1914 article (472).

The First World War, however, controverted the aspirations toward world peace and intercommunication that characterised the laying of the first submarine telegraphy cable, an important project that played out alongside the transition from sail to steam. Helen Rozwadowski recounts the difficulties attending the laying of the cable and the concomitant increase in interest in the ocean depths, as scientific surveys preceded each cable-laying attempt, and as the remnants of broken cables were found to play host to a variety of hitherto unknown marine plants and animals (13-15). The first transatlantic cable was successfully laid in 1858, from Ireland to Newfoundland, but broke one month after being placed (13). Costs, electrical difficulties, and the American Civil War disrupted further efforts until 1866, when a cable was successfully stretched across the two thousand miles from Valentia, Ireland, to St. Johns, Newfoundland (14). Apart from its practical uses, however, the telegraphic cable came to embody an ideal of universal peace (15).

The popular appeal of the telegraphic cable, and its seeming symbolism of a promised peace occur in Walt Whitman's 'Passage to India' as 'the seas inlaid with eloquent gentle wires' (line 7), and in John Rollin Ridge's self-congratulatory 'The Atlantic Cable,' which foresees a euphoric future of peace and communion between all nations:

> Now may, ere long, the sword be sheathed to rust,
> The helmet laid in undistinguished dust;
> . . .
> For Nation unto Nation soon shall be
> Together brought in knitted unity,
> And man be bound to man by that strong chain,

Which, linking land to land, and main to main,

Shall vibrate to the voice of Peace, and be

A throbbing heartstring of Humanity! (20-21)

As late as 1912, Rudyard Kipling imagined a world in which 'Transportation is Civilisation' (a motto Ezra Pound would turn into 'intercommunication is civilisation') and peace is maintained so long as traffic and commerce between nations is maintained (Kipling 1, 20; *PPII* 235, C268). This ideal of connection and peace was shattered by the First World War, the build-up to which, especially, was characterised by intense maritime competition between Britain and Germany (Clark 147-152; MacMillan 100-130).

At the same time, the latter half of the nineteenth and the first of the twentieth century saw a great increase in individual and public engagements with the maritime. During the nineteenth century, the seaside became a popular destination not only for the upper classes, but also, in time, for the middle and lower classes (Rozwadowski 9). Sea bathing and sea-air were touted as healthful remedies to the stress and poor air quality of city life (Rozwadowski 8). As I will explore in my second chapter, the opening of various public aquariums, and naturalist expeditions not only to the British seashores, as in the work of Philip Henry Gosse, but out and beyond to trawl the depths, as famously conducted by Challenger Expedition (Brunner 14), captured the public imagination, and the scientific cataloguing of various new marine specimens in the medium of colourful lithographs further facilitated the absorption of this new visual data into contemporary aesthetic consciousness (Adamowsky 40, 102).

Finally, ocean travel and emigration increased greatly during the latter half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. Of the authors I study, Eliot, Pound,

and H.D. all emigrated from the United States to the United Kingdom. In so doing, their experiences echo, sometimes self-consciously, as in the case of Eliot, the seventeenth-century migration of English Puritans to America, fleeing persecution. In my third chapter I will explore the ideological ramifications of such Atlantic migration for white Anglo-American writers like Eliot.

MARITIME METAPHORICS

In outlining his argument surrounding maritime modernity, Casarino makes the interesting case that old forms of representation might be remarkably suited to smuggle in 'the radically new' (6). He poses the question: 'what narrative structures can one use . . . when one is announcing the invisible and powerful presence of something radically new that does not yet actually exist anywhere, that cannot yet be named or represented as such, and that indeed may reveal itself to be unnameable and unrepresentable?' (6). His answer, in *Modernity at Sea*, is that one uses old and familiar narrative structures, including, for example, the nineteenth-century sea narrative, which provides authors with a 'site where visions of the new. . . came to incubate within old forms of representation so as then to explode those forms from the interior' (6).

This brings me back to Blumenberg, whose designation of what he calls 'absolute metaphor' resonates with Casarino's claim above for the functionality of the familiar in expressing what resists expression (3-5). Blumenberg's metaphors are images and figural constructions that step into the aporias of reason and act as provisional ways to think through and represent or provisionally '"answer" supposedly naive and in principle unanswerable questions' (14). What is more, these metaphors operate within historically specific contexts,

and are themselves a fascinating field for historicist study: 'they indicate the fundamental certainties, conjectures, and judgements in relation to which the attitudes and expectations, actions and inactions, longings and disappointments, interests and indifferences, of an epoch are regulated' (14). Blumenberg defines what he calls 'metaphorology' as an activity which 'seeks to burrow down into the substructure of thought, the underground, the nutrient solution of systematic crystallisations' (5)—in this we hear strong echoes of Benjamin's archaeological burrowings into the subconscious formulations, productions, and constellations of urban modernity. In a strikingly Benjaminian turn of phrase, Blumenberg writes elsewhere that 'metaphors are fossils that indicate an archaic stratum in the trial of theoretical curiosity—a stratum that is not rendered anachronistic just because there is no way back to the fullness of its stimulations and expectations of truth' ('Prospect for a Theory of Nonconceptuality' 82). For Blumenberg, this research on metaphor thus seeks to rehabilitate figurative language into the field of history. Metaphorology, he writes, 'aims to show with what "courage" the mind preempts itself in its images, and how its history is projected in the courage of its conjectures' (5).

Christopher Ricks has valuably pointed out the intractabilities of what he calls 'the pursuit of metaphor' (242), and given the proliferation in the past decade of book-length chases, I will not here seek to stage my own.[7] I agree with the criticisms of writers like Nicolae Babuts and Marina Rakova who find cognitive metaphor theory, as propounded by

[7] See, to name but a few, Monika Fludernik's *Beyond Cognitive Metaphor Theory: Perspectives on Literary Metaphor* (2011), James Underhill's *Creating Worldviews: Metaphor, Ideology and Language* (2011), David L. Ritchie's *Metaphor* (2013), Denis Donoghue's *Metaphor* (2014), Zoltán Kövecses' *Where Metaphors Come From: Reconsidering Context in Metaphor* (2015), Nicolae Babuts' *Literature and the Metaphoric Universe in the Mind* (2015), Terrence Hawkes' *Metaphor* (2018), Adam Seligman and Robert Weller's *How Things Count as the Same: Memory, Mimesis, and Metaphor* (2018), and Jeanette Littlemore's *Metaphors in the Mind: Sources of Variation in Embodied Metaphor* (2019).

George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, and Mark Turner, in which metaphors comprise constituent image schemas (source-path-goal, container, thermic etc.), an impoverishment of the specificity, complexity, and creativity of individual metaphors. Babuts especially, a certain intransigence aside,[8] has done valuable work over the course of his career on the relation between memory, creativity, and metaphor, and is distinctive in that he pays careful attention to poets' and authors' own definitions of metaphor, comparing and shoring these up with experimental data in the neurosciences that relate to image processing, perception, memory, and language. His difference from Johnson and Lakoff might be summarised as a theory of perceptual, rather than conceptual metaphors (Babuts 48-49). That is, while Johnson and Lakoff write about image-schemas (254), these are closer to conceptual categories than to perceptual images, and their theory of metaphor is one in which our experience is categorised into various pre-existent, unconscious formulas (Babuts 47-48). Despite later attempts at refinement, this theory does not allow much room for individual metaphoric creativity (Fludernik 4-7). Babuts' own definition, in which images or 'dynamic patterns' that are stored in an individual's memory are at times retrieved and creatively combined with a new, intractable image which when encountered catalyses this retrieval, has much in common with theories like those of Blumenberg and Benjamin (Babuts 48). We might recall Blumenberg's observation of the '"courage" with which the mind pre-empts itself in its images' (5). And, without reducing the complexities and individuality of each of these arguments, there is an affinity here with Benjamin's observation that it is

[8] Babuts can rarely resist the opportunity to take a scornful detour on the failings of Marxist criticism. I will be citing from his most recent work, *Literature and the Metaphoric Universe in the Mind* (2015), but see also *Memory, Metaphors, and Meaning: Reading Literary Texts* (2009), *Baudelaire at the Limits and Beyond* (1998), and *Dynamics of the Metaphoric Field: A Cognitive View of Literature* (1992).

> not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on the past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. (462)

What is at stake is not the simple use of one image (the past image stored in our memory) to tell us something about another, but the fact that the figural relation of the two can give expression to a 'remoteness or complexity' that exceeds our rational abilities (Nisbet 4), giving a 'luminosity,' as Babuts calls it, to the interaction of these images that is more than the transference of qualities from one to another (83).[9]

Research in neuroscience seems to bear out such perceptual theories of metaphor, as Babuts argues, and, strikingly, such research is often less deterministic in its findings than cognitive linguistic theory can be. Research conducted on mental imagery and metaphor recognition over the past three decades, using fMRI-imaging, Positron Emission Tomography (PET), and similar techniques, seems to suggest that perceptual images and metaphors constitute a fundamental part of how we interact with the world.[10] For example, numerous studies have shown that forming a mental image activates the same regions both in the brain and in the retina that a perceptual image does (Briscoe 153; O'Craven and Kanwisher 1019; Kosslyn, Thompson, Kim, and Alpert 469; cited in Babuts 7-8). Stephen Kosslyn, William Thompson, Katherine Sukel, and Nathaniel Alpert summarise their results as follows:

[9] In a similar vein, in 1969 Robert A. Nisbet posited that 'Metaphor is, at its simplest, a way of proceeding from the known to the unknown.. . . It is a way of cognition in which the identifying qualities of one thing are transferred in an instantaneous, almost unconscious, flash of insight to some other thing that is, by remoteness or complexity, unknown to us' (4).

[10] For a thorough overview, see the first three chapters of Babuts' *Literature and the Metaphoric Universe in the Mind* (1-70).

> Mental images are representations like those evoked during the early phases of perception, but created on the basis of information stored in memory, instead of on the basis of input from a sensory organ (as occurs during perception); such representations give rise to the experience of perceiving in the absence of the appropriate sensory input (e.g. *Seeing with the mind's eye)* (50-51)

Similarly, researchers like Seana Coulson and Colin Brown, Peter Hagoort, and Marta Kutas have found that the processing of metaphoric sentences and those that are purely propositional occur at the same speed, suggesting that a propositional engagement with the world is not more fundamental to the human mind than a metaphoric engagement (Coulson 179-182; Brown, Hagoort, and Kutas 890; cited in Babuts 1-13).

In an early but philosophically elegant paper on metaphor and dual-coding theory (which posits that cognition is mediated both by words and by images), Stevan Harnad sets up a contrast between inductive reasoning and perceptual memory, or the 'bounded engrams' of the former and the 'unbounded engrams' of the latter (196-197). In our propositional and inductive interaction with the world, that is, information is filtered and reduced to what is important or relevant (191, 196). Bounded engrams can be encoded into propositions, for example, *that Socrates is a man* (201). At the same time, there exists within the mind a much fuller, perceptual memory, which exceeds language and cannot be encoded in propositions. These memories are 'overdetermined in their uniqueness' (196) and they

> blend continuously and namelessly into one another, preserving their irreducible uniqueness, but doing so anonymously, without benefit of an absolute identity. They may be available in an immediate sense for short-term iconic memory, and they may

> be more-or-less available later on, in mental imagery. But they are bound to be less tractable than bounded engrams. (197)

The relationship between unbounded engrams, Harnad argues, is not propositional, but appositional.

> Whatever it is that the bounded system "has" in being able to process propositional information, the unbounded system hasn't got it. I would venture the guess that the critical property has a lot to do with bivalence and category boundaries. Whereas in the bounded case the propositional information is decoded as something proposed or claimed concerning category relations, in the unbounded case the information is merely construed as the apposition of (the unbounded engrams of) the subject and the predicate. (201-202).

Whether dual-coding theory is universally applicable or not,[11] this positing of appositional images is a potentially enriching way of understanding metaphor, and one that aligns broadly with those of Benjamin, Blumenberg, and Babuts, as outlined above. Harnad argues that appositional formulations that do not make sense within the limits of the bounded system—for example 'Socrates is immortal'—might sometimes nonetheless be meaningfully interpreted by this bounded system when understood as the product of appositions from the unbounded or figural system (for example, Socrates might metaphorically be said to be immortal in that his ideas are still being discussed today) (202-203). Harnad defines apposition as 'the juxtaposing or pairing of the engrams, in much the way they are paired in a

[11] For early critiques, see Zenon Pylyshyn's 'What the Mind's Eye Tells the Mind's Brain' (1973) and John Anderson and Gordon Bower's 'A Propositional Theory of Recognition Memory' (1974).

relative discrimination or similarity judgment' (202), and concludes that, ultimately, 'a similarity judgment is precisely what the essence of such an apposition is' (202). I agree with Harnad that metaphors are such figural appositions, and I will be drawing on the above theories of image and metaphor in what follows.

I in no way contend that the theories touched upon here constitute an exhaustive or definitive account of metaphor: this is a field in its own right. I am certainly guilty, too, of the fragmented use of the term that Ricks points out in his essay on metaphors, which highlights the inevitability of using the term metaphor to mean both the relation of two things ('whatever else metaphor may be it is a relation' (245)) and also to designate one of the terms in that relation (in my case, for example, 'the metaphor of the sea') (246).[12] I wish it to be understood that when I do so, I am mindful of another term in the equation, but given the fact that the maritime is one of the terms in many different and unique metaphors, I require a turn of phrase to designate the common image at use in all of them. I follow Ricks, however, in a measure of scepticism about the pursuit of some ultimate truth-about-the-thing, and the outline of theories of metaphor above is a provisional, not in the least all-encompassing accounts of what metaphor is (there are indeed many others, but these are a few germane to my arguments). Ricks suggests that we acknowledge that metaphor is 'often myriad-minded' (246), and has something 'recalcitrant at the core' (250). It is a troubling construction, he writes, that invites us

[12] In the relational conception, for example, *x* is a metaphor for *y*; in the non-relataional conception, *x* is a metaphor *simpliciter*.

> to wonder whether the matter itself, in refusing to abide our question let alone answer it, is not telling us something. Issuing perhaps a courteous refusal, a chastening answer to our craving for answers and for labels. Knowing to know no more. (257)

This recalcitrance is part of what makes metaphors such an abidingly interesting field of study. Abdicating further pursuit, the paradigms I have outlined above provide a sufficient framework for this thesis. I use the term 'metaphorics' quite broadly to designate all figural language that forms a certain thematic constellation of metaphors. When it come to the constellation I call 'maritime metaphorics,' this includes images of ebb and flow, flood, tide, drowning, shipwreck, depths, marine animals, swimming, sea-crossing, and castaways.[13] This does not mean, of course, that any metaphoric depiction of depths or of flux is inherently maritime—depths are often caverns and flux is often a river—but it does mean that in reading through such images I maintain a sensitivity to the ways in which they might fit within a wider maritime set of images. For example, when in Chapter 2 I read Virginia Woolf's image of fishing in the subconscious within a maritime framework, I do so mindful that Woolf's image itself is specifically that of a lake (*Essays VI* 482), but also mindful of its intertexts, and the analogous fishing-at-sea metaphors we find in Woolf herself, in her contemporaries, and in her predecessors (think, for example, of Neville's net that sounds the depths and lifts up 'whales—huge leviathans and white jellies' in *The Waves* (171)) . It seems impoverishing to dismiss such metaphors, which certainly partake of maritime elements, merely because they do not adhere to a strict saltwater set of criteria. So too, in Chapter 1, I read the Thames as a maritime space, as is only fitting when addressing a time when the Port of London was

[13] I follow Baker's definition of the maritime as indicating 'the broad scope of involvement with the ocean,' thus including both the marine, or 'that which pertains to the sea in its independent nature,' and the nautical, which 'designates what pertains to seafaring in its social and technological aspects' (5).

the largest and most prosperous in the world, and strongly linked the sea and the city both literally and in the imagination. In this, I follow Samuel Baker in taking a rather broad approach to what might be included in the term 'maritime,' but I am not willing to include, as he does, all bodies of water that participate in the water cycle (5). For example, I do not think it true that all rivers are inherently maritime just because they flow into the sea, but I do think the Thames is an incontestably maritime river. Throughout this thesis, I will seek to read images that so lend themselves within a maritime constellation, but this remains a contextually sensitive exercise.

This shaping of language by our lived worlds—which includes individual histories, sensory perception and cultural-historical backgrounds—constitutes, I contend, a fascinating and historically specific substratum that is an under-researched field in historicist approaches to literary studies. When I come across metaphors in which time ebbs and flows and people flood through a city in tides, or individuals drown in the centre of a busy thoroughfare—metaphors that might traditionally be formulated as TIME IS A SEA, A CROWD IS A FLOOD (formulations I shall not be following in this thesis)—I do not read these as idle or abstract comparisons, but ones that potentially reflect true and historically specific experiences of modernity that draw, at times unconsciously, and at other times very consciously indeed, on the maritime underpinnings of the world they describe.

MODERNISM

As with metaphor, the definition of modernism is a vexed and much debated one, and I will not attempt to problematise it here. The authors I study are all uncontestedly modernist, in part as I have attempted to examine maritime metaphorics as it occurs within a representative

selection of high modernists. In short, the undisputedly 'modernist' status of my authors helps to underwrite the main claim of this thesis that the maritime is a neglected context for modernism *as such*, and that addressing their treatment of the sea offers new perspectives on such signature modernist topics as the city (Conrad), perception (Woolf and HD), expatriation (Eliot), and right-wing politics (Pound). This selection of authors might fruitfully be pushed further, and there may be interesting distinctions to tease out in how so-called middlebrow authors deploy these images, or if and how they occur in postmodern literature. Here, however, I broadly accept definitions of modernism that have been provided by Peter Nicholls, Michael Levenson, Michael Whitworth, Sean Latham, and Gayle Rogers, describing modernism as a set of aesthetic responses, on the part of authors, to certain conditions and anxieties of modernity, including, for example, the status of the individual within modern life, qualitative versus quantitative experiences of time, the value of art in an age of commerce and industrialism, or the relation of the present moment to the past.[14] As Whitworth puts it, '"Modernism" is not so much a thing as a set of responses to problems posed by the conditions of modernity' (3)—responses or, as he later puts it, 'reactions to modernity that were sometimes aggressive, sometimes defensive, sometimes ambivalent' (5).

Counter to these critics, who present a relatively unified set of criteria by which we might characterise modernist texts, in 1984 Perry Anderson famously described the term as

[14] Peter Nicholls' *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (1995), for example, opens by musing that irony might be read as a 'necessary defence against modernity,' and states its aims as trying 'to unpick this complicated response to "modernity" and to trace its ambiguous relation to ideas of the social' (5). Aspects of this 'complicated response' Nicholls goes on to consider are the self-conscious 'newness' of modernism (6), the instability of the individual subject (8), and the value of art in a bourgeois modernity (9). Levenson's *Modernism* (2011) likewise explores familiar categories like novelty, the individual, formal innovation, and political affiliation within modernist literature. In the opening of his own *Modernism* (2007), Michael Whitworth stresses the critical consensus that 'modernism and modernity are related but not identical' (3), and he organises his edited collection around topics like 'Modernism and Romanticism' (Chapter 1), 'Modernism, the Masses, and the Culture Industry' (Chapter 4), and 'Modernity and the City' (Chapter 5).

'the emptiest of all cultural categories,' one whose 'only referent is the blank passage of time itself,' and uselessly so: 'for what was once modern is soon obsolete' (112-113). Yet he goes on to describe this 'blank passage of time' in a striking metaphor:

> The futility of the term, and its attendant ideology, can be seen all too clearly from current attempts to cling to its wreckage and yet swim with the tide still further beyond it, in the coinage 'post-modernism': one void chasing another in a serial regression of self-congratulatory chronology. (113)

The first thing to note here is that Anderson's metaphor is an instantiation of Blumenberg's shipwreck-with-spectator: one that has repeatedly been applied to history, to the passing of time, and to successive historic moments. As with Burkhardt and so many others, we, the spectators, no longer have any solid ground from which to view the blank passage of time, but look at the wreckage from within its melee. What is fascinating is that many modernists themselves characterise modernity as a great, engulfing smash-up, and Anderson's choice of the image of shipwreck for modernism seems remarkably consonant with the self-understanding of writers like Eliot, Pound, H.D., and Woolf. As early as 1935, Stephen Spender characterised a set of modern writers as immersed in 'the destructive element,' in the famous phrase from Conrad, with some 'making a fine show of emerging at the other side' (13). These writers, he explains, are 'all conscious of the present as chaotic . . . and of the past as an altogether more solid ground' (12). And indeed, there is a remarkable extent to which shipwreck, immersion, drowning, and oceanic destruction make up modernist self-stylisations and feature in their depictions of their own modernity.

In 2000, Zygmunt Bauman called postmodernity a 'liquid modernity' (15) which situates it as the *terminus ad quem* of Marshall Berman's Marxian 'melting of the solids' (*The Communist Manifesto* 6). In this construction, we might think of the modernist moment as the interim between such liquidity and the dissolving solidity of an older world. In the texts I study, cities are often threatened by imminent floods, people drown and suffer sea-change, or else become themselves creatures of the sea—octopuses, crabs, or anemones. Liquidity is ubiquitous and always threatens to overwhelm, much more presently so than in the more solid seagoing structures of the nineteenth century. To appropriate a Nietzschean image, in modernist literature we are clinging to the floating beams that are the remaining wreckage of such relatively safe institutions (*Werke 14,* 144-145; cited in *Shipwreck with Spectator* 20).

Critics like Casarino and Marianne DeKoven have both described the modernist moment as one in which we find a an 'unsynthesised dialectic' (DeKoven 4), a simultaneity or a 'potentially explosive spatial coexistence' of 'historically heterogenous practices and social formations' (Casarino 6). In *Modernity at Sea* (2010), Casarino highlights residual forms of mercantile capitalism that coexist alongside and conflict with emergent forms of industrial capitalism (5, 10). Two decades earlier, in *Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Modernism* (1991), DeKoven showed how subversive currents like feminism and socialism increasingly dissolve patriarchal and bourgeois hegemony. DeKoven traced these tendencies through the image of sea-change and the drowning and undoing of a ruling patriarchal figure in the person of the king, and the anxieties and temptations proffered by a more liquid, diffuse world (3-4).

The current debates around modernism are lively ones. New Modernist Studies has by now largely rehabilitated modernism from its politically suspect, elitist branding in the final decades of the twentieth century, and the trajectory of modernist studies as a field has been recently broached in *The New Modernist Studies* (2021), edited by Douglas Mao, which comprises a wealth of critical approaches, and surveys the past three decades of study in the field, from the founding of the journal *Modernism/Modernity* in 1994, the founding of the Modernist Studies Association in 1998, and its first conference in 1999 (Wollaeger 41). I shall not attempt to summarise those developments here, as they are admirably treated in *The New Modernist Studies,* and by Bloomsbury's recent academic series *New Modernisms*. Granted my own partiality toward the eloquence of metaphors, one of the best accounts of the history of modernism is the introductory volume of this series, *Modernism: Evolution of an Idea* (2015), by Latham and Rogers, which is overtly metaphorical, and examines different understandings of modernism through the two images of Joyce's 'strandentwining cable of all flesh' (suggesting lineage and selectivity) and of Ezra Pound's magnetic 'rose in the steel dust' (suggesting force fields, multiplicity, and mutability) (6-7; Joyce 46; *PPI* 114, C69). Of course, these images of a cable of communication and of magnetic force are also historically interesting (the late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw an efflorescence both of telegraphic cables and discoveries in the field of magnetism).

Like Anderson and DeKoven around the end of the last century, more recent critics also persist in characterising modernism through a maritime metaphorics, and that in itself is interesting. Latham and Rogers write that 'the field continues to develop in waves that have now gathered into a protean tide' (153), and argue that the temporality of modernity,

'disconnected from political history,' is an 'unmoored' one (1). In his essay in *The New Modernist Studies,* Mark Wollaeger defends the field as being more than 'merely a parochial rill in the great ocean of modern literature studies' (52); Fredric Jameson, in *A Singular Modernity* (2002), dubs postmodernity a 'rudderless' modernity (213); Susan Stanford Friedman calls for 'modernity' to be 'unmoored from its conventional nominal definition (the metanarrative of Western modernity)' and for 'modernism' to be 'set adrift from its original association with a specific aesthetic style' (185). Nicholls writes that the 'authentically modern subject seems to slip the social moorings of the rational bourgeois self' (8). While it is not my purpose here to unpick the specificities of each of these images, the fact that maritime metaphorics persist in the ways we try to think through modernity and modernism underscores the salience of these metaphorics in contemporaneous modernist texts, and the merit of a historicist examination of how they function.

As is inevitable in a thesis of this length, I have had to exclude a number of themes and authors otherwise well worth studying in this context. One canonical absence is James Joyce, whose texts consistently toy with the contested waters of the Irish Sea; Joyce's engagement with the sea has, however, received recent and admirable treatment by Nicholas Allen in his 2020 book *Ireland, Literature, and the Coast: Seatangled.* This project might also have been enriched by an investigation of the maritime investment of the Harlem Renaissance, particularly of writers like Langston Hughes and Claude McKay, and by a comparison of their maritime metaphorics with that of a white American writer like T.S. Eliot. In my chapter on Eliot, however, I have endeavoured to set up a contrast of maritime identities along the lines of gender rather than those of race. Finally, although my project by

and large does not explicitly engage with recent developments in Blue Ecocriticism, my second chapter nonetheless gestures toward and participates in a broader scholarly approach of environmental sensitivity.[15]

It is dangerous to broach a project on the sea in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries without including Conrad, and I have not made so bold. My opening chapter acknowledges Conrad as marking an important threshold in maritime history, and in literature, serving as a bridge between nineteenth-century sea narratives and more subtle modernist deployments of the image of the sea that are neither set at nor about the sea. I argue that Conrad himself uses this image in similar ways, and demonstrate the extent to which his depictions of London, in *The Nigger of the Narcissus, The Return,* and *The Secret Agent,* are maritime ones.

Building on such constructions of the city as a space that is saturated by the sea, I argue in my second chapter that the perceptual conjectures of urban modernist women writers draw on the nexus of marine biology, visual culture, and optical science to interrogate the subjectivity and the gendering of vision. In what I call 'marine perception,' I examine a

[15] Sidney Dobrin's recent book, *Blue Ecocriticism and the Oceanic Imperative* (2021), defines 'Blue Ecocriticism' as a project 'intended to call attention to this neglect [of the ocean and marine life] and emphasise the need to expand the ecocritical lens to more attentive inclusions of matters oceanic, given both the tremendous corpus of literary and textual representations of ocean that contribute to cultural imaginaries and the vital role of ocean in global ecologies and environmental crises.' This attentiveness to the environmental import of the ocean has been a significant aspect of Steve Mentz's career, as is evinced in his 2009 works *At the Bottom of Shakespeare's Ocean* and 'Toward a Blue Cultural Studies: The Sea, Maritime Culture, and Early Modern English Literature,' as well as in his recent book, *Ocean* (2020). Other important scholars in this field include Daniel Brayton (*Shakespeare's Ocean: An Ecocritical Exploration* (2013)), Melody Jue (*Wild Blue Media: Thinking through Seawater* (2020)), and Stacy Alaimo, who is currently working on a project entitled *Deep Blue Ecologies: Science, Aesthetics, and the Creatures of the Abyss.* See also her articles 'Feminist Science Studies and Ecocriticism: Aesthetics and Entanglement in the Deep Sea' (2014) and 'Jellyfish Science, Jellyfish Aesthetics: Posthuman Reconfigurations of the Sensible' (2013). These scholars all share an overtly stated commitment to the destabilising of terrestrial biases, and a de-centring of the land in their scholarship. Conversely, my project seeks to demonstrate that landed modernity is always already an oceanic and watery phenomenon.

specific tendency in these modernists to draw on the scientific and observational traditions of the nineteenth century—its systematic cataloguing and defining—and to use these approaches in the fields of optics and marine biology to interrogate the modern subject. Specifically, I trace how Woolf and H.D. complicate the traditional image of thinking as diving or fishing by imagining the perceiving subject as a jellyfish, an octopus, an oyster, or an anemone, and how they appropriate these animals' associations with the grotesque and the monstrous to affirm their own embodiment.

I then move from such expansive constructions of identity (through metaphors of marine creatures who live at ease in a fluid world) to an analogous but contrasting maritime subjectivity, arguing that the Atlantic is a crucial space for understanding Eliot's various rehearsals of his national, religious, and artistic identities. To this end, I read Eliot's reception by and response to the New Critics to examine the centrality, fluidity, and development of the concept of the 'destructive element' in Eliot's work, from early texts where it figures psychological breakdown, through its New Critical cultural canonisation in *The Waste Land,* and finally in the highly self-conscious personal and national constructions of *Four Quartets.* I situate my claims in relation to Laura Doyle's argument in *Freedom's Empire* that Anglo-American racial identity is formulated on a rhetoric of exile, freedom, and Atlantic ocean-crossing, and argue that Eliot appropriates this rhetoric in *Four Quartets,* engaging with an Anglo-Saxon racial identity from both sides of the Atlantic.

In my final chapter, I trace a similar contrast between expansiveness and narrow ideology in the work of a single author, studying the occluded world of maritime trade, with its ideological repercussions, in the poetry and prose of Ezra Pound. Pound's interests in

economics have been widely studied, as has the pervasive presence of the sea in his oeuvre. They have not, however, been studied in conjunction. This chapter will argue that the sea is a crucial economic exemplar in *The Cantos* and in Pound's prose, ranging throughout his writings in the ancient and often open-ended, communicative maritime economies of Venice, Rome, and Athens, in the maritime contestations of the American Revolution by US president John Adams with the British and the French, and finally in the imperialist ideology of Italian Fascism.

Finally, to bookend my thesis, I read James Hanley's depictions of Liverpool in his chronicles of the Fury family, and of London in *No Directions,* and examine the ways in which perception, class struggle, psychic breakdown, and the urban scene of these cities are all portrayed in terms of the maritime. I compare Hanley's maritime tropes with those of Conrad, Woolf, H.D., and Eliot, and so round off my study with a consideration of how maritime metaphorics shift in late modernism, on the brink of great maritime decline.

CHAPTER 1

NAVIGATING THE SEA OF LONDON: JOSEPH CONRAD'S WATERY METROPOLIS

At the end of Joseph Conrad's *The Nigger of the Narcissus,* the narrator describes how the ship's crew drift apart after being paid off. It is a striking passage, juxtaposing the seamen with the city crowds, and evoking the area's maritime past. The narrator sees the crew for the last time,

> swaying irresolute and noisy on the broad flagstones before the Mint. They were bound for the Black Horse, where men, in fur caps with brutal faces and in shirt sleeves, dispense out of varnished barrels the illusions of strength, mirth, happiness; the illusion of splendour and poetry of life, to the paid-off crews of southern-going ships. From afar I saw them discoursing, with jovial eyes and clumsy gestures, while the sea of life thundered into their ears ceaseless and unheeded. And swaying about there on the white stones, surrounded by the hurry and clamour of men, they appeared to be creatures of another kind—lost, alone, forgetful, and doomed; they were like castaways, like reckless and joyous castaways, like mad castaways making merry in the storm and upon an insecure ledge of a treacherous rock. The roar of the town resembled the roar of topping breakers, merciless and strong, with a loud voice and cruel purpose; but overhead the clouds broke; a flood of sunshine streamed down the walls of grimy houses. The dark knot of seamen drifted in sunshine. To the left of them the trees in Tower Gardens sighed, the stones of the Tower gleaming, seemed to stir in the play of light, as if remembering suddenly all the great joys and sorrows of

> the past, the fighting prototypes of these men; press-gangs; mutinous cries; the wailing of women by the riverside, and the shouts of men welcoming victories (128)

What is most remarkable about this passage is that the city of London itself is figured as a sea, with 'topping breakers' threatening to swallow the small crew who appear as 'mad castaways making merry in the storm and upon an insecure ledge of a treacherous rock' (128). The image of the city as a sea of life is common enough, but it has an uncanny effect after we have followed the crew through more literal seas and storms. Lest we miss the connection, Conrad has a heavenly light flood down upon the city and the crew and give us a vision of London's maritime past, the 'fighting prototypes of these men' (128): press-gangs, mutinies, sending-offs and naval victories. These fighting prototypes are not merely the forerunners of the *Narcissus*' crew, the men who made them what they are, but they also made London what it is, so that the vision of the city as a rough and tossing sea serves as a revelation, a stripping back of the bricks and mortar to reveal the waves and the brine that they are founded on.

In this chapter I argue that Conrad's London is a markedly maritime one, and I seek to untangle the ways in which the city and the sea intertwine. Particularly, I probe texts set in London, and from which the sea itself is largely or entirely absent, texts like *The Secret Agent* and *The Return*, arguing that these cityscapes, too, have a watery underbelly. I commence with a consideration of Conrad's descriptions of the London Docks, the liminal space between the city and the sea. I read these, embedded within Conrad's sea-writing more generally, interspersed with descriptions of the same spaces, a few years later, in the city-writing of Virginia Woolf. Next, I turn to the city itself, and read Conrad's London texts

alongside the urban images of Walter Benjamin, arguing that the maritime, not merely an economic condition *sine qua non* of the city, also becomes a sublimated aesthetic presence in urban modernity. That is, I will read the maritime world as one of Benjamin's economic and industrial realities which have an inherently 'expressive character' that flows through urban spaces, artistic tastes, architecture, and national myths (Benjamin 460). One of the ways in which the maritime world finds expression in the modern metropolis is in its shaping of Greenwich Mean Time and the first meridian, and it is to this specific aspect of the sea-saturated city that I turn in the final section of this chapter.

Of course, the sea is everywhere in Conrad's fiction, and it has long served as a focus for Conradian criticism. Texts like Georges Jean-Aubrey's *The Sea Dreamer: A Definitive Biography of Joseph Conrad* (1957), Jerry Allen's *The Sea Years of Joseph Conrad* (1965), and Norman Sherry's *Conrad's Eastern World* (1966), have focussed on the biographical and the geographical detail of Conrad's career in the British Merchant Marine. Critics like C.F. Burgess, Paul Bruss, and Robert Foulke have all stressed Conrad's sea years as being a central crucible for the themes and aesthetics of his literary career. In contrast, one of Conrad's finest biographers, Zdzislaw Najder, has dismissed the sea years as relatively unimportant (188-189), and Conrad himself would complain of the 'infernal tail of ships' he inevitably dragged behind him (Allen 32). In *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932), Q.D. Leavis wryly summarised Conrad's inevitable association with the sea as spawning the 'common complaint: "I can't read Conrad, sea-stories bore me," or alternatively: "I like Conrad because I'm so fond of stories about the sea"' (6). The facts, in brief, are as follows. Conrad commenced his sea career in Marseilles in 1874, before transferring to the British Merchant Marine in 1878 (Larabee 50). He passed his officer's examination in 1880, his

examination for first mate in 1884, and his master's examination in 1886 (Watt 16). In 1894, he left his sea career for good after serving aboard the *Adowa* (Larabee 50; Watt 18).[16]

Apart from the abundant critical attention that has been paid to Conrad's sea career, multiple critics have explored his relationship to the British Empire, and to colonialism more broadly. One excellent engagement with these themes is David Adams' *Colonial Odysseys: Empire and Epic in the Modernist Novel*, which cogently argues that we should not expect Conrad's colonial fiction to provide us with a genuine engagement with colonised peoples (Chinua Achebe famously branded Conrad a 'bloody racist' (792)) and that his texts are better read as explorations of colonial Europe, for all their exotic settings (2-3). This is what I will seek to do. However, instead of focussing on the voyages Conrad gives us from the centre outward, I will focus on the imperial metropolis itself, and argue that the maritime networks of empire form strong currents within the city itself, even and especially in texts that do not overtly engage with the sea. Critics like Christina Britzolakis, Anna Depotopoulou, Leo Mellor, and Benjamin Bandosz have all studied Conrad's metropolis, all focussing on *The Secret Agent*. While theirs are fascinating engagements with Conrad's urban modernism, none acknowledge the maritime presence in his portrayals of London.

One particular way in which the sea impinges on the city in *The Secret Agent* is through the mechanisms of time that structure the urban experience, and towards the end of this chapter, I turn towards Greenwich Mean Time and its adoption as the first meridian as an instance of entanglements of the maritime, metropolis, and empire. Randall Stevenson is right to emphasise the entanglements of the maritime and the temporal in Conrad's works, especially in *The Secret Agent*, but he does a disservice to the wider-ranging implications of

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[16] See also Nadjer's *Joseph Conrad: A Life,* p. 187 for a concise overview.

this connection in reducing it to a matter of Conradian biography, and particularly to Conrad's difficulties in passing his Trade Board Examinations (91). In closing this chapter, I compare Conrad's clocks and timepieces with those of Woolf (who has no biographical sea career or mariner's examinations to explain the connection), to highlight the acute awareness, in both writers, of the oceanic dimensions of urban temporality.

Before turning to Conrad, however, it is germane to give a brief overview of Britain's, and particularly London's, maritime status in the latter half of the nineteenth century and in the build-up to the First World War. As I mentioned in my introduction, it is generally accepted among maritime historians that the latter half of the nineteenth century constituted a watershed that saw the sailing ship rendered obsolete by the ultimate ascendency of steam power. What is more, the passing of the age of sail is seen to mark the end of the cultural significance of the sea in modern Britain. While this transition has often been depicted as rapid and revolutionary, in the past decades, critics and historians have emphasised and wondered at the comparatively tardy and uneven progress of the steamship during the nineteenth century. Sarah Palmer has remarked upon the 'lack of progress' of steam 'in relation to sail,' calling it simply 'not impressive' (233). Similarly, Robert Gardiner describes the adoption of steam power as 'a complex and long-drawn-out affair' (6). Historians like David Williams and John Armstrong delve more deeply into such progression. Nonetheless, during Conrad's sea years, steam was indeed progressively replacing sail as the dominant means of sea transport, and the transition is one Conrad repeatedly laments in many of his novels and essays (see, for example, *The Mirror of the Sea*, the closing pages of *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, and 'Some Reflections on the Loss of the *Titanic*'). Literary critics like Mark D. Larabee have argued convincingly that certain details of the sea voyages Conrad gives us

in his novels only make sense when viewed within the context of sailing ships' decreasing bids for economic viability—for example, the reckless and dangerous speed with which Captain Alistoun drives the *Narcissus* before the gale, and his refusal to de-mast the ship despite considerable risk of sinking (58-59).

From the 1870s onward, steam power inexorably sweeps the remaining sailing ships from the sea, and they are broken up, their timber used for garden furniture or the exteriors of buildings (Rule 261). This development does not explain, however, the baffling consensus in literary studies that the cultural importance of the sea therefore disappears with the last of the sailing ships. Critics like Cesare Casarino, John Peck, and Margaret Cohen all explicitly or implicitly take the end of the nineteenth century to mark the obsolescence of the sea as an important shaping force in economics and culture, despite the fact that shipping, particularly in Britain, in fact burgeons in the years leading up to World War I (Rule 303-306).[17] In a contemporary survey that grants an insight into how Britain's relation to the sea was perceived in the early twentieth century—*British Shipping, its History, Organisation, and Importance* (1914)—Adam Kirkaldy expounded how 'statistics show that the shipping trade of London has constantly increased' (489). This increase was once 'more rapid than it has been of recent years,' he was willing to concede, 'but the development still continues to be substantial' (489). Kirkaldy gave the rates of increase as follows:

[17] For an excellent account on the vagaries of shipping in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Fiona Rule's *London's Docklands: A History of the Lost Quarter*. The turn of the century saw the port of London troubled by dock strikes, excessive traffic, the collision of ships, prohibitively high rates charged for berthing and for storage, and the inaccessibility, for larger ships and steamers, of many docks (303-306). However, with the nationalisation of the various competing dock companies under the Port of London Authority, the fortunes of the port changed (306). 'By 1912,' Rule writes, 'the London docks had re-established themselves as Britain's premier port, with foreign trade being valued at almost £400 million per annum' (306). Wartime measures inevitably impacted the port, but by the 30s it was burgeoning again, with foreign trade valued at nearly £700 million in 1930 (322).

> From 1859 to 1879 the percentage of increase in the trade of London was very high. The total net tonnage of shipping entered and cleared with cargo, in the foreign trade only, showed an increase during the decade from 1859 to 1869 of 39 per cent., from 1879 to 1889 of 37 per cent., but from 1889 to 1899 the rate of increase fell to 26 per cent., and from 1899 to 1909 it was only about 22 per cent. (490)

However, Kirkaldy accounted for this relatively slower growth by emphasising that London already had a massive tonnage—newer ports like Southampton, Hamburg, Rotterdam, and Antwerp were growing astronomically, but the rapidity of their growth rate was facilitated by their relatively humble beginnings (491). In short, he held, 'there is nothing to indicate that the older ports' (among which the foremost is London) 'are being superseded, or prevented from largely increasing' (492). 'We are unable to conclude,' he reiterated, 'that the figures show any relative decline of London compared with the other ports named, allowing for the difference in the nature of the business done' (491).

Kirkaldy went on to describe the Port of London in exhaustive detail, and as though to drive home his confidence in the continued maritime dominance of London, he noted how in 1913 alone, £2,671,471 had been spent on dock repairs and improvements (516), and how different Dock Companies had agents in Australia and South Africa to advertise the advantages and the many recent modernisations of the Port of London (516; Miller 32). What is more, new docks had continued to be built, such as a new Greenland Dock in 1904, and the construction of Millwall Dock, along with a granary in 1903 to facilitate 'the discharge and storage of grain cargoes' (Kirkaldy 508). 'The teeming millions of London, too,' he wrote, 'require[d] an enormous amount of imported foodstuffs' (510).

Kirkaldy's book forms part of a series of volumes on the 'National Industries' by Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co, and Kirkaldy himself was a professor of finance at the University of Birmingham. Published in May 1914, it is unsurprising that the book participates in some of the nationalistic bombast of the time, but the details of Kirkaldy's contemporary account are borne out by recent appraisals like those of Fiona Rule in her *London's Docklands* (2009), Michael Miller's *Europe and the Maritime World* (2012), Gelina Harlaftis, Stig Tenold, and Jesús Valdaliso's *The World's Key Industry* (2012), and Peter Stone's *The History of the Port of London: A Vast Emporium of All Nations* (2017). What is more, Kirkaldy's evident maritime patriotism is in itself a valuable indicator of the tenor of discussions and representations of the sea in the early twentieth century: there is very much a sense of the Port of London, and British maritime monopoly in general, as an integral part of British national identity.

Given the staggering interconnectedness of the modern metropolis with its maritime networks, it is strange that more attention has not been given to the continued importance of the sea to urban modernity, or to the modernist texts that register its presence within their urban landscapes. I turn now to the interfaces that connect these networks with the wider metropolis: of particular importance for Conrad are London's docks.

THE DOCKS

Docks are the permeable membrane that literalises the interpenetration of the modern metropolis and its maritime underpinnings. Here, sea traffic comes ashore, and ships lie at anchor amidst warehouses and factories, masts blending with windows and chimneys. On a very basic level, they shape the city. In London, residents displaced and districts demolished

for the construction of new docks necessarily had to spring up elsewhere, and new urban housing was built (Rule 227). Similarly, the employment of waged labourers at docks some distance from the city gave rise to new working-class communities (Rule 227). For example, the construction of the West India Docks in 1802 led to the growth of a suburb of dockworkers on the Isle of Dogs (Stone 103). Conversely, the construction of the new London Docks in Wapping in 1805 was estimated to require the clearance of two thousand houses, businesses, the Shadwell Waterworks, and the churchyard of St John's Wapping (Stone 107; Rule 221). Twenty-four streets, and thirty-three courts, lanes, and alleys were cleared (Stone 107). Similarly, in 1825, the St Katharine Docks Act approved the demolition of 1,250 houses, along with St Katharine's church and hospital; 11,000 residents were displaced (Rule 231). Beyond such direct physical changes to the urban landscape, industries sprang up around the docks. The substantial workforce employed by the various docks of the Port of London attracted tradesmen and mariners on leave as a captive market, and processing and refining plants sprang up around and within the dockyards for products like sugar, tobacco, spices, and wool (Rule 233, 262-263, 272-273). In London, even a modern urban institution like the Metropolitan Police Service had its origins in connection with the maritime trade in what was then the Marine Police Establishment, based at Wapping, and created to protect valuable cargoes from thieves (Stone 94-97). So, too, rich lines of communication connected the financial and political heart of the City with the shipping industries, via insurance institutions like Lloyd's of London and the headquarters of the Port of London Authority, constructed between 1915 and 1922, which employed administrative clerks, female typists, and telephone operators with an extensive communications network

linking it to the docks (Stone 168-169, Miller 53-54). Miller summarises the entanglements of the maritime world and great urban centres as follows:

> Maritime enterprise, strung out across the world, was always knowledge based. All the great historical switchboards—from Amsterdam to London to New York—assembled vast arrays of services and infrastructures, but at their core they functioned primarily as hubs of intelligence. Without access to information, modern shipping and trading companies would have withered on the vine, and global exchange with them. (18)

While the dockyards of London thus shaped and necessitated much of the infrastructure of the modern metropolis, including its police force, they were also crucibles for political insurgence and social reform. At the end of the nineteenth century, casual work on the London docks was some of the worst paid and least reliable work to be had (Rule 291-292). An article published in *The Andover Review* in October 1889, in the wake of the London Dock Strike, holds that 'No laborer earns so precarious a living, or so suffers from the advantage taken of his necessities, as the "casual" at the docks' (*The Andover Review* 422). At least, it continues, 'such was his condition before the strike' (422). The strike resulted in a victory for the 100,000 dockworkers who participated (Rule 296), and led to the establishment of strong trade unions, which later amalgamated into the Dock, Wharf, Riverside, and General Labourers' Union (Rule 303). The same 1889 article opines that the strike and resulting unionisation did 'something to take the lowest class of laborers out of the terrible 'residium' of the unemployed and to give them a foothold in the ranks of labor' (422).

The dockyards would continue to be central in disputes and strikes regarding workers' rights and trade unions, with further strikes in 1911 and 1912.

The docks had long featured prominently in critiques of British industrial capitalism. In *Our Mutual Friend,* Charles Dickens (whom Conrad read and admired) has Rogue Riderhood dwell 'deep and dark in Limehouse Hole, among the riggers, and the mast, oar and block makers, and the boat-builders, and the sail-lofts, as in a kind of ship's hold stored full of waterside characters' (350). In *Oliver Twist* he describes the dockyard slum of Jacob's Island as a 'maze of close, narrow, and muddy streets, thronged by the roughest and poorest of waterside people,' an area characterised by 'tottering house-fronts projecting over the pavement, dismantled walls that seem to totter as he passes, chimneys half crushed half hesitating to fall, windows guarded by rusty iron bars that time and dirt have almost eaten away, every imaginable sign of desolation and neglect' (403). Friedrich Engels, in his 1845 work *The Condition of the Working Class in England,* contrasts the economic splendour of England's maritime power with the living conditions it imposes upon its workers:

> I know nothing more imposing than the view which the Thames offers during the ascent from the sea to London Bridge. The masses of buildings, the wharves on both sides, especially from Woolwich upwards, the countless ships along both shores, crowding ever closer and closer together, until, at last, only a narrow passage remains in the middle of the river, a passage through which hundreds of steamers shoot by one another; all this is so vast, so impressive, that a man cannot collect himself, but is lost in the marvel of England's greatness before he sets foot upon English soil. It is only

later that the traveller appreciates the human suffering that has made all this possible. (31)

In Conrad's work, the opposition between sea and land is often emphatically delineated: the former is, for the most part, a sordid, muddy, claustrophobic jumble, to which is opposed the moral elevation of the sea (the departures and landings in both *Heart of Darkness* and *The Nigger of the Narcissus* play on this contrast). Of course, this standard opposition, also persistently presented as a dichotomy of dark and light, is also often troubled in Conrad's sea fiction. For example, in texts like *The Nigger of the Narcissus, The Shadow-Line*, and 'The Secret Sharer,' the space of the ship becomes morally unsettling and oppressive, whether due to a strangely charismatic dying shipmate who undermines the discipline of the crew, a mad first mate who believes the ship haunted by the ghost of his dead captain, or a strange and unsettling stowaway (potentially a murderer) hidden by the narrator on his first command. Dockyards, however, are spaces that inherently trouble any neat distinction between land and sea in their very function as a meeting point and interface between the two. I would now like to turn more specifically to Conrad's descriptions of these significant spaces.

Conrad's fullest description of the Port of London occurs in the 1906 *The Mirror of the Sea*. He describes the glamour and history that clings to the banks of the Thames, with the knowledge of all the former seamen who have plied its banks. He describes the various docks and the different character of each, how 'each has its own peculiar physiognomy, its own expression,' made uniformly beautiful in 'their common train of being romantic in their usefulness' (176). St Katharine's, for example, is 'cosy,' the London Docks are 'venerable,' devoid of railroad lines, and they smell of spices (175). The Import and Export Docks are

'quiet, serene nooks in the busy world of docks' (186), to which Conrad contrasts the third of the West India dockyards, still clinging on to profitability: the New South Dock, in Conrad's sea years, was the last abode of the great 'smart wool-clippers,' whose rigging, in the docks, 'made a thick enormous network against the sky,' and which sailed between London and Australia, hugely overmasted and all 'expected to make good passages' (188).

These descriptions, written by a merchant seaman at the end of the age of sail, are in themselves historically interesting because they offer an insight into a specific era of shipping as it is irrecoverably changing. More germane to my purposes, however, are the passages where Conrad begins to blur the worlds of the sea and the city (a blurring that, given the space of the dockyards, is not difficult to do). In most of his descriptions of ships docked in the Port of London, Conrad sets up a clear opposition: the ships are beautiful white-winged birds trapped and imprisoned by the city; they belong properly to the seas and not to the sordid land. The 'docks of great European ports' are accompanied by 'that sense of a dungeon, that sense of a horrible and degrading misfortune overtaking a creature fair to see and safe to trust,' and the ships that berth in them, Conrad writes, seem 'dishonestly locked up, to be hunted about from wharf to wharf on a dark, greasy, square pool of black water as a brutal reward at the end of a faithful voyage' (182). He goes on to describe the 'dismal shores … studded thickly with scaffold-like, enormous timber structures,' and the sense of 'cruelty' being 'meted out to the helpless ships': 'Shut up in the desolate circuit of these basins, you would think a free ship would droop and die like a wild bird put into a dirty cage' (174).[18]

[18] Similarly, when the *Narcissus* enters the Port of London, it is met by 'a mad jumble of begrimed walls [that] [loom] up vaguely in the smoke, bewildering and mournful, like a vision of disaster.' The ship is imprisoned in a 'sombre and rectangular pool' between these 'soulless walls, staring through hundreds of windows as troubled and dull as the eyes of over-fed brutes' (123). Finally, *Narcissus* is boarded by 'a swarm of strange men' who '[take] possession of her in the name of the sordid earth,' and the ship '[ceases] to live' (123).

Yet Conrad also has occasion to write that these ships have 'always suggested to my mind the image of a flock of swans kept in the flooded backyard of grim tenement houses' (174). The opposition between the graceful and the sordid is still retained, but the image of swans in tenement backyards is no longer as jarring, and has become a landed scene rather than a romance of the seas, contrasting, rather, the rural and the urban, or opulence and degradation. Shortly after this image, Conrad starts referring to the masts of ships as 'spire-like' (174): he is careful to contrast these floating, swaying spires to the stolid concrete of factories and warehouses, but with this metaphor the ships become part of the architecture of the city, no longer birds but buildings (174-175).

In a particularly striking passage in *The Mirror of the Sea*, Conrad collides the ship and the city docks, remembering an occasion when his craft's yard-arm came close to breaking the windows of a warehouse. The passage merits citing at length:

> Behind the growth of the London waterside the docks of London spread out unsuspected, smooth, and placid, lost amongst the buildings like dark lagoons hidden in a thick forest. They lie concealed in the intricate growth of houses with a few stalks of mastheads here and there overtopping the roof of some four-story warehouse.
>
> It is a strange conjunction this of roofs and mastheads, of walls and yard-arms. I remember once having the incongruity of the relation brought home to me in a practical way. I was the chief officer of a fine ship, just docked with a cargo of wool from Sydney, after a ninety days' passage. In fact, we had not been in more than half an hour and I was still busy making her fast to the stone posts of a very narrow quay in front of a lofty warehouse. An old man with a gray whisker under the chin and

> brass buttons on his pilot-cloth jacket, hurried up along the quay hailing my ship by name.
>
> . . .
>
> 'If you don't look sharp, you'll have your topgallant yards through the windows of that 'ere warehouse presently!" This was the only cause of his interest in the ship's beautiful spars. I own that for a time I was struck dumb by the bizarre associations of yard-arms and window-panes. To break windows is the last thing one would think of in connection with a ship's topgallant yard, unless, indeed, one were an experienced berthing-master in one of the London docks. (168-170)

There is a blurring here of 'roofs and mastheads' and of 'walls and yard-arms' (169). For the inexperienced Conrad, it is still a strange conglomeration, but for the old berthing-master they form part of the same world, and yard-arms and window-panes are commonly to be expected in the same few square metres. In fact, Conrad's own metaphor of the city as a forest and the docks as its water source acknowledges the integration of the two. The docks of London are hidden among the urban landscape and form part of its growth in the same way as forests sprouting around and nourished by dark lagoons. For all the jarring conjunction of mastheads 'overtopping the roof of some four-story warehouse,' the 'intricate growth of houses' and the docks they conceal are part of the same organic whole (168).

While this confusion between the city and the sea is here represented as merely an autobiographical anecdote, their synaesthetics are likely fed by the author's familiarity with Dickens. There is a striking passage in Conrad's 1915 'Poland Revisited,' where the author remembers walking through the city, 'navigating the sea of London by the chart [a newspaper

cutting detailing the address of a shipping agent] concealed in the palm of my hand' (122). Conrad then muses that his skill in navigating the city was, in later years, to help him in his maritime navigations (122); here, he describes a Dickensian city, and one which he depicts using the same image of tangled forests and dark lagoons that I have noted in his description of the docks:

> The place I was bound to was not easy to find. It was one of those courts hidden away from the charted and navigable streets, lost among the thick growth of houses like a dark pool in the depths of a forest, approached by an inconspicuous archway as if by a secret path; a Dickensian nook of London, that wonder city, the growth of which bears no sign of intelligent design, but many traces of freakishly sombre phantasy the Great Master knew so well how to bring out by the magic of his understanding love. (122)

Conrad thus explicitly links his maritime city with a Dickensian aesthetics; here again, the maritime backbone of London lies concealed in its tangled streets and buildings like a hidden lagoon in a deep forest, feeding and nourishing the city's growth.

Dickens's London, like Conrad's, is a watery one. *Our Mutual Friend,* for example, is pervaded throughout by the life of the Thames. Dickens describes the 'amphibious human-creatures who appear to have some mysterious power of extracting a subsistence out of tidal water' (74), humans to whom Conrad constructs the moral equivalent in ships in his 'string of smoking steamboats' that 'waddle, hugging the coast, like migrating and amphibious monsters' (*Narcissus* 121). Most striking, however, is Dickens' early description of the lawyers Eugene and Mortimer's journey from a *nouveau riche* dinner party in the city to the

squalor of the river, from which John Harmon’s drowned corpse appears to have been recovered:

> The wheels rolled on, and rolled down by the Monument and by the Tower, and by the Docks; down by Ratcliffe, and by Rotherhithe; down by where accumulated scum of humanity seemed to be washed from higher grounds, like so much moral sewage, and to be pausing until its own weight forced it over the bank and sunk it in the river. In and out among vessels that seemed to have got ashore, and houses that seemed to have got afloat—among bow-splits staring into windows, and windows staring into ships. (20-21)

This concatenation of ships and windows, of vessels that have got ashore and houses that have got afloat, is closely echoed by Conrad in his 'bizarre associations of yard-arms and window-panes' (170), and in his depictions of the London Docks as the permeable space between the metropolis and the maritime.

In Conrad's fiction, it is more often the opposition between land and sea that is insisted upon, but even then it is troubled in interesting ways. The famous opening of *Heart of Darkness,* with its description of a 'mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, the greatest town on earth,' also describes the sea on the horizon in strikingly industrial terms, as 'welded together' with the sky 'without a joint' (3). The darkness and haze itself 'rested on the low shores' but 'ran out to sea in a vanishing flatness,' so that it is hard to tell where earth ends and sea begins (3). In *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, as the ship enters the Port of London, Conrad heavily stresses the monstrosity of the city, with its 'soulless walls, staring through hundreds of windows,' its 'monstrous iron cranes crouched, with chains hanging from their

long necks,' its shadows and dust and strange men who take possession of the Narcissus 'in the name of the sordid earth' (123). Yet a few pages later, this soulless city will itself become a great sea, and even here the dust of London is 'the dust of all the continents' (123), shaped and constituted not only by factories and gas and the breath of Londoners but also by the cargoes of ships from all over the world—'a penetrating smell of perfumes and dirt, of spices and hides, of things costly and things filthy' (123). The smog of London seems 'to rise from the steaming brow of millions of men' and throb to their heartbeats, carrying with it the immense murmur of 'lips praying, cursing, sighing, jeering—the undying murmur of folly, regret, and hope exhaled by the crowds of the anxious earth' (122). Yet at the same time this anxious city is bolstered by its maritime networks, by ships like the Narcissus that bring with them the 'dust off all the continents' (123), and this is something, I submit, that Conrad acknowledges when he turns London into a great and heaving sea in the closing passages of the book.

More than twenty years later, Virginia Woolf, who read Conrad extensively and wrote several articles on him,[19] likewise emphasises how the docks blur the distinction between the city and the sea. In a 1931 article, as she describes the docks, Woolf, like Conrad, writes that ships bring with them the grandeur of the sea, and seem like 'soaring and winged creatures who have got themselves caught by the leg and lie tethered on dry land' (*Essays V* 275). But when they lie at anchor, and 'cranes begin their dipping and their swinging,' she writes, 'it seems as if all romance were over' (*Essays V* 276). She describes how 'behind the masts and

[19] See, for example, 'Lord Jim' (1917), 'Mr Conrad's "Youth"' (1917), 'Mr Conrad's Crisis' (1918), and 'Joseph Conrad,' (1925). Woolf, however, takes Conrad at face value when he writes about ideals like 'the brotherhood of the sea' or 'craft.' In 'Mr Conrad's "Youth",' she writes that the trials and dangers of the sea 'bring into action those qualities in mankind which always seem most dear to Mr Conrad's heart—courage, fidelity, magnanimity in the face of suffering' (159).

funnels lies a sinister dwarf city of workmen's houses' and how in the foreground 'cranes and warehouses, scaffolding and gasometers line the bank with a skeleton architecture' (*Essays V* 276). Both Woolf and Conrad hold that 'use produces beauty as its bye-products' (*Essays V* 279; *Mirror* 176). However, for Conrad it is the grandeur of the sea and the glory of maritime imperial history that confer a splendour onto the docks, whereas for Woolf it is the labour itself, the work that goes on in the docks, that is beautiful in its rhythm and efficiency. The ships, become, for Woolf, part of the cityscape, as when she writes of 'the roofs of London, its masts and spires' (*Essays V* 279), blurring all distinction between the urban and the maritime.

THE METROPOLIS

Having examined the unique space of the dockyards in the modern metropolis, I turn now to the way in which the city itself becomes figured in maritime metaphors.

Woolf's article on the London Docks is one of a series of six pieces she wrote for *Good Housekeeping*.[20] 'The Docks of London,' which concludes with an acknowledgement that it is the capital itself, the demands of its consumers and its economic and political heart, which draws the ships from all corners of the earth (*Essays V* 280), is followed by an article

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[20] She reflects on these articles in light of Maria and Aldous Huxley's prospective writings on industrial Britain (Clarke 280-281). In her private diaries, she admits 'I feel us, compared with Aldous & Maria, unsuccessful. They're off to do mines, factories…black country; did the docks when they were here…And I am to write 6 articles straight off about what?' (*Diary IV* 111). In a letter to Clive Bell, she is far more mocking of Huxley's enterprise:

> Aldous astounds me—his energy, his modernity. Is it that he can't see anything that he has to see so much? Not content with touring Europe with Sullivan to ask all great men of all countries what they think of God, science, the soul, the future and so on, he spends his week in London visiting docks, where with Maria's help he can just distinguish a tusk from a frozen bullock (*Letters IV* 293, no. 2330)

While Woolf 's oeuvre does demonstrate a deep and thoroughgoing engagement with the maritime dimensions of London, it is worth noting that her article on the docks resulted from a rather staged tour, which culminated in Woolf's party—consisting of Leonard Woolf, Vita Sackville-West, and the Persian Ambassador—dining with the PLA. (Clarke 280-281)

titled 'The Oxford Street Tide.' At the docks themselves, the environment adapts itself to the necessities of produce. Vaulted wine cellars, warming gas jets, and cottony fungi are beautiful, perhaps, but each element is in place purely for the optimisation of the production of wine (*Essays V* 279). In the city of London, different transformations take place not only in products, but in their consumers, and the terms in which Woolf describes this change are fascinating. In the docks, she writes, 'one sees things in their crudity, their bulk, their enormity,' but in Oxford Street. they are 'refined and transformed' (*Essays V* 283):

> The huge barrels of damp tobacco have been rolled into innumerable neat cigarettes laid in silver paper. The corpulent bales of wool have been spun into thin vests and soft stockings. The grease of sheep's thick wool has become scented cream for delicate skins. And those who buy and those who sell have suffered the same city change. Tripping, mincing, in black coats, in satin dresses, the human form has adapted itself no less than the animal product. Instead of hauling and heaving, it deftly opens drawers, rolls out silk on counters, measures and snips with yard sticks and scissors. (*Essays V* 283)

Woolf's choice of metaphor for this transformation is significant. The title of her article already compares the flow of production and consumption with a sea-tide, and here she writes how things and people have 'suffered the same city change' (*Essays V* 283). Appropriating the Shakespearean image of sea-change, Woolf makes the modern metropolis the transformative, dissolving element that breaks down the bulk and volume of the products in the London docks into the rich and strange tide consumed by the Oxford Street shoppers. Here, the constant circulation of the tide of trade persuades the city: 'that here unending

beauty, ever fresh, ever new, very cheap and within the reach of everybody, bubbles up every day of the week' (*Essays V* 286). The antithesis to these waves of novelty is the immobility of the past: 'the mere thought of age, of solidity, is abhorrent to Oxford Street' (*Essays V* 286). What Woolf describes as the 'glassiness' of Oxford Street, its 'transparency,' and 'surging waves of coloured plaster,' constitutes the allure of 'modern London': it is 'built to pass' (*Essays V* 285), and modern Londoners seem to take pleasure in 'proving that we can make stone and brick as transitory as our own desires' (*Essays V* 286). These desires, and the consumption of the modern metropolis that calls ships from across the world into the Port of London, ebb and flow like the tides of the sea itself, and the city becomes a mirror image of the capricious sea.

It is worth commenting on this mirroring. As in the docks the sea and the city meet and literally interpenetrate, the urban experience of capitalism becomes more broadly depicted in maritime terms. I contend that this is not a casual occurrence, but that the watery underbelly of the metropolis becomes sublimated into its metaphors and aesthetic expressions. We now readily think of a crowd as a heaving sea of people, or of the bustle of urban life as the tossing of a restless ocean, but these are metaphors that emerge most strongly and become embedded in our language as clichés at a time in history when the modern metropolis and its capital and consumption are bolstered and fed by a maritime world at the height of its global reach.

Walter Benjamin registers this aesthetic sublimation. In a number of passages in *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin presents us with cityscapes described through the imagery of the sea. This conflation, he tells us, is a modern phenomenon: Baudelaire, he says, was the first

to describe the brick chimneys and tiled roofs of Paris as a tossing sea (245); Charles Meryon, a former officer in the French Navy, known and admired by Baudelaire for his etchings of Paris, superimposed the sea onto the city. Benjamin cites passages from Gustave Geffroy's *Charles Meryon*, in which the author describes the strangely maritime city of the artist. The engraving 'Rue des Chantres,' he remarks, shows a narrow urban street, with a poster advertising 'sea baths' on one of the high walls (Benjamin 232; Geffroy 144). In the work 'College Henri IV,' in the midst of the cityscape,

> suddenly Meryon begins to fill it with a landscape of mountain and sea, replacing the ocean of Paris. The sails and masts of a ship appear, some flocks of sea birds are taking wing, and this phantasmagoria gathers around the most rigorous design, the tall buildings of the school regularly pierced by windows, the courtyard planted with trees, . . . and the surrounding houses, with their dark rooftops, crowded chimneys, and blank facades (Benjamin 232; Geffroy 151; for the engraving see Appendix, Image 1)

This same maritime phantasmagoria populates Meryon's final Parisian engraving, 'The Admiralty,' where 'in the clouds a troop of horses, chariots, and dolphins advances upon the ministry; ships and sea serpents are not lacking, and several human-shaped creatures are to be seen in the multitude' (Benjamin 232; Geffroy 161). With these weird juxtapositions, Meryon constructs what Geffroy terms 'the ocean of Paris' (Benjamin 232; Geffroy 151).

Of course, there are some distinctions to be made between the urban modernity of Paris and that of London. While both capitals were cosmopolitan and imperial centres through which flowed the riches of the colonial world, Paris was not a world port in the same

way that London was.[21] Interestingly, though, Benjamin insists on the comparison, juxtaposing and comparing Baudelaire and Meryon with Auguste Barbier's poem 'Londres,' in which

> An ever swelling, unapproachable river,
>
> Rolling its muddy currents in sinuous onrush,
>
> Like that frightful stream of the underworld
>
> And arched over by gigantic bridges on piers
>
> That mimic the old Colossus of Rhodes,
>
> Allows thousands of ships to ply their way;
>
> A great tide polluted and always unsettled
>
> Recirculates the riches of the world.
>
> Busy stockyards, open shops are ready
>
> To receive a universe of goods (Benjamin 452; Barbier 193-194)

Benjamin wonders whether Baudelaire's and Meryon's images of Paris might not have been 'very materially determined by the texts of Barbier and Poe,' especially as 'London was certainly ahead of Paris in industrial development.' In this way, what is economic reality

[21] It was not for that reason, however, an insignificant port, although its traffic was much more diffuse than other French ports, like those of Marseilles and Le Havre. Still, Albert Demangeon estimates that in 1913, the tonnage of the Port of Paris, at 15,228,085 tons, surpassed that of Marseilles, the biggest of France's maritime ports (278).

metamorphoses into artistic currency. This expressiveness of economic realities lies at the heart of Benjamin's *Arcades Project*. As he summarises:

> Marx lays bare the causal connection between economy and culture. For us, what matters is the thread of expression. It is not the economic origins of culture that will be presented, but the expression of the economy in its culture. At issue, in other words, is the attempt to grasp an economic process as perceptible *Ur*-phenomenon, from out of which proceed all manifestations of life in the arcades (and, accordingly, in the nineteenth century). (460)

Among many other contemporary figures, Benjamin is intrigued, for example, by the Swiss historian Sigfried Giedion, who claims that 'in the nineteenth century, construction plays the role of the subconscious' (Benjamin 4, 16, 391; Giedion 87). Benjamin himself prefers the image of 'bodily processes' that express themselves, in sleep, in different kinds of dreams (391). For Benjamin, the 'bodily processes,' or the economic circulations, of the urban metropolis result in collective dreams, found in the arcades, in advertising, architecture, consumption, and other aspects of life in a modern city (391). The maritime, I think, counts as one such dream, and images, myths, and incarnations of it are spawned throughout nineteenth and twentieth-century accounts and creations of the city and of modernity. Benjamin himself cites a fascinating passage from Giedion that purports to describe 'the fundamental aesthetic experience of present-day architecture,' encountered, he writes, in the 'windswept stairways of the Eiffel Tower, or, better still, in the steel supports of a Pont Transbordeur' (Benjamin 491; Giedion 91). Here,

> through the thin net of iron that hangs suspended in the air, things stream—ships, ocean, houses, masts, landscape, harbor. They lose their distinctive shape, swirl into one another as we climb downward, merge simultaneously. (Benjamin 491; Giedion 91)

This is a striking image in which the city and the sea become superimposed and melt into one another. Houses and ships become indistinguishable, and sea and cityscape become identified with each other. The Pont Transbordeur crossed the Port of Marseille, and thus one would literally have glimpsed ships, ocean, masts, and houses through its iron frame. The sea is nowhere near Paris, however, but when Giedion juxtaposes the Eiffel Tower and the Pont Transbordeur, we begin, like Meryon, to picture ships and sea glimpsed through the iron scaffolding of this inland urban tower. This particular maritime landscape is a purely imaginary one. At the same time, it is one that Giedion describes as 'the fundamental aesthetic experience' of modern urban architecture (Benjamin 491; Giedion 91). In another passage that Benjamin cites, Giedion describes the modernist architecture of Le Corbusier, who sought to emulate the machinery of modernity such as the ocean liner, the automobile, or the aeroplane in his designs (Le Corbusier 3-4). Giedion writes:

> Le Corbusier's houses depend on neither spatial nor plastic articulation: the air passes through them! Air becomes a constitutive factor! What matters, therefore, is neither spatiality per se nor plasticity per se but only relation and interfusion. There is but one indivisible space. The integuments separating inside from outside fall away. (Benjamin 423; Giedion 169)

This interfusion is the same that characterises the landscape we find in the docks of London. It is the same, too, that Geffroy sees in the etchings of Geryon, with its 'spires whose fingers point to heaven,' its 'obelisks of industry, spewing forth their conglomerations of smoke against the firmament,' and its 'prodigies of scaffolding 'round buildings under repair, applying their openwork architecture, so paradoxically beautiful, upon architecture's solid body' (Benjamin 231; Geffroy 125). Strikingly, Geffroy goes on to highlight Meryon's own maritime background: he 'bade farewell to the ocean's solemn adventures in order to paint the gloomy majesty of this most disquieting of capitals' (Geffroy 126; Benjamin 231). In a similar vein to Geffroy, Le Corbusier describes a steamship, in his *Towards a New Architecture,* as a balance between 'elements both vast and intimate,' proffering to the eye a 'good contrast between the solids and voids,' between 'powerful masses and slender elements' (99).

For Benjamin, this urban architecture that juxtaposes land and sea, solidity and flux, becomes, what is more, a juxtaposition of the bourgeois interior with the urban exterior. I have looked at the London docks as a space in which a similar but larger-scale conjunction and interpenetration between an interior place (the city) and an exterior space (the ocean) is exemplified. For Benjamin, such liminal spaces between an enclosed interior and a large exterior, between intimacy and vastness, characterise a great deal of life in the modern metropolis: it is the 'intoxicated interpenetration of street and residence' that emerges in the Paris of the nineteenth century, 'especially in the experience of the flâneur,' and is emulated in architecture (423). It is an ongoing conflict, in which what Benjamin elsewhere calls the 'phantasmagorias of the interior' impinge upon and seek to domesticate the urban space and the market forces that flow through it (14). Woolf enacts this domestication at the end of her

article on the docks, turning the focus to the life, habits, and habitation of the bourgeois individual:

> it is we—our tastes, our fashions, our needs—that make the cranes dip and swing, that call the ships from the sea. Our body is their master. We demand shoes, furs, bags, stoves, oil, rice pudding, candles; and they are brought to us. Trade watches us anxiously to see what new desires are beginning to grow in us, what new dislikes. One feels an important, a complex, a necessary animal as one stands on the quayside watching the cranes hoist this barrel, that crate, that other bale from the holds of the ships that have come to anchor. Because one chooses to light a cigarette, all those barrels of Virginia tobacco are swung on shore. (280)

And indeed, in urban modernity, the bourgeois individual is an 'important, a complex, a necessary animal' (280). For Benjamin, it is the arcades, which he on occasion calls the 'drawing room' or the 'furnished and familiar interior of the masses' (423), that epitomise this interpenetration and domestication, swallowing the tide of trade into their boutiques and stores, with inviting, intimate interior spaces that impinge upon the flux of the street. Interestingly, in his convolutes on the Arcades, he cites Giedion for the 'old name for department stores: *docks a bon marché*—that is, 'discount docks' (Benjamin 40; Giedion 115).

THE RETURN

I have now given an overview of the docks as a space where the distinction between the urban and the maritime becomes blurred, and I have shown how descriptions of urban modernity take on the maritime characteristics of the networks that support and give rise to it.

In this section, I turn to one of Conrad's early urban stories, to show how a text that nominally has nothing to do with the sea, nonetheless becomes weirdly oceanic.

The Return (1898) is one of Joseph Conrad's earliest short stories, and it is focussed upon two of what Woolf calls the city's important, complex, necessary animals. Conrad himself calls these creatures 'the beastly bourgeois' (*Letters* 69). Alvan Hervey and his wife are comfortable, complacent city dwellers, living amidst the 'impenetrable and polished discretion of closed doors and curtained windows' (31). Conrad describes their manner of living as skimming 'over the surface of life,' going through the world 'like two skilful skaters cutting figures on thick ice for the admiration of the beholders, and disdainfully ignoring the hidden stream, the stream restless and dark; the stream of life, profound and unfrozen' (8). In a story so obviously focused on class, it is hard not to imagine echoes of a dangerous and insurgent proletariat in such descriptions, and in Conrad's conclusion to the story, in which a dark flood rises up and swallows the house (notably, as the tired-faced servant girl ascends the stairs). This oblique criticism of class relations is quite unusual for Conrad, but the working classes are certainly at least part of 'the stream restless and dark' (8), which Colm Tóibín identifies with 'the great unstable openness of London' (vii), and which threatens the self-enclosed world of Conrad's characters.

The interior of the Hervey home is decorated with mirrors and statues, with 'brass rods' glimmering along the red-carpeted stairway (8), bronze dragon light-fittings, and conventional but 'artistic' paintings on the walls (9). It is the type of the bourgeois dwelling that Benjamin will compare to a shell, which 'bears the impression of its occupant' (220). He elaborates on these shell-like interiors:

> The nineteenth century, like no other century, was addicted to dwelling. It conceived the residence as a receptacle for the person, and it encased him with all his appurtenances so deeply in the dwelling's interior that one might be reminded of the inside of a compass case, where the instalment with all its accessories lies embedded in deep, usually violet folds of velvet. (220)

The Hervey home is just such a 'receptacle for the person' (Benjamin 220), a space within which Alvan's wife can give free play to her 'individuality—of which she was very conscious' (5), and in which Alvan can encase himself in rooms arranged according to his tastes, which are 'distinctly artistic' (9). The story opens, however, when Alvan returns home from work to discover a letter from his wife, describing her decision to leave him for another man. The shockwaves that this letter sends through Alvan's shell-dwelling are remarkable in Conrad's description. As he reads, Alvan seems to hear a 'great aimless uproar that, in a manner, prevented him from hearing himself think and made his mind an absolute blank' (11). This uproar seems, we are told, 'to ooze out of the written words' before his eyes (11). Rushing to the window, Alvan flings it open and puts his head out, compelled by a sort of unreflecting need to 'raise an alarm of fire or murder' (11):

> A chill gust of wind, wandering through the damp and sooty obscurity over the waste of roofs and chimney-pots, touched his face with a clammy flick. He saw an illimitable darkness, in which stood a black jumble of walls, and, between them, the many rows of gaslights stretched far away in long lines, like strung-up beads of fire. A sinister loom as of a hidden conflagration lit up faintly from below the mist, falling upon a billowy and motionless sea of tiles and bricks. At the rattle of the opened

> window the world seemed to leap out of the night and confront him, while floating up to his ears there came a sound vast and faint; the deep mutter of something immense and alive. (11-12)

The stability and security of Alvan's bourgeois, interiorised way of life is undermined by his wife's infidelity, and the 'impenetrable and polished discretion of closed doors and curtained windows' which the Hervey home constitutes and is surrounded by (31), suddenly becomes a 'billowy and motionless sea of tiles and bricks' (11), an oceanic city with its 'deep mutter of something immense and alive' (12).

This sea-change that follows Alvan's reading of the letter constitutes one of Conrad's earliest instances of 'delayed decoding' (Watt 270-271), as Alvan's senses are overwhelmed by the breach in his familiar habits, which in turn defamiliarises his bourgeois habitat. At last, he formulates this breach in the words 'she's gone' (12), but the words themselves feed into his world's dissolution, becoming a 'receding wave of sound,' a 'wave spreading out in a widening circle, embracing streets, roofs, church, steeples, fields' (13). The result, for Alvan, is a kind of seasickness, a 'physical' sensation 'as though he had bitten through something nauseous' (13).[22] It is striking that this aesthetics of alienation, which is one of the defining features of Conrad's modernism, is represented through sea imagery, especially given how very removed from the sea this story is. Tóibín calls *The Return* Conrad's 'most exotic territory: a house in London, not a boat in sight, utterly free of the Orient,' where 'mirrors and a carpet replace sky and sea' (x). He strikes at something true in this provocative formulation; it is what Conrad himself enacts in describing Alvan's shock: the uncanny resurgence of a

[22] Interestingly, this is the same formulation Marlow uses to describe his sensations surrounding lies, in *Heart of Darkness:* 'There is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies—which is exactly what I hate and detest in the world—what I want to forget. It makes me miserable and sick like biting something rotten would do' (28).

destabilising or 'exotic' outside at the heart of Conrad's bourgeois living room. It is only fitting, given his biography, and given the historical specificity of London as an imperial metropolis, that Conrad chooses to represent this outside in the imagery of the oceanic.

Toward the end of the story, this sea-imagery starts to infuse the house itself, finally driving Alvan out into the street. He vacillates between a sense that everything has changed, and a knowledge that the 'polished discretion' of walls and closed doors remains unscathed (31), and that no one knows or cares about his private crisis. As he watches the servant girl lock up for the night, he notes her 'tired, young face' (69), and the threatening outside she seems to bring with her:

> the darkness of the hall seemed to cling to her black skirt, followed her, rising like a silent flood, as though the great night of the world had broken through the discreet reserve of walls, of closed doors, of curtained windows. It rose over the steps, it leaped up the walls like an angry wave. (69)

He watches this 'rising tide of impenetrable gloom,' a tide which will ultimately force him to his crisis (70), and that makes a mockery of the 'severe discretion of doors' (68). Strikingly, Conrad ties this tide to the servant girl, who has otherwise been a non-character in this story, serving only as an obscure source of observation for Alvan, who is anxious that 'the servants must not know' (57). The unsettling juxtaposition of 'tired' and 'young' brings her into the reader's focus as an individual in her own right (69), removed from the labour she provides the Herveys. She becomes the embodiment of the dangerous outside, and following her, 'the flowing tide of a tenebrous sea filled the house, seemed to swill about [Alvan's] feet, and rising unchecked, closed silently above his head' (70). On a literal level, of course, this tide of

darkness follows in her track because she is extinguishing the lights as she locks up, but Conrad's description exceeds the literal, and the servant girl becomes the symbolic bringer of the oceanic outside that engulfs and dissolves the reserve and discretion of bourgeois interior.

Responding to this flood, Alvan seeks the 'tacit complicity' of his wife to help him resist it, rushing into her room like a 'fugitive' (72). Here Conrad gives us another subtle yet important delayed decoding: at first there is dazzling light, and then, 'as if detached and floating in it,' Alvan sees 'the head of a woman' (72). The simple explanation is that he has rushed into a brilliantly lit room from the darkness of the hall, and that his wife has jumped up as he entered, but the effect of the description is to implicate her in the destructive tide, and to refuse Alvan the succour and escape that he seeks.

Conrad's relation to this early story was ambivalent, and he calls it, in his author's note to *Tales of Unrest*, a 'left-handed production' (7). At the same time, it anticipates much of his more mature work, in that he renders a complex 'apparatus of analysis' in a text that 'consists for the most part of physical impressions' (7). The phenomena Conrad connects with these impressions 'of sound and sight' are remarkably externalised—they are not of the interior, but read like a catalogue of Benjamin's urban impressions: 'railway station, streets, a trotting horse, reflections in mirrors and so on' (7). The closest we get to the interior is in the mirroring reflections, but these, too, are alienating, externalising. In Benjamin's terms, they bring the exterior into the interior.[23] Conrad combines this concatenation of impressions with

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[23] See especially Benjamin's ‘Convolutes’ on 'Mirrors' (and recall the mirrors that pervade the drawing room of *The Return*):

> Brittle, too, are the mosaic thresholds that lead you, in the style of the old restaurants of the Palais-Royal, to a "Parisian dinner" for five francs; they mount boldly to a glass door, but you can hardly believe that behind this door is really a restaurant. The glass door adjacent promises a "Petit Casino" and allows a glimpse of a ticket booth and the prices of seats; but were you to open it—would it open into anything?

what he calls 'a sublimated description of a desirable middle-class town-residence' and notes how this particular combination 'somehow manages to produce a sinister effect' (7-8). A large degree of this sinisterness is produced precisely by the invasion of the 'desirable middle-class town-residence' (7-8), along with its feeling of fragility and unreality, with the hard physical impressions of the outside, which intrude into Alvan's anaesthetised existence, and shock him out of his complacency.

It is characteristic of Conrad, however, that there is no final 'something' to be got at beyond this complacency. Alvan's awakening rings as hollow as his anaesthesia, and clichés of 'love' (64-65) and 'the gift' (67) become the ideals that render the discretion of walls and closed curtains intolerable. The flood of darkness is too intolerable, and too ineffable, and Alvan's encounter with it has to be packaged into more comprehensible terms, making the conclusion of the story inherently unsatisfactory. Similar strivings toward grander ideals or toward some Idea are rendered more successfully (although perhaps never entirely) in texts like *Heart of Darkness* and *The Nigger of the Narcissus*,[24] but the 'attempt,' as Conrad calls it, of *The Return* is their fascinating precursor (*Tales of Unrest* 7). For the purposes of my argument that Conrad's cities are watery, oceanic spaces, inseperable from the maritime networks that support them, it is particularly fascinating for the fact that the 'destructive element' of the sea lingers in the margins of Conrad's most oceanless text, and indeed, spills

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> Instead of entering the space of a theatre, wouldn't you be stepping down to the street? Where doors and walls are made of mirrors, there is no telling outside from in. (537)

[24] We may think, for example, of Mr Kurtz's nihilistic vision, 'The horror! The horror!' (74), and of the idealised community or 'brotherhood of the sea' we find in *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (26). Ian Watt and others have convincingly dismantled this idealised community, however, with Jocelyn Baines wondering why 'Conrad should have declared his wish "to enshrine my old chums in a decent edifice" and then put a curse on the edifice' (186). See Watt, 'Solidarity in *The Nigger of the Narcissus*,' pp. 94-120.

over these margins to flood the reader with 'a sort of dismal' and unsatisfactory 'wonder' (*Tales of Unrest* 7)

TIME THAT WASHES, FLOODS, AND DROWNS

As I have shown, in Conrad and in Woolf, urban representations often smack of the sea. It is my contention that even the seeming commonplaces they deploy like the ebb and flow of time, the surging of a crowd, or a sea of roofs and tiles bear further looking into. As passing metaphors nestled within otherwise urban texts, they are easy to ignore, but they hint at the ways in which the modern imperial metropolis is shaped, supported, and interpenetrated by the maritime networks it proliferates. In this section, I turn to a specific aspect of these authors' watery urban representations: the description of urban time. I will show how experiences of temporality within modernity, in Conrad and Woolf, are portrayed through metaphors of flux, flooding, and drowning.

Conrad's most famous (and virtuosic) city-text is *The Secret Agent*, which, though much more sophisticated, has certain parallels to *The Return*. In the latter, the outside floods the conventional safety of one middle-class character and destroys it; in *The Secret Agent,* the domesticity and security of Winnie Verloc is exploded by the absurd death of her brother. This is what Conrad explores again and again in his fiction: the fragility of convention, and what happens when it fails. Most of his texts can be described as psychological explorations of failure (one of the reasons, beyond the adventure-story element, for the multitude of near-disasters we find in Conrad's sea stories). For this reason, there is a continuum between his sea-texts, where conventions and human life are inherently at risk from the external, elemental force of the sea (for example, in texts like *Typhoon, The Nigger of the Narcissus,*

and *The Shadow-Line*)**,** his 'exotic' texts, where the same threat is literalised by a dangerous hinterland (in texts like *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*), and his London texts, where the city itself becomes strange, hostile, and 'oceanic,' as it were.

The first thing I would like to note is that *The Secret Agent* echoes themes found in an earlier seaside short story called 'The Idiots,' published in 1896, and written while Conrad was on his honeymoon (Atkinson 113). In this strange tale, a wife is driven to kill her husband when he tries to rape her, and she ends her life drowning in the sea. Jean-Pierre Bacadou, the husband in question, is a prosperous farmer, but in his desperate efforts to produce an heir he fathers only mentally disabled children. His desperation leads to a religious turn (where he had always hated the priests he now pays for masses), religious disillusionment when the next child is also disabled, and it culminates in an assault on his wife Susan, who stabs him with a pair of scissors.

The story, which is melodramatic, uneven, and often very abrupt in its narrative transitions, is pervaded by two presences: the church and the landscape. The former structures the religious life and the hopes of the characters. The latter is their source of industry. For Jean-Pierre, this industry is in working the farm; for others, it is gathering and selling seaweed on the coast; for Susan's mother, Madame Levaille, it is quarrying granite and freighting coastal vessels with it, 'even trad[ing] with the Channel Islands' (60). Jean-Pierre cares little for the church until the birth of his third disabled child, viewing the clergy as exploitative leeches on other people's industry; in contrast, Madame Levaille is deeply religious, while also a widely respected and pragmatic businesswoman:

> After the inns that command the roads, the churches were the buildings she frequented most. Men of liberal opinions would induce small children to run into sacred edifices to see whether Madame Levaille was there, and to tell her that so-and-so was in the road waiting to speak to her about potatoes, or flour, or stones, or houses; and she would curtail her devotions, come out blinking and crossing herself into the sunshine; ready to discuss business matters in a calm, sensible way across a table in the kitchen of the inn opposite. (60)

William Atkinson argues that Madame Levaille stands as a representative of a passing age that combines work, religion, and prosperity seamlessly and without conflict (119-120). This is evidently no longer the case for Jean-Pierre Bacadou and for Susan, and the breach in this way of life is represented, Atkinson argues, in the discontinuation of their lineage in the sterility of their children (125-126). As modernity intrudes into the Breton world, there is a rupture between the religious, the social, and the realm of industry. The sea, of course, is an important vehicle for modernity, constituting a sphere of industrialisation, a motor for globalisation, and proffering the possibilities of overseas territories. This sea, which had been an important, integrated part of the Breton community, now becomes symbolically more, and gradually changes into a threatening presence, until it swallows up church and faith in its vast nothingness.

On the evening of the climactic murder, as Madame Levaille pays off her workers, the darkening landscape becomes an eerie mix of sea cliffs and church masonry, mirroring the way in which Conrad's docks blur sails and city spires:

> The sea-winds coming ashore on Stonecutter's point, fresh from the fierce turmoil of the waves, howled violently at the unmoved heaps of black boulders holding up steadily short-armed, high crosses against the tremendous rush of the invisible. (64)

The rugged landscape holds up 'high crosses' against the threatening onrush of the sea and its winds, like church steeples or like worshippers warding off evil (64). This suggestive imagery, in which the sea becomes symbolic of that which threatens a religious and social order, is further heightened when Susan, having confessed to her mother of the murder, and being repudiated by this bastion of Breton society, rushes out toward the sea:

> She ran lightly, unaware of any effort of her body. High sharp rocks that, when the bay is full, show above the glittering plain of blue water like pointed towers of submerged churches, glided past her, rushing to the land at a tremendous pace. (70)

Having run out to a sea that swallows churches and their pointed towers (though it is worth noting that the Breton community's maritime industry is also what built those very churches), Susan turns, looking back toward the land and the still-standing steeple of the church in Ploumar. She shrinks back from the emptiness and desolation of the sea and decides to face the judgement of the land instead, and to explain to 'the gentlemen in black clothes' (71), but as she makes this decision she hears 'the night or the sea seem . . . to pronounce distinctly—"Aha! I see you at last!"' (72). This, of course, is neither the night nor the sea, but the 'old African soldier' Millot, who had pursued the deranged woman as she sprinted toward the waves (72). Susan then mistakes Millot for her dead husband; his altered voice is 'a little strange . . . because of the scissors' (72). When he tries to reassure her that he is 'perfectly alive' (73), it is as though the land and all its order disowns her: she screams and falls 'as if

the islet itself had swerved aside from under her feet' (73). The water whitens with her struggles, and 'one shrill cry' seems to 'dart upwards along the perpendicular face of the rock, and soar past, straight into the high and impassive heaven' (73-74).

What is remarkable about this death scene is the way the land and the sea are set up in opposition to each other, and that this is done in order to highlight the conflict between church, heaven, and the religious order associated with the former, and the emptiness, impassiveness, and darkness associated with the latter. In this story, the sea is primarily a symbolic and atmospheric device, along with being an important feature of the landscape and the Breton economy. In addition, however, there are hints, as in the figure of Millot, of France's *Outre-mer*, of its colonies beyond the sea. Millot boasts of being an old African soldier, likely having served in the mid-nineteenth-century conquest of Algeria, a crucial and brutal event in France's entry into modernity and an imperialist economy.[25] In *The Secret Agent,* the Assistant Commissioner, who 'had been very successful in tracking and breaking up certain nefarious secret societies amongst the natives' (80), stands as a similarly dark colonial hint. It is interesting that the harbinger of Susan's death is this old soldier: on the one hand, he gestures toward a vast amount of bloodshed in France's colonisation of Africa; on the other hand, and more importantly for Conrad, he heralds the passing of this Breton *Gemeinschaft*, founded on the land and on religion. As opposed to these 'clodhoppers' (72), he defines himself in terms of his military *Gesellschaft,* auguring modernity and globalisation.[26]

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[25] For a recent account of the French invasion and colonisation of Algeria, see Jennifer E. Sessions, *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria* (2015).
[26] Ian Watt makes use of Ferdinand Tönnies' influential categories in his analysis of solidarity in *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (*Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* pp. 94-120).

In *The Secret Agent*, this globalisation is an important aspect of Mr Vladimir's 'fetish of the hour,' which 'all the bourgeoisie recognise' (29). The universalism and disinterestedness of science, he suggests, is what is sacrosanct in the modern metropolis, and he asks Mr Verloc what he thinks of 'having a go at astronomy' (29, 31). The Greenwich Observatory is an ideal target for an anarchist attack against British imperial hegemony, because, as Mr Vladimir tells Verloc: 'The whole civilised world has heard of Greenwich. The very boot-blacks in the basement of Charing Cross Station know something of it' (32). The central plot-point in the novel then, and one which Conrad makes a point of never representing save through second-hand narration, is an attempt to blow up the observatory, loosely based on an actual attempted bombing in 1894. Conrad sets his story in 1886, and, somewhat characteristically, claims to have been out of England at the time of the actual attack, and denies knowing anything about 'what was called, if I remember rightly, the "Greenwich Bomb Outrage"' (*Letters* 489). Having just signed off from his final ship, the *Adowa*, Conrad was in fact living near Victoria Station at the time (*Letters* 489, n).

As Randall Stevenson usefully outlines, as a seaman, Conrad was intimately acquainted with Greenwich Mean Time and with 'Astronomy,' both being crucial to navigation in the nineteenth century (83-84). As early as 1976, Hans van Marle conducted archival research into Conrad's Board of Trade Exams, noting that he failed his examination for his first mate's certificate on the 17th of July 1884, passing a re-examination two weeks later only marginally, and due to a kind examiner hinting at an error made (103). Conrad would also sit his examination for his master's certificate twice (Van Marle 104). The section of the examinations Conrad had trouble with were in both cases, Van Marle's research indicates, in 'Day's Work' (103, 104). This was a section of a written paper in 'Navigation and

Nautical Astronomy' required by the Marine Department and Board of Trade for both certificates, and which dealt with daily navigational practices and calculations, such as dead-reckoning or an astronomical calculation of longitude in reference to the Greenwich Observatory (Stevenson 79-80, 83).

Conrad's first academic tussles with longitudinal calculations occur in a very interesting cartographical year. As Fredric Jameson has stressed in his landmark essay 'Modernism and Imperialism,' 1884 saw the Berlin Conference, which portioned out Africa amongst various European Empires (153). Also in 1884, in Washington D.C., the Prime Meridian Conference debated standardisations in timekeeping, the reckoning of longitude, and the adoption of a prime meridian (Barrows 36). These two conferences are not as disparate as they might first seem. Adam Barrows stresses that the quest for accurate timekeeping at sea, from the Longitude Act in 1714 onward, had always been tied up with Empire, whether geographical or economic. He notes that the act shortly follows the merging of Scotland into Great Britain, and that it 'was driven by naval pressures during the thirteen-year war of Spanish succession' (5):

> Accurate global positioning thus emerged as an acute need during a time when Britain was consolidating its national power at home and fiercely competing abroad for territories and resources. Time control was a crucial element in that battle for the control over spatial positioning. (5)

The Prime Meridian Conference follows in this vein, marking the beginning of a global spatiotemporal enmeshment with Great Britain at its centre (Barrows 8), and of a new understanding of space and time as equivalent and interchangeable. The Canadian engineer

Sandford Fleming vehemently campaigned for both 'a prime meridian and a universal time,' arguing for the meridian 'to be employed as a common zero of longitude and standard of time-reckoning throughout the globe' (Barrows 37; *International Conference Held at Washington* 33). Against such a view, Jules Jansen, the director of the Observatory of Paris, posited that the meridian was something principally useful to 'geographers and navigators' (Barrows 37; *Conference* 29), rejecting the temporal implications promoted by Fleming.

By the 1884 conference, most navigation at sea had already long been conducted in reference to Greenwich, including that of the United States (Stevenson 84). A passage from Herman Melville's 1852 *Pierre: Or, The Ambiguities,* is a useful expression of the ideological stakes of Greenwich. In an extended metaphor, Melville compares 'Heaven's own Truth' to the Greenwich Observatory, in reference to which all people must set their chronometers and tell their time (247). God is, he writes, 'the great Greenwich hill and tower from which the universal meridians are far out into infinity reckoned,' and a certain rare, truth-carrying 'order of human souls' are compared to 'London sea-chronometers . . . which as the London ship floats past Greenwich down the Thames' are themselves 'accurately adjusted by Greenwich time, and if heedfully kept, will still give that same time, even though carried to the Azores' (247). He then goes on to describe the propensities of all chronometers to inaccuracy, and the adjustments that might be made upon knowing the peculiarities of each individual instrument, and recommends the same precaution in dealing with human souls (247-248). The ideological exigencies of the Greenwich model become clear, however, when Melville imagines a perfect chronometer, keeping Greenwich time without inaccuracy, being carried to China, where it

will naturally contradict Chinese local time, telling Greenwich time instead. There follow analogies between Heaven and Greenwich and between our imperfect world and China:

> the soul of man is further removed from its God and the Heavenly Truth, than the chronometer carried to China, is from Greenwich. And, as that chronometer, if at all accurate, will pronounce it to be 12 o'clock high-noon, when the China local watches say, perhaps, it is 12 o'clock midnight; so the chronometric soul, if in this world true to its great Greenwich in the other, will always, in its so-called intuitions of right and wrong, be contradicting the mere local standards and watch-maker's brains of this earth. (248)

Of course, for Melville this is no straightforward recommendation to align ourselves with Heaven's Time, and he goes on to remark how ridiculous it would be to live according to Greenwich Mean Time in China (249), but he does, in this metaphor, hit upon value judgements and a concept of British normativity that underlie the later designation of Greenwich as the First Meridian.

British time had been synchronised to Greenwich for nearly half a century by the time of the conference, and had long shaped urban life in railway schedules, public clocks, and factory timetables (Barrows 5, 8). After the 1884 conference however, the global import of Greenwich was massively extended, designated as the First Meridian not just for 'geographers and navigators,' but for all people, in its status as Time Zero (*Conference* 29). Now, Barrows writes, 'England begins to *export* British time as a commodity to an entire globe newly dependent on Greenwich precision' (8), and British modernists find themselves writing at a time when the whole world is defined in relation to Greenwich, and thus as 'spatiotemporally

enmeshed with England' (8). Barrows summarises the conjunction between literary modernism and globalising revolutions in time as follows:

> The project of using British time to dictate a new global conception of space was unique to this historical period, as standard time advocates proceeded nation by nation to integrate the world into a system of Greenwich precision. To fail to recognize this new burden on British time in the decades between 1884 and 1930 is to miss the greater significance of direct modernist references to British time as well as modernism's larger transformations of standard narrative chronology, both of which indicate an engagement with questions of paramount public concern rather than a philosophical retreat into bourgeois, private interiority. (3-4)

While I have significant reservations about the formal influence Barrows contends that these temporal revolutions had on narrative texts,[27] the early twentieth century is certainly a period in which time, and specifically Greenwich Mean Time, obtrudes into British urban life. In what follows I am indebted to Barrows and his study on modernism and standard time, *The Cosmic Time of Empire: Modern Britain and World Literature*. The point I want to stress, however, is that Greenwich Mean Time acts as a pragmatic and ideological culmination of the oceanic underpinnings and maritime saturation of the modern imperial metropolis. What is more, I contend, authors like Conrad acknowledge this urban-maritime conjunction in their representations of time and timekeeping in their texts, which become a crucial aspect of their watery metropolises. To extend Peter Galison's metaphor when he describes synchronicity in timekeeping as a 'circulating fluid of urban life' (107), I wish to stress that this circulating

[27] Stephen Kern makes a similar case in *The Culture of Time and Space.* These are conceptually very pleasing arguments, but risk giving too neat a treatment to the messy, idiosyncratic, and contradictory motivations behind the formal innovations of modernist literature

fluid seeps into the city from the sea. This is worth bearing in mind when modernist writers give us clocks and bells that lap, wash, flow, or dissolve.

In his author's note to *The Secret Agent*, Conrad calls the historical attempt to blow up the Observatory 'a blood-stained inanity of so fatuous a kind that it was impossible to fathom its origin by any reasonable or even unreasonable process of thought' (5). Though, he writes, the 'outrage could not be laid hold of mentally in any sort of way,' the fact remains that a man was 'blown to bits for nothing even remotely resembling an idea, anarchistic or other,' while the Observatory itself 'did not show as much as the faintest crack' (5). In the novel itself, the bombing is presented as a similarly senseless and ridiculous event, and Conrad goes to pains to distance the Greenwich Observatory from any political significance.[28] Mr Vladimir tells Verloc that the ideal attack of 'shocking senselessness and gratuitous blasphemy' would be to 'throw a bomb into pure mathematics' (31). The next best thing, he contends, would be to 'have a go at astronomy':

> I defy the ingenuity of journalists to persuade their public that any given member of the proletariat can have a personal grievance against astronomy. Starvation itself could hardly be dragged in there—eh? (31-32)

It is very rarely advisable to take Conrad at face value, and, as critics have shown, what journalists did in fact make of the attempted attack was far from the consternation Mr Vladimir predicts. Barrows argues that newspaper reports of the attempted bombing 'clearly indicated a public awareness that the Observatory was associated with intense political

[28] In the 1921 adaptation of the novel into a play, women at an upper-class dinner party gossip about the event: 'I can't see how it can have any connexion to politics. Those anarchists must be simply mad' (134). It is true, however, that Conrad depicts the bombing as having a political motive, as Mr Vladimir seeks to produce a national clampdown on anarchists and revolutionary groups. Greenwich Observatory, however, is selected as a target for its supposed absence of any political consequence.

controversy' (18). In fact, critics like Michael Newton and Karen Piper have shown that the Greenwich Observatory was seen as a very real potential target for terrorist attacks, and was examined in 1880 to assess its vulnerability to a dynamite explosion (Newton 141). Amid the Fenian bombings in 1885, correspondence between the Home Office and Greenwich Observatory again discusses the vulnerability of the building, evidently concerned lest it become a target for the revolutionary proponents of Home Rule (Newton 141). In a similar vein, a police guard was set up outside the building in 1915 due to reports of an alleged suffragette plot to blow up the building. An overhead conversation on a tram car had purportedly run: 'Wait till they start on the Greenwich Observatory; London, without time, will cause them to wake up' (Piper 37). Barrows, Newton, Piper, and Sven Lütticken all argue cogently that, with its status as prime meridian, Greenwich constituted a 'potent symbol of British imperial power' (Lütticken 100) and was therefore a natural target for anti-imperialist, anarchist, or suffragist revolutionary movements. As Lütticken summarises in his 2006 article:

> Ships all over the world calculated their positions with reference to the Greenwich meridian. Attacking Greenwich was therefore quite as logical [sic] as the attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon. (100)

In *The Secret Agent,* Conrad toys with this spatiotemporal authority. Greenwich remains unscathed, but the city of London, and the novel itself, in the oft-cited phrase, witnesses 'unexpected solutions of continuity, sudden holes in space and time' (69)—holes that Inspector Heat laments and blames for the impossibility of keeping an eye on all the London anarchists all the time, despite his very meticulous and sensible efforts to do so. Such holes in

time and space are an important feature of much of Conrad's writing. Time stretches and contracts, becomes elastic, breaks off in its continuity: think of Winnie stabbing Verloc, Alvan Hervey reading his wife's letter, and all the many instances of Conrad's famous delayed decoding. As I have mentioned, Barrows cogently argues that such experiments with temporality, for authors like Conrad, Woolf, and Joyce, constitute an engagement with and a disputation of the hegemony of standardised time. This does not, he is careful to clarify, amount to mere critical commonplaces about the modernist distinction between private and public time. Public time had long since been part of everyday urban life. Rather than turning away from public time, these writers' work is pervaded by it.

Barrows suggests that Conrad's alternative to the tortuous time of the urban metropolis is the communal time of labour on a ship, responding to diurnal rhythms and environmental demands (108-109). In doing so, Barrow sets up a distinction between a city shaped by a maritime economy, and a sea that offers an escape from that economy. Here I have to differ with him. The communal time on Conrad's ships, while in some ways obviously different from urban time, is more akin to time in a factory than to the diurnal rhythms of pre-industrial activities like farming. At times, he waxes lyrical about the craft and community of seamen—consider phrases like 'brotherhood of the sea' (*Nigger of the Narcissus* 26) and 'the bond of the sea' (*Heart of Darkness* 3). At others, he writes fondly about the sun on the ship's horizon (Barrows notes especially Jim's shipboard reveries about the daily course of the sun). However, it would be a stretch to argue that Conrad therefore valorises time at sea, given that, as I noted in the opening section of this chapter, Conrad troubles the idealised distinctions between land and sea as often as he sets them up. Community and craft are significant in their failure in *The Nigger of the Narcissus*; life

aboard is ruled by rigorous timekeeping and the men are divided into various watches. There is a port watch and a starboard watch (92, 73), there are dog-watches and night-watches (80). Far from following diurnal rhythms, we are told of the seamen that

> the half-hourly voice of the bells ruled their life of unceasing care. Night and day the head and shoulders of a seaman could be seen aft by the wheel, outlined high against sunshine or starlight, very steady above the stir of revolving spokes. (29)

It would be similarly difficult to argue that Conrad's sea narratives have less of the 'sudden holes in time and space' about them (*The Secret Agent* 69). One could adduce myriad examples, but the stretching and breaking of time in Jim's leap from the *Patna* is a worthy one (*Lord Jim* 85-88).

It is true, however, that throughout his oeuvre, Conrad troubles any safety or stability given the world by standard time. I turn now to the aftermath of Mr Verloc's murder, which sees Winnie mired in a threatening sea of time. The description is in some ways a virtuosic parallel to the flooding and destruction of the bourgeois interior that we saw in *The Return*, with the difference that here this flooding is represented not only in the implosion of the domestic sphere, but also in the rush of a chaotic and dangerous time that follows this implosion. As Winnie leans forward and rests on her arms on the side of the sofa, Conrad tells us that this movement was necessary 'because of the undulatory and swinging movements of the parlour, which for some time behaved as though it were at sea in a tempest' (198). Released from her responsibility of caring for her brother, and the concomitant need to submit herself to Mr Verloc, Winnie becomes for a brief moment 'a free woman with a perfection of freedom which left her nothing to desire and absolutely nothing to do,' and in

this freedom, she is 'giddy but calm' (198). In what follows, the clock, the dripping of blood, and the threatening sea become superimposed:

> Nothing moved in the parlour till Mrs Verloc raised her head slowly and looked at the clock with inquiring mistrust. She had become aware of a ticking sound in the room. It grew upon her ear, while she remembered clearly that the clock on the wall was silent, had no audible tick. What did it mean by beginning to tick so loudly all of a sudden? Its face indicated ten minutes to nine. Mrs Verloc cared nothing for time, and the ticking went on. She concluded it could not be the clock, and her sullen gaze moved along the walls, wavered, and became vague, while she strained her hearing to locate the sound. Tic, tic, tic.
>
> By the position of the body the face of Mr Verloc was not visible to Mrs Verloc, his widow. Her fine, sleepy eyes, travelling downward on the track of the sound, became contemplative on meeting a flat object of bone which protruded a little beyond the edge of the sofa. It was the handle of the domestic carving knife with nothing strange about it but its position at right angles to Mr Verloc's waistcoat and the fact that something dripped from it. Dark drops fell on the floorcloth one after another, with a sound of ticking growing fast and furious like the pulse of an insane clock. At its highest speed this ticking changed into a continuous sound of trickling. Mrs Verloc watched that transformation with shadows of anxiety coming and going on her face. It was a trickle, dark, swift, thin. . . . Blood!
>
> . . .

> With a sudden snatch at her skirts and a faint shriek she ran to the door, as if the trickle had been the first sign of a destroying flood. (199)

In the parlour, undulating like a ship in a tempest (198), the usually silent clock now obtrudes into Winnie's hearing; she checks the time, dismisses the time, searches for the source of the sound, following the lines of her murdered husband's body with her eyes (198-199). The sound becomes 'fast and furious like the pulse of an insane clock' (199), finally resolving itself from a manic ticking into a steady trickle, which Winnie at last decodes as the trickling of blood, and she runs from it as 'the first sign of a destroying flood' (199). As in *The Return*, the bourgeois dwelling that had kept out the flood, providing a safety and stability, once it implodes, is flooded by the dangerous and oceanic city, the madness and savagery that are the underside of Mr Verloc's sane 'domestic virtues' (4). Early in the novel, when he returns from his appointment with Mr Vladimir, we see Mr Verloc shrinking back from this unfriendly city, listening to the ticking of the old clock on the landing, feeling the fragility of the single pane of glass that separates the city from his domestic interior, and the single month he has to satisfy his employer (48-49). Now, at the end of the novel, the oceanic city seeps into the house as his blood trickles away, mimicking the mad ticking of the clock that threatens to let the days flow out till that month of grace is up, driving Mr Verloc to his desperate actions; it mimics too, the seconds that ticked away as Stevie approached the Greenwich Observatory—the symbolic locus of that ticking time—with a bomb in a paint can. Ironically, it is not time that kills Stevie, as he trips and detonates the bomb within five minutes of being left to himself, long before the fifteen minutes on it were up (174).

Once Winnie Verloc realises what she has done, she starts to think of its consequences, and, realising she will be hanged, resolves to throw herself into the Thames. Somewhat treacherously, the time that seemed to be running away so wildly now seems to have stopped, and Conrad draws attention to how much he has been stretching and contracting time:

> As a matter of fact, only three minutes had elapsed from the moment she had drawn the first deep, easy breath after the blow, to this moment when Mrs Verloc formed the resolution to drown herself in the Thames. But Mrs Verloc could not believe that. She seemed to have heard or read that clocks and watches always stopped at the moment of murder for the undoing of the murderer. (202)

Time resumes its role in service of societal order, and since Winnie is now a murderer, it turns against her. When Winnie staggers out into the streets, she is now part of the watery underside of the city, the oceanic wasteland of time which the orderly workings of the city, with all its domestic and industrious citizens, once kept in check. Conrad describes Winnie as though she is already drowning, swallowed by that destroying flood first heralded by the ticking of the drops of blood:

> She floundered over the doorstep head forward, arms thrown out, like a person falling over the parapet of a bridge. This entrance into the open air had a foretaste of drowning; a slimy dampness enveloped her, entered her nostrils, clung to her hair. (202)

The city streets and time itself seems to resist her agency now. She can barely move forward, floundering about and clinging onto a lamppost to steady herself; she imagines she must have

been 'staggering in that street for hours': 'I'll never get there before morning' (203). The thought of being hanged spurs her on, and she staggers on, 'but another wave of faintness overtook her like a great sea, washing away her heart clean out of her breast' (203). It is striking that Conrad chooses to represent this difficult trajectory through the city, with its concomitant impossibly sticky time, which refuses to let Winnie make any progress, in the image of the sea. Ultimately, Winnie is of course taken in hand by Comrade Ossipon, who, as Barrows points out, navigates time with ease, and in a series of deft calculations of minutes and seconds, working around the 'shortcomings of timetables' (212), he abandons her on a train and leaves with her money (Barrows 110). Winnie ends her life throwing herself from a cross-channel ferry, and thus, aptly, given the social pariah she has become, she drowns at sea.

I have suggested that there is an aptness to Galison's choice to describe the synchronous timekeeping of the modern city as the 'circulating fluid of modern life' (107), and argued that we would do well to remember standardised timekeeping's origins and incredible importance in the imperial city's maritime economy. That is, in the hackneyed image of the Thames (and the wider maritime world) as the lifeblood of London, we have a parallel to Galison's 'circulating fluid' (107): it is maritime traffic that prompted the global standardisation of timekeeping with reference to its greatest imperial city. As when Winnie Verloc strikes her fatal blow, blood, time, and water become indistinguishable.

In the writings of Woolf, we find the same constellation of time, the sea, social order, and death. In *Jacob's Room,* Woolf describes how

> The battleships ray out over the North Sea, keeping their stations accurately apart. At a given signal all the guns are trained on a target which (the master gunner counts the seconds, watch in hand—at the sixth he looks up) flames into splinters. With equal nonchalance a dozen young men in the prime of life descend with composed faces into the depths of the sea; and there impassively (though with perfect mastery of machinery) suffocate uncomplainingly together. (254)

Perfect time accuracy, maritime power, and the contesting of that power in the destruction of war all combine here, and the drowning men become macabre mirror-images of the machinery of the watch itself. Together with a range of other economic and industrial activities, such deaths, Woolf writes bitterly, 'are the strokes which oar the world forward' (254-255):

> And they are dealt by men as smoothly sculptured as the impassive policeman at Ludgate Circus . . . When his right arm rises, all the force in his veins flows straight from shoulder to finger-tips; not an ounce is diverted into sudden impulses, sentimental regrets, wire-drawn distinctions. The buses punctually stop. (255)

All is efficient and punctual, as sanctioned and required by Greenwich. In her *Freedom's Empire,* Laura Doyle explores how clocks, in Woolf, 'express the sea power that buoys British empire and surges through the lives of the characters' (424). This applies to character after character in Woolf, from Jacob Flanders to Mrs Dalloway, from Septimus Smith to Andrew Ramsay. In the 'Time Passes' section of *To the Lighthouse,* for example, the terse notice of Andrew's death in war is followed by the terse observation that 'those who had gone down to pace the beach' might at that season see, among the rich imagery of the seashore, a

'silent apparition of an ashen-coloured ship,' which, vanishing, leaves 'a purplish stain upon the bland surface of the sea as if something had boiled and bled, invisibly, beneath' (127).

This maritime dimension is similarly present in *Mrs Dalloway*, where 'the sound of Big Ben flood[s] Clarissa's drawing room' (105), and later yet again 'flood[s] the room with its melancholy wave; which recede[s], and gather[s] itself together to fall once more' (105). The rhythms and sounds of urban timekeeping thus echo the crash and fall of waves and sea, and remind the reader of their maritime underpinnings. So too the smaller bells of St Margaret follow those of Big Ben, 'flooding and lapping and dancing in on the wake of that solemn stroke which lay flat like a bar of gold on the sea' (114). In the by-waters of this novel and its temporal rhythms, Septimus, returned from the war, is 'an outcast, who gazed back at the inhabited regions, who lay, like a drowned sailor, on the shore of the world' (83). The city has done with him, and like the maddened Winnie, drowning in its enveloping sea, the 'mad' Septimus too will figuratively drown, unable to live according to Dr Bradshaw's laws of Proportion and Conversion, the two laws of the British Empire (Conversion, we are told, is engaged in her redemptive work 'in the heat and sands of India, the mud and swamp of Africa, the purlieus of London') (90).

In Woolf's and Conrad's city texts, we are presented with characters who face the challenge of trying to live in a strange, watery modernity. These texts differ from their nineteenth-century predecessors in their heightened sense of crisis: the city is not only watery, as it is in Dickens, but it is one that floods, threatening to wash away comfortably established enclaves like Mr Verloc's domestic sphere or Alvan Hervey's artistically decorated home. The options facing these characters are, on the one hand, to drown—their bodies washing up in

sordid bywaters like Winnie or like Septimus Smith—or to transform into something that can live and survive in the wash of the oceanic city. There is another option too, as we shall see in the writings of Eliot and Pound: to master the sea, contesting its destructive powers and bending those to the vitalisation of some greater end.

When, midway through *The Secret Agent*, the Assistant Commissioner of Police descends into the city in pursuit of more information on the Greenwich bombing, Conrad describes his journey in terms similar to the ones we have seen above:

> His descent into the street was like the descent into a slimy aquarium from which the water had been run off. A murky, gloomy dampness enveloped him. The walls of the houses were wet, the mud of the roadway glistened with an effect of phosphorescence, and when he emerged into the Strand out of a narrow street by the side of Charing Cross Station the genius of the locality assimilated him. He might have been but one more of the queer foreign fish that can be seen of an evening about there flitting round the dark corners. (114)

What is striking here, however, is that this is not the same representation of floundering through a sea or even of drowning that we saw in characters like Winnie Verloc or Septimus Smith. Instead, here, a metamorphosis takes place, and the Assistant Commissioner, though submerged in the watery city, himself becomes a sea creature, one of the 'queer foreign fish' that dart around this neighbourhood (114). This too, is a distinctly urban scene, but it differs significantly from those I have discussed above, and it highlights the relationship between the Assistant Commissioner and the city he moves within—what about him makes him so eerily adaptable? In the following chapter, I will explore similar metamorphoses in the works of

H.D. and Woolf, paying specific attention to that nexus of interaction between the individual subjectivity and the environment of modernity. As we shall see, the space of the aquarium becomes an amenable image to explore this interaction.

CHAPTER 2

AQUARIUMS AND MARINE PERCEPTION IN VIRGINIA WOOLF AND H.D.

In 1872, Anton Dohrn founded the *Stazione Zoologica di Napoli,* which remains to this day a leading research centre in marine biology. It was the scene, in the late nineteenth century, of experiments by Carl von Hess and Karl von Frisch on colour vision in fish and cephalopods (Dröscher 618). Between 1890 and 1892, Dohrn would also collaborate with the French physiologist Étienne-Jules Marey, providing him with specimens to conduct experiments on the movement of marine animals, including jellyfish and octopuses (Gaudiosi 181-182). Drawing on advancements in photography-related chemistry in the preceding decade, Marey was able to obtain a chronophotographic record of the locomotion of these animals, seen in silhouette as light passed through their tanks and their shapes were outlined against a strip of moveable paper (Gaudiosi 182). Marey's images, published in *La Nature*, inspired the Lumière brothers in the creation of their 1895 short film *L'Aquarium*.[29] An art enthusiast as well as a scientist, Dorhn employed the artists Hans von Marées and Adolf von Hildebrand to produce several works of art for display at the *Stazione Zoologica* (Fehrenbach 96-97). This appreciation for both art and science also formed the basis of Dohrn's friendship with the zoologist and illustrator Ernst Haeckel (Groeben 5), whose elaborate and intricate hand drawn and coloured lithographs of marine animals notably influenced art nouveau.[30] The *Stazione Zoologica* opened to the public as an aquarium in 1874.

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[29] For more on the relation between the Lumières and Marey see Gaudiosi's 'Marey's Aquarium: The Underwater World and the Archaeology of Cinema' in *Underwater Worlds* (168-188). For the Lumiere brothers' acknowledgment of their debt to Marey, see their *Notice sur le Cinématographe Lumière* in 1897.

[30] See, for example, David Irwin's 'Back to Nature: The Flowering of Art Nouveau.'

The *Stazione Zoologica* exemplifies the nexus of art, science, and marine life that characterises the development of public aquariums and advances in marine biology in the latter half of the nineteenth century.[31] Yet despite this overlap, work on the relationship between visual culture and marine biology is surprisingly sparse in Anglo-American scholarship. There have been considerable recent publications on the popularisation of marine biology and on the aquarium craze in the Victorian Era.[32] However, only in the past five years have continental critics drawn attention to the influence of the aquarium and marine illustrations on visual art, and particularly cinema.[33] Recent works by Claire Nettleton, Caroline Hovanec, and Catherine Setz all examine the ways in which experimental writers use animal metaphorics and draw on contemporary zoology to figure modern subjectivity, and Setz and Hovanec both contend that these uses of the non-human animal constitute another example of modernism's return to the primitive. However, there has been no study that focuses primarily on marine biology or on the markedly gendered nature of the attention it received in the early twentieth century, nor has the connection been made between metaphors of marine animals and optics or visual culture. Christina Walter has explored modernist engagements with optical science in relation to subjectivity and its complex constructions by modernist writers (she ties the fraught interrogation of subjectivity to discourses surrounding 'impersonality'). She does not, however, connect writers' attention to

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[31] For more on the *Stazione Zoologica di Napoli* see Irmgard Müller and Christiane Groeber *Die Geschichte der Zoolischen Station in Neapel der Gründung durch Anton Dohrn (1872) bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg und ihre Bedeutung für die Entwicklung der modernen biologischen Wissenschaften;* Groeben and Müller (eds) *The Naples Zoological Station at the time of Anton Dohrn;* Julius Kollman 'Die Cephalopoden der zoologische Station des Dr Dohrn'

[32] See Natascha Adamowky, *The Mysterious Science of the Sea*: 1775-1943 (2015); Anthony Adler, *Neptune's Laboratory: Fantasy, Fear, and Science at Sea* (2019); Bernd Brunner, *The Ocean at Home: An Illustrated History of the Aquarium* (2005).

[33] These include Natascha Adamowsky's *Unter Wasser Über Wasser* and Massimilliano Gaudiosi's *Lo Schermo e l'acquario.*

the optical with contemporary interests in zoology and marine biology. A 2019 collection of essays edited by Will Abberley, *Underwater Worlds: Submerged Visions in Science and Culture* does indeed address the particular interrelation between vision, the submarine, science, and art, including a pertinent chapter by Kelly Bushnell on Tennyson's 'Kraken' and the dual visual worlds of the aquarium and the microscope, and another by Gaudiosi on the development of cinema as it relates to the 'screens' and visual tableaux of aquarium tanks. However, the collection pays no attention to the many significant modernist incarnations of these tropes, skipping from the nineteenth century to contemporary films like *The Cove* (2009) and *Blackfish* (2013).

This chapter situates itself at the interstices of the above works. My argument is that major women modernists wrote from within this nexus of marine biology, visual culture, and optical science to interrogate the subjectivity and the gendering of vision—interrogations that stand in contrast to an analogous but far more monologic sort of theorising found in the largely masculine modernist manifestos. This fruitful connectedness between optics, marine science, and subjectivity has not yet been studied in relation to modernist writing, nor has the specific gendering of what I will call 'marine perception' been acknowledged.

By marine perception I mean to denote a specific tendency in some major women modernists to draw on the scientific and observational traditions of the nineteenth century—its systematic cataloguing and defining—and to use these approaches from the fields of optics and marine biology to interrogate the modern subject, exploring the functioning and fluctuating of the individual consciousness within the context of modernity.

In what follows I will read some of these marine modes of perception in, primarily, H.D. and Virginia Woolf. Contrasting these authors with male writers like Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis and T.S. Eliot, I will pay attention to the feminine gendering of the sea, the subconscious, and the primitive, in contrast to the abstraction and etiolation of theory and rationalist modes of thought. Woolf's and H.D.'s emphasis on immersion rather than etiolation, and on the liquid boundaries of individuality, comes to light most clearly when other subjects border and bleed into the individual observer. This helps to explain why the modern metropolis we studied in the previous chapter should so often be represented as an underwater world, especially as seen through the eyes of the flâneur, and I will argue that the submarine world becomes a particularly apt image through which to evoke the immersion of the observing individual in the flux of other subjectivities. It is, of course, impossible to ignore the presence of the sea and of water more generally in writers like Woolf and H.D.. In the last chapter, for example, I discussed Woolf's overt depictions of the influence of maritime trade on the city, and her representations of destructive floods of urban time. In this chapter, however, I argue that it is the submarine that provides these authors with a new vocabulary for writing about modern subjectivity.

In the first section, I summarise the associations with the primordial and the preconscious that accompany aquariums and marine creatures, and highlight, by contrast, the modernity that enables and forms the backdrop for these primordial spectacles. I then turn, in the second section, to narratives of marine monstrosity and inversion that characterised popular imaginings of marine animals like octopuses and jellyfish, and modernist deployments of these animals to figure passivity, femininity, or a degenerate masculinity. In the third section, I examine Woolf's anemones and oysters, arguing that they become positive

metaphors for perception and sensual embodiment, and stand in contrast to traditional images that figure thinking or perception as fishing or diving. I then turn, in the fourth section, to H.D.'s visionary jellyfish, in *Notes on Thought and Vision* and *Tribute to Freud* (especially 'Advent'), emphasising the lens-like qualities she gives them, before moving on to the sapphic dimensions of this perception in H.D.'s sensual octopuses. In the penultimate section of this chapter, I argue that the celebrated immersion and ego-dissolution that these women modernists' marine animals often figure also has a darker side, reflected in the threat of mental breakdown and illness that accompany this mode of subjectivity. Finally, in closing, I trace a specific instance of this breakdown and disintegration in the urban destruction of the London Blitz, and the stress this public trauma placed on individual subjectivities; I show how here too, marine perception becomes an efficacious and rich metaphorics through which authors might interrogate the individual, its environment, and the creative or perilous interpenetration between the two.

THE AQUARIUM: PRIMORDIAL SPECTACLE IN THE MODERN METROPOLIS

The term 'aquarium' was coined in 1854 by the marine biologist Philip Henry Gosse, in his *The Aquarium: Unveiling the Wonders of the Deep Sea.* In the first half of the century, advances in plate glass and cast iron technology, the development of extensive railway systems, and experiments in the oxygenation of water by chemist Robert Warington all fed into and facilitated the invention of these 'fish houses' (Brunner 36-37, 99). A display at the Great Exhibition in 1951 and the opening of the first public aquarium by Gosse in the London Zoo at Regent's Park in 1853 sparked a brief aquarium craze, and home aquariums were sold by William Alfred Lloyd's warehouse on Portland Road in London, quite near the zoo

(Adamowsky 120; Brunner 55). Lloyd would later be responsible for supplying the glass tanks for the *Stazione Zoologica di Napoli* (Adamowsky 120).[34] Further public aquariums would open in Paris and Vienna (both in 1860), Berlin (1869), and Brighton (1872).

Public response to aquariums registered a fascination with this strange and primordial spectacle. Théophile Gautier wrote that the London 'Fish House' seemed to him a magical 'ichthyological drama in fourteen acts moving past' (297). The *Stazione Zoologica* attracted artists as diverse as Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee, Arnold Böcklin, as well as Igor Stravinsky, and writers like Richard Aldington and H.D. (Adamowsky 143). Authors Joris-Karl Huysmans and Jules Laforgue both wrote prose poems about the Berlin Aquarium, both depicting it as a primordial space, a realm of the unconscious or preconscious, the birthplace of dreams and nightmares. Laforgue's aquarium is '*le pays où fleurit le Silence*' [the land where Silence blossoms],[35] which costs a franc to enter—'*moins cher, mais aussi moins couru que l'Opéra*' [less expenisve and less busy that the opera] (*Oeuvres II*, 501). Elsewhere, he describes the 'ideal' marine animals of Berlin aquarium: '*ces éponges, ces astéries, ces plasmas dans le silence opaque et frais, tout au rêve, de l'eau* [these sponges, these starfish, these plasmas in the opaque and fresh silence, all in the dream of water] (*Oeuvres III,* 35). In his *Les Travailleurs de la Mer,* partly responsible for the popularisation of the octopus as 'devil-fish,' Victor Hugo writes that 'the dream-world is the Aquarium of Night' (27). This metaphorical nexus is of course partly due to a concurrence between the birth of psychology and Darwinian evolution, alongside increasing exploration of the deep sea and discoveries of new marine species. The development of the aquarium enabled ordinary people to come face to

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[34] For more on the history and popularisation of the aquarium, see Bernd Brunner's *The Ocean at Home: an Illustrated History of the Aquarium.*

[35] All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

face with a representation of the underwater world and to experience first-hand the spaces described by Jules Michelet in *La Mer:*

> *l'esprit, sous ces apparences flottantes d'une fantastique féerie, témoigne de son premier réveil. C'est une aube, c'est une aurore. Par les couleurs éclatantes, les nacres ou les émaux, il dit le songe de la nuit et la pensée du jour qui vient. Pensée! Osons-nous dire ce mot? Non, c'est un songe, un rêve encore, mais qui peu à peu s'éclaircit, comme les rêves du matin.* (138)
>
> [The mind, amid the floating apparitions of a fantastic fairytale, witnesses its first awakening. It is a dawn, it is a sunrise. In explosive colours, pearls, or enamels, it tells the dream of the night and the reason of the day that is coming. Reason! Dare we use this word? No, it is still a dream, but little by little it is becoming clearer, like morning dreams]

Michelet's description evokes the sea as the birthplace of primordial life; it is the origin of our evolutionary step into consciousness, the realm of the preconscious. At the same time, the aquariums that made marine life accessible to the public are the product of modernity, and every aspect of their construction—the cast iron and plate glass used for the tanks, the railways that could speedily transport salt water and marine specimens, the urban population that was its audience—fixes its emergence in the historic specificity of the modern metropolis.[36]

With this marked urban modernity in mind, certain passages from Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* are illuminating. In the last chapter, I traced Benjamin's acknowledgements

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[36] For more on the development of the public aquarium in relation to the metropolis, see Adamowsky.

of how the city and the sea blur together in modern architecture, in the poetry of Baudelaire and in the etchings of Geryon. I argued that we should read the maritime world as one of Benjamin's expressive economic facts that become a sublimated aesthetic presence in the modern metropolis. A distinct aspect of the maritime interpenetration with the urban comes to light in the spectacle of the aquarium, which combines the primordial and the unconscious with the height of modernity, in a sort of microcosmic metaphor for the way in which the modern metropolis is a palimpsest of the now and of ruins and spectres of the past. In the same way that Freud uses the metaphor of the archaeological strata of Rome for the layers of history in the individual psyche, for Benjamin the metropolis likewise preserves the now with relics and traumas from its past. The aquarium offers a metaphorics through which to figure this uncanniness, confronting the viewer with spectacular, alien-looking forms that problematise and bring into focus questions of subjectivity and perception. It is an image Benjamin makes use of more than once in his *Arcades Project.* Amidst his Convolutes on mirrors, this metaphor finds its most extended expression when he draws on the writings of Carl Gerstäcker and Louis Aragon. Like the aquariums, the arcades too are a product of the plate glass and cast iron of modernity, and Benjamin cites Aragon to describe the light in these passages as

> A glaucous gleam, seemingly filtered through deep water, with the special quality of pale brilliance of a leg suddenly revealed under a lifted skirt. The great American passion for city planning, imported into Paris by a prefect of police during the Second Empire and now being applied to the task of redrawing the map of our capital in straight lines, will soon spell the doom of these human aquariums. Although the life

> that originally quickened them has drained away, they deserve, nevertheless, to be regarded as the secret repositories of several modern myths (539)

In a way, the arcades, through the image of the aquarium, become symptomatic of a remnant past that still exerts its influence. The arcades are the repositories of several secret modern myths, the expression of a modern collective unconsciousness. Benjamin explores this more fully in his engagement with Friedrich Gerstäcker's 1921 novel *Die versunkene Stadt*, in which the young Eduard Merkfeld goes in search of a legendary sunken city, banished to the seafloor because of its great iniquity. Benjamin cites extensively from this novel. Gerstäcker's city is washed through by a 'green, transparent tide,' houses are 'overgrown with shells and seaweed' and each adorned with a 'coral tree' outside its doorstep, whilst 'polyps with spreading arms reached in their luxuriance high above the windows' (539-540). Nor are the streets of this underwater city abandoned: 'there, up and down, swam the queerest fish, often nearly human in appearance,' a vision that might well have come from a 'book of prehistoric images' (539). Even the modernity, the 'utter pomp and splendour of gas lighting,' the 'vitreous radiance of the globes of the street lights,' becomes incorporated into the underwater city in 'broad-brimmed, glassy-looking medusas' that give off a phosphorescent light with increasing intensity as darkness descends' (540). Benjamin analyses this striking description as a creative literary 'sublimation' of the repressed material found in the phenomenon of the arcades. He argues that if we agree that 'a work of literature, an imaginative composition, could arise from repressed economic contents in the consciousness of a collective, as Freud says it can from the sexual contents in an individual consciousness,' then Gerstäcker's

underwater city is exactly that: a symptomatic outlet for the repressed and forgotten 'modern myths' and psychic/economic contents of the metropolis (540).

For Benjamin, the sinuous and highly ornamental *Jungendstil* is a hearkening back to these primordial contents. The strongly negative description he cites from Paul Morand anticipates some of the unfavourable marine descriptors which writers like Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound would later apply to the feminine. Morand decries the 'serpentine effect of the octopus style, of green, poorly fired ceramics, of lines forced and stretched into tentacular ligaments, of matter tortured for no good reason' (547). The octopus becomes an image for the monstrous, the formless, the material, and the visceral. Remarkably, modernity is cited here as something that should induce these primitive forms to be left behind. Morand complains specifically that 'in an era of light and electricity, what triumphs is the aquarium, the greenish, the submarine, the hybrid, the poisonous' (548-549). The primordial is contrasted to the advancement suggested by 'light and electricity' (548). Flux and hybridity threaten the sharp definitions Morand prefers: straight lines are tortured into tentacles.

PERVERSE POLYPS: THE JELLYFISH OF THE FEMININE AND THE OCTOPUS OF INVERSION

Morand's description of tentacular ligaments, primordial forms, 'the greenish, the submarine' and the poisonous resonates uncannily with similar descriptions applied both to the feminine and to degenerate masculinity, particularly homosexuality. Laforgue's aquarium, too, is described in sexual, feminine terms: he writes of its '*flore foetale et claustrale*' [claustral and foetal flora] and strikingly describes the tanks as

> *gynécées plus perdus, laboratoires d'expériences plus mystérieuses, ou flottent en ascensions, oh! elles vont se déchirer! des bulles peut-être enceintes, des bulles de gélatine bleuâtre contractées d'un même et perpétual spasme diaphane.* (502)
>
> [yet more hidden gynaeciums, yet more mysterious laboratories of experiences, where floating in ascensions—oh! they will tear!—bubbles which are perhaps pregnant, bubbles of bluish gelatin contracted by a constant and perpetual diaphanous spasm].

More specifically, Bushnell describes the nineteenth-century reaction to polyps—any tentacled marine creature, from barnacles to octopuses—as a horrified fascination. In particular, it is the inversion and sexual promiscuity of these animals that preoccupied their Victorian audience. Bushnell writes that

> the form of the polypus becomes a symbol for sexual grotesqueness and a creature that threatens the foundations of polite taxonomy with its anthropomorphized, literal and figurative backwardness: it is "upside-down," "head-footed," an unchanged inhabitant of the primordial monster-filled seas, a primitive, readily breeding creature whose mouth, genitals, and appendages are situated in indelicate proximity. (57)

That is, these marine creatures are grotesque inverts both in terms of physiognomy—legs upside-down, genitals and digestive organs blurring with mouths—and in terms of breeding: many are hermaphroditic or reproduce asexually. In an 1826 letter, for example, Samuel Taylor Coleridge accuses nature of being a 'wily long-breathed old witch, tough-lived as a turtle and divisible as the polyp, repullalative in a thousand snips and cuttings' (*Volume IV*, 496, cited in Bushnell 59) and elsewhere he writes of his intention to proliferate his

publications that he 'will divide them polypus-wise, so that the first Half should get a new Tail of its own, and the latter a new Head' (*Volume III*, 235; cited in Bushnell 59). This grotesque reproducibility and perverse organisation of organs made polyps highly suitable for figuring degeneration and monstrosity. Rebecca Stott notes that, among his source material for *Dracula,* Bram Stoker lists two books by Henry Lee, who sometimes worked as a naturalist at the Brighton Aquarium (305). These books, *Sea Fables Explained* and *Sea Monsters Unmasked* partake in what Stott calls 'narratives of marine monstrosity' (305). If these marine creatures were indeed part of the inspiration for Stoker's famous figure of degeneracy, this was not material limited to fictional inspiration: Stott notes a pervasive anxiety around masculinity in writers like Charles Darwin and George Henry Lewes, and traces, in their letters and reviews, a preoccupation with the sex and reproduction of barnacles and marine invertebrates, particularly such unisexual or hermaphroditic species where males seemed to have devolved into nothing more than sacs of sperm parasitically attached to the female (315).

An awareness of this marine monstrosity is strongly linked to the improvement and popularisation of microscopy during the nineteenth century. In her *Victorian Glassworlds*, Isobel Armstrong argues that magnification 'intensified the shock' of the feeding and breeding habits of marine animalcules, troubling nineteenth-century taxonomies by their strange bodily forms and 'transgressive sexual reproduction': 'the hermaphrodite and the hybrid,' she argues, 'carried the Grotesque and its monstrous jouissance into biology' (318). Natural science, optics, and cultural data thus combine to make polyps into metaphors for excess, transgression, or degeneracy.

This is a metaphorics that persists into twentieth-century modernism. In Wyndham Lewis' *Tarr* the eponymous character muses on a dividing line in development between the female and more advanced forms: 'God was man: the woman was a lower form of life. Everything was female to begin with. A jellyfish diffuseness spread itself and gaped on the beds and in the *bas-fonds* of everything' (334). People below this developmental line have 'jellyfish attributes' like 'a lack of energy,' a 'permanently mesmeric state,' and 'almost purely emotional reactions' (334). We will pay more attention to Eliot's submarine aesthetics in the following chapter, but it is worth noting here that his 1935 *Murder in the Cathedral* evinces a deep horror of the bodies, movements, textures, and reproducibility of marine animals:

> I have eaten
>
> Smooth creatures still living, with the strong salt taste of living things under sea; I have tasted
>
> The living lobster, the crab, the oyster, the whelk and the prawn; and they live and spawn in my bowels, and my bowels dissolve in the light of dawn. (64)

Like Lewis with his mesmeric jellyfish, Eliot stresses the passivity of sponges and anemones: 'I have lain on the floor of the sea and breathed with the breathing of the sea-anemone, swallowed with ingurgitation of the sponge' (*Murder in the Cathedral* 64). In 1919, Conrad Aiken dismissed the poetry of Mina Loy as 'tentacular quiverings,' encouraging readers to turn their attention instead to the masculine verse of T.S. Eliot and Wallace Stevens (162). So too Ezra Pound, in a passage that draws on Remy de Gourmont's philosophy of love, where the feminine is the passive material waiting to be infused by the active, creative masculine energy: 'TAN AOIDAN / Chiefest of these the second, the female / Is an element, the female / Is a chaos / An octopus / A biological process / and we seek to fulfill' (144). TAN AOIDAN

means 'the process' brought about by this combination of male and female. Pound's lines repeat the hackneyed trope of the feminine as an unformed chaos, but it is interesting that this fecundity is figured through the image of an octopus.

Instructively, the octopus, which has been used as an image for various powers and forms of greed and avarice, has also been a popular image for sexual excess and inversion. In the nineteenth century, the French author Willy (Henry Gauthier-Villars) issued the disavowal, in *Ersatz,* via his autobiographical character Marc Renneval, that 'I am sure now never to become the prey of the octopus of inversion, whose tentacles I do not fear' (263). In *Souvenirs*, he repeats this disavowal: 'as far as I am concerned, I shall never be the prey of the octopus of Homosexuality, whose . . . tentacles I disdain' (141). These associations lasted long into the twentieth century. In a parliamentary debate in the House of Lords in 1957, for example, the Bishop of Rochester argued that 'homosexuals are predators in matters of sex.. . . It is something that spreads like the plague. Men are sucked in and held on to as it were by an octopus of corruption' (United Kingdom, Parl. Debates 797). In the same year, Arthur Guy Mathews, a freelance investigator and armchair psychologist, wrote in his *Is Homosexuality a Menace?* that 'the female who is held captive by a lesbian soon becomes a mental and physical wreck, who suffers from the pangs of hell and remorse, but like a drug addict she is unable to ward off the repeated advances made toward her by the octopus-like creature who continually saps her strength' (20).

In contrast, tentacles and inchoate forms become positive metaphors for sexuality and creativity in writers like H.D. and Woolf.[37] As we shall see, they do not do away with the

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[37] Woolf is interesting in that her polyps are sometimes the same negatively described ones we find in male authors. On the 3rd of October 1924, she writes scathingly to Jacques Raverat: 'Its true that all my lovers were of the simplest type; and could only flush and fade crudely like sea anemones bathed now blue, now red' (*Letters*

bodily connotations of these animals but embrace them, or incorporate them in constellations that blend the sapphic with artistic perception. So, in H.D.'s *HERmione*, Her's 'octopus intelligence' finds its fullest expression in her relationship with Fayne Rabb (72). So, too, in *Advent*, her 'jelly-fish experience' needs the presence of Bryher in order to unfold (116). This particular polyp, however, adds connotations of transparency, fragility, and beauty to those of monstrousness and inversion. It too has the tentacles, the grotesque form, and the resistance to personification and anthropomorphic consciousness of the octopus or anemone. But, in addition, it does not require an excessive leap to compare the curvature, texture, and translucence of a jellyfish to that of an eye, as indeed H.D. does, making these animals her visionary exemplars of maritime perception in *Notes on Thought and Vision.* In *Victorian Glassworlds,* Armstrong argues that the suspicion of distortion and monstrosity opened up to nineteenth-century scientists by the lenses of their microscopes was also balanced by a joyous fascination that she calls *crystalphilia* (329). Two sides of the same coin, the fear of distortion and the 'longing for transparent legibility,' exist together in the microscopic space, and so too, with simultaneous attraction and repulsion, in the jellyfish (329).

This fascination is reflected in public interest in jellyfish in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Juli Berwald notes that '[s]ome of the most preeminent thinkers of that

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III 136, no. 1501). Even more bitingly, she describes an unfortunately fecund and contented middle-class woman in a diary entry on the 31st of January 1920:

> she has spread more widely; is even more settled into a kind of whitish sediment; a sort of indecency to me in her passive gloating contentment in the arm chair opposite; like some natural function, performing automatically—a jelly fish—without volition, yet with terrifying potentiality. She breaks off into young on the least provocation. (*Diary II* 15)

Elsewhere, the woman poet Fredegond Shove is described as a 'poor silver fish enveloped by a mass of jelly fish'—the exploitative Alix Sargant Florence, who is trying to move in with her (*Letters II* 210, no. 903). At the same time, as we shall see, Woolf also engages in a positive and celebratory marine metaphorics. It is perhaps possible to read her negative marine metaphorics as evidence of her fraught relationship to her own embodiment.

time studied jellyfish, including, of course, Charles Darwin, but also the founder of Harvard's zoology museum, Louis Agassiz, and *Brave New World* author Aldous Huxley' (21). Arthur Conan Doyle featured a jellyfish as the murderer in 'The Adventure of the Lion's Mane'; Emperor Hirohito collected and meticulously described jellyfish specimens; Prince Albert I of Monaco encouraged the future Nobel Prize-winning Charles Richet to study the venom of the Portuguese man o' war (Berwald 21-22). Berwald summarises that 'twice as many comb jelly species were identified between 1900 and 1910 as in any other decade before or since,' and that 'more of a kind of jellyfish called hydrozoa were identified during that same decade than any other time in history' (22). The marine biologist Steve Haddock therefore calls the turn of the twentieth century 'a golden age of gelata' (549). It is the scientist Louis Agassiz who perhaps best encapsulates the draw and wonder of these marine animals, however. The biographer Christopher Irmscher describes Agassiz staring for hours, motionless and by candlelight, at a single floating jellyfish in the specimen jar before him, meticulously observing its form, motion, and reactions (123). Agassiz describes these animals with a welter of imagery, attempting to pinpoint their particular fascination:

> It is indeed a wonderful sight, to see a little animal not larger than a hazel-nut, as transparent as crystal, as soft as jelly, as perishable as an air-bubble, run actively through as dense a medium as water, pause at times and stretch its tentacles, and now dart suddenly in one direction or another, turn round upon itself, and move suddenly in the opposite direction, describe spirals like a bird of prey rising in the air, or shoot in a straight line like an arrow, and perform all these movements with as much grace and precision, and elongate and contract its tentacles, throw them at its prey, and secure, in that way, its food, with as much certainty, as could a larger animal provided

> with flesh and bones, teeth and claws, and all the different soft and hard parts which we consider generally as indispensable requisites for energetic action; though these little creatures are, strictly speaking, nothing more than a little mass of cellular gelatinous tissue. (230)

Agassiz's reflections rest particularly on the transparency, softness, and fragility of the jellyfish. He describes the grace and precision of their movements, the perfection of their form and motion. Then, at the end of the passage, the distaste for distortion and formlessness creeps in: the animal he first describes as though cut from crystal, a paragon of perfect vision and legibility, must be qualified by the suspicious knowledge that, after, all, it is 'nothing more than a little mass of cellular gelatinous tissue' (230).

Thus far, I have argued that the aquarium in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century was both widely popular and figurally rich. What is also important to note is that these spectacles of the primordial and the grotesque were popular with women modernist writers. For example, in 1924, Woolf wrote two reviews of the aquariums in Brighton and Regent's Park in London (*Essays III* 404-405), and the latter also features prominently in her 1928 'The Sun and the Fish' (*Essays IV* 519-524). In all of these she registers a fascination with the inaccessible subjectivity of fish, and muses on their self-sufficiency, their brilliant forms and colours, and their indifference to the niceties and the sophistication of modern society. She was familiar with zoology from childhood through the interests of her father and went to the Natural History Museum as a child. She read Thomas Huxley and Charles Darwin (*The Origin of Species* was one of the items she rescued from their bombed property in

Mecklenburgh Square).[38] She also read Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son* and would thus have been familiar to some degree with the studies in marine biology carried out by his father, Philip Henry Gosse.[39] In a 1926 letter to Vita Sackville-West, she describes 'a book called Father and Son [1907], by Gosse, which says that all the coast of England was fringed with little sea anemones and lovely tassels of seaweed and sprays of emerald moss and so on, from the beginning of time till Jan 1858, when, for some reason, hordes of clergy and spinsters in mushroom hats and goggles began collecting, and so scraped and rifled the coast that this accumulation was destroyed for ever' (*Letters III* 254, no. 1628).

On H.D.'s part, there is less writing on aquariums and zoology. However, in *Asphodel,* Hermione's description to Jerrod Darrington of jellyfish in the Naples aquarium gives reason to believe that H.D. herself visited the *Stazione Zoologica* during her time in Naples with Richard Aldington in 1913 (194). She writes about 'the blue-fire phosphorescence of the huge blue deep sea sort of jelly fish that so fascinated [Hermione] in the aquarium' at Naples (194). Her scrapbooks contain a print of seaweeds and marine algae from the other great centre of marine research of the day: The Museum of Oceanography in Monaco (seq. 1211290). What is more, her grandfather was an accomplished biologist who published meticulously hand-illustrated and hand-coloured books on algal formations in water droplets (Mandel 305). Her father was a professor of astronomy. Works like *HERmione* and *Tribute to Freud* record her interest in the respective kinds of vision provided by the lenses of telescopes and microscopes, and then relate these lenses to the embodied vision she calls her 'jelly-fish experience' (*Tribute to Freud* 116). Arguably, when in *HERmione* she compares her being to

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[38] For more on Woolf's education in natural biology, see Gillian Beer. For the salvaging of Darwin from the bombed flat, see Woolf's diary entry on the 20th of October 1940 (*Diaries V* 331).
[39] See 'Edmund Gosse' in *Essays V* 248-257

sea spume, she would have had in mind her grandfather's research, and thus may in fact be talking about the marine microorganisms one would find in sea spray.

Other women modernists shared some of these interests with Woolf and H.D.. Marianne Moore's interest in zoology is well documented: she enjoyed nature documentaries and reading natural biology, and writes of the *Stazione Zoologica* in a 1933 film review (307). Vita Sackville-West wrote a poem about the aquarium in San Francisco. Katherine Mansfield wrote with rapture about the Oceanographical Museum and Aquarium at Monaco: 'the AQUARIUM finished me & I had to lean over a tank of slumbering tortoises & weep because of the fishes I had seen & the worm high worm built forests' (284). What is distinctive and telling about Woolf and H.D., however, is that they not only describe aquariums and marine animals, but go on to employ these animals as metaphors for the perceiving subject, and for the position of that subject within the modern world. It is to this fraught subjectivity, interrogated through metaphors of marine animals, that I turn in the following section.

FISHING, FEELING, AND THE SUBJECTIVITY OF FISH

We have now seen the interesting tension between the primordial and the heigh of modernity in the spectacle of the aquarium, and in public reaction to these spaces; we have seen, in addition, how marine animals become metaphorical stand-ins for passivity, femininity, and a monstrous sexuality. In this section, we will see how Virginia Woolf engages with these metaphorics of marine monstrosity, problematising them, and turning their tentacular, preconscious creatures into subjectivities of a heightened sensitivity. These immersed

subjectivities provide a marked contrast to traditional metaphors that construe thinking and perceiving as fishing or diving.

Writing to Mary Hutchinson on 19 September 1917, T.S. Eliot commends a story she sent him, but offers the criticism that having 'got thoroughly *inside* the feelings' at stake, she 'hadn't quite got out again':

> I like to feel that a writer is perfectly cool and detached, regarding other people's feelings or his own, like a God who has got beyond them; or a person who has dived very deep and comes up holding firmly some hitherto unseen submarine creature. (*Letters 1* 220)

There is a striking tension here between the detached, God's-eye view of Eliot's first image, and the immersion of the image of the diver. Eliot is careful to stress that he 'comes up' again. Nonetheless, there is a strong contrast between a God viewing the world from up above, and the diver plunging into the depths to grab hold of 'some hitherto unseen submarine creature.' While Eliot seems to muddle the two images, listing them as examples of the same thing, other modernist authors would make much of the differences between the 'seen from above' and the immersed perspective. One of these, of course, is Ezra Pound, who describes Homer's *Odyssey* as exemplifying a 'correct geography; not as you would find it if you had a geography book and a map, but as it would be in 'periplum,' that is, as a coasting sailor would see it; or, as he puts it in Canto LIX, 'as sea bord seen by men sailing' (*ABC of Reading* 43-44; *Cantos* 324). This is a conscious departure from abstraction in favour of a perceiving that is immersed in the act of perception itself.

Fishing, or indeed diving, is a well-established metaphor for thought—one delves into the unknown and dredges living kernels up to the surface. It is one Woolf herself would use in much of her fiction, including *The Waves* and *Mrs Dalloway.* In *The Waves*, Neville thinks of his mind as

> a net whose fibres pass imperceptibly beneath the world. My net is almost indistinguishable from that which it surrounds. It lifts whales—huge leviathans and white jellies, what is amorphous and wandering; I detect, I perceive. Beneath my eyes opens—a book; I see to the bottom; the heart—I see to the depths (171).

Neville's mind is perhaps almost indistinguishable from that which surrounds it, but the net being lifted up still implies a central human consciousness independent of the world it observes.

In her essay 'Professions for Women,' however, Woolf genders and problematises this image of fishing and collecting. Here, she famously claims that she has succeeded in killing the Angel in the House. However, this does not leave her free. We often forget that there is a second feminine figure in the essay, and a second problem Woolf admits herself unable to solve. There are two 'adventures' of her professional life: one of them, she writes, 'killing the Angel in the House—I think I solved. She died' (*Essays VI* 483). The second, however, is 'telling the truth about my own experiences as a body,' and this, she writes, 'I do not think I solved' (*Essays VI* 483). The image she employs here is of a girl fishing on the shore. A writer, she claims, strives to be as unconscious as possible, so that 'nothing may disturb or disquiet the mysterious nosings about, feelings round, darts, dashes, and sudden discoveries of that very shy and illusive spirit, the imagination' (*Essays VI* 482). A girl sitting at her desk,

only very occasionally dipping her pen in ink, is figured as 'a fisherman lying sunk in dreams of the verge of a deep lake with a rod held out over the water' (*Essays VI* 482). While Woolf initially describes this body of water as a lake, it soon takes on maritime resonances in descriptions of spume and rockpools. Woolf describes how this writing/fishing girl would be 'letting her imagination sweep unchecked round every rock and cranny of the world that lies submerged in the depths of our unconscious being' (*Essays VI* 482). However, something happens that rouses her: her thoughts have turned to her embodiment, to 'something about the body,' to 'passions which it was unfitting for her as a woman to say' (*Essays VI* 482). Woolf describes this experience by extending her fishing metaphor:

> The line had raced through the girl's fingers. Her imagination had rushed away. It had sought the pools, the depths, the dark places where the largest fish slumber. There was an explosion. There was foam and confusion. The imagination had dashed itself against something hard. (*Essays VI* 482)

That something is her body, and 'the consciousness of what men will say of a woman who speaks the truth about her passions' (*Essays VI* 482-483). Her artistic project is interrupted. The girl is plucked violently out of her state of unconsciousness and, writes Woolf, 'she could write no more' (*Essays VI* 483). Woolf says candidly that this is a problem of gender. It is perhaps acceptable for men to dredge up the depth of their beings to show the world, and the ideal male subject, associated with pure thought, is not encumbered with his body in the same way as are women (*Essays VI* 482-483).

Woolf does not solve this problem in her longer fiction, as indeed she readily acknowledges in 'Professions for Women.' However, in a trope not expanded in her longer

fiction, Woolf, in essays and letters, turns this self into the pursued fish itself. In letters she repeatedly describes herself as an anemone, sensing and perceiving from the depths. In a letter to Katherine Cox of the 7th of February 1912, she describes the London scene as a marine space where 'Ottoline floats about; but I'm not really in the swim now, and feel like an anemone at the bottom of an aquarium, seeing the fishes and weeds—and not caring for anyone a damn' (*Letters I* 489, no. 602) On the 25th of March 1928, she writes to Vanessa Bell, or 'Dolphin,' that she feels 'like a sea anemone which has had to keep all its tentacles curled up, and when its [sic] put in water (i.e. Dolphin) they come out and wave and tumble and are of an exquisite and incredible beauty' (*Letters III* 478, no. 1875). This transferral offers her an escape from female embodiment, but also stands in stark contrast with the safety or nonchalance with which the male subject might figure thought. In these letters, Woolf is not a fisher or a diver who inspects and captures material from above, but is immersed, tentacular, a rhizome almost—she is part of what she perceives, or at the very least at home in that element.

In Woolf's writing, these marine creatures are usually images for perception, usually of a subconscious or preconscious kind. In some ways, her identification with the marine becomes a tool to escape the individual, and to stress the flux, interconnectedness, and sameness between people. In 'Together and Apart,' for example, Miss Anning and Mr Serle are described as 'atoms, motes, standing there at Mrs Dalloway's window, and their lives, seen by the moonlight, as long as an insect's and no more important' (*Mrs Dalloway's Party* 34). The two carry on a fairly superficial, bland conversation about Canterbury, while at the same time Miss Anning's subliminal perception tries to make him out:

> Fibres of her were floated capriciously this way and that, like the tentacles of a sea anemone, now thrilled, now snubbed, and her brain, miles away, cool and distant, up in the air, received messages which it would sum up in time so that, when people talked about Roderick Serle (and he was a bit of a figure) she would say unhesitatingly: "I like him," or "I don't like him". (*Mrs Dalloway's Party* 38)

Her sensing feelers are therefore not the later conscious judgement she will draw from them, but the extended sensitive fibres of her being, feeling out the environment and the people they intertwine with in a preconscious perceptiveness. Anemones do not have a centralised nervous system, and their tentacles are as important as their central body cavity. Comparing the individual to an anemone therefore decentralises the role of thought and consciousness in perception, though, in Woolf's case, these still operate as the sort of headquarters to which the tentacles report: 'Her tentacles sent back the message that Roderick Serle was nice' (*Mrs Dalloway's Party* 39). Nonetheless the metaphor allows her to evoke a sort of embodied perception that exceeds the fairly limited reach of the rational mind.

Woolf's uses of the fishing metaphor and of marine perception itself both find expression in relation to the writer Dorothy Richardson. In 1923, in language that recalls the fishing girl from 'Professions for Women,' Woolf writes that Richardson has invented 'a sentence which we might call the psychological sentence of the feminine gender,' one that is 'of a more elastic fibre than the old, capable of stretching to the extreme, of suspending the frailest particles, of enveloping the vaguest shapes' (*Women and Writing* 191). She concedes that male writers have made use of similar techniques, but the difference, she claims, is that Richardson

> has fashioned her sentence consciously, in order that it may descend to the depths and investigate the crannies of Miriam Henderson's consciousness. It is a woman's sentence, but only in the sense that it is used to describe a woman's mind by a writer who is neither proud nor afraid of anything that she may discover in the psychology of her sex. And therefore we feel that the trophies Miss Richardson brings to the surface, however we may dispute their size, are undoubtedly genuine. (*Women and Writing* 191)

The nooks and crannies of the unconsciousness which led the fishing girl into confrontation with her body and the social norms structured around it are the same ones that, Woolf writes, Richardson is currently exploring with her 'psychological sentence of the feminine gender.' It avoids both shame and praise. It is exploratory, curious, and truthful. The trick, perhaps, is the degree of separation between Richardson and her character Miriam Henderson. In an earlier essay, describing the character of Miriam, Woolf again makes use of a marine metaphor, but of a different kind. She describes how, in *The Tunnel*, the conventions of writing are dispensed with, so that

> there is left, denuded, unsheltered, unbegun and unfinished, the consciousness of Miriam Henderson, the small sensitive lump of matter, half transparent and half opaque, which endlessly reflects and distorts the variegated procession, and is, we are bidden to believe, the source beneath the surface, the very oyster within the shell. (*Women and Writing* 189)

Here, we do not have a subject fishing from above, but a perceptive, immersed body. With her image of the opaque-transparent oyster which both 'reflects and distorts,' Woolf

emphasises the subjectivity and inescapable embodiment of being and perceiving in the world.

Woolf's 1927 essay 'Street Haunting' orchestrates this embodied perception through the night-time flânerie of its speaker. In many ways, 'Street Haunting' is Woolf's 'sublimation of the arcades,' or of the repressed economic contents of a collective consciousness. We have seen these dynamics at work in the previous chapter. The essay takes us through the streets of London as the speaker goes on a night-time meander, ostensibly to buy a pencil. Woolf describes 'the glossy brilliance of the motor omnibuses; the carnal splendour of the butchers' shops with their yellow flanks and purple steaks; the blue and red bunches of flowers burning so bravely through the plate glass of the florists' windows' (*Essays IV* 482). The street itself is a stream or a tide where 'under lamps are floating islands of pale light through which pass quickly bright men and women,' who, Woolf writes, have the air of having 'given life the slip, so that life, deceived of her prey, blunders on without them' (*Essays IV* 481-482). On Oxford Street, the economic 'tide of trade which deposits its burden so punctually and prosaically upon the shores' seems by night to have 'cast up nothing but treasure' (*Essays IV* 485). The observing eye flits between various people on the streets. At one moment it belongs to a woman in silks and pearls who, 'riding on the highest mast of the tallest ship,' sees the Prime Minister walking with Lady So-and-So (*Essays IV* 486). At another, it plunges into the tide and sees 'a bearded Jew, wild, hunger-bitten, glaring out of his misery,' or 'the slumped body of an old woman flung abandoned on the step of a public building' (*Essays IV* 484). Old, faded carpets have had their carnations melt into 'a pale green sea' (*Essays IV* 485). While not as sustained in its metaphorics as Gerstäcker's novel, the city is nonetheless, here too, recurrently described in terms of the sea, and of the submarine, suggestive of the 'skeleton

beneath' the modern metropolis (*The Voyage Out* 4). This becomes most striking when the eye momentarily, in a second-hand bookstore, 'finds anchorage in these thwarting currents of being' (*Essays IV* 486). Describing the tales of adventure and exploration housed by the bookshelves, Woolf subtly highlights the role of the sea in British Imperialism:

> this packing up and going off, exploring deserts and catching fevers, settling in India for a lifetime, penetrating even to China and then returning to lead a parochial life in Edmonton, tumbles and tosses upon the dusty floor like an uneasy sea, so restless the English are, with the waves at their very door. (*Essays IV* 487-488)

To use Benjamin's terms, in this image of an uneasy sea milling around the bookstore, we find the sublimation of the repressed psychic and economic contents of the British metropolis.

There is an important difference, however, between this essay and the maritime metaphorics of the city we saw in the previous chapter: Woolf's essay is also an interrogation, through these metaphorics, of subjectivity, and its limits and interrelations. Street haunting allows the speaker to penetrate a little way into the lives of various others, 'far enough to give oneself the illusion that one is not tethered to a single mind, but can put on briefly for a few minutes the bodies and minds of others' (*Essays IV* 490). Here we find perhaps Woolf's most striking figuring of marine perception: she compares the immersed eye to the soft fleshy inside of an oyster. As the street engulfs us,

> the shell-like covering which our souls have excreted to house themselves, to make for themselves a shape distinct from others, is broken, and there is left of all these

> wrinkles and roughnesses a central oyster of perceptiveness, an enormous eye. (*Essays IV* 481)

All that is hard and clearly demarcated gives way to a soft, malleable sensitivity. The eye is a mirror, a receptive surface, a recording consciousness without the alienation and differentiation implied by consciousness. Recall the shell-like bourgeouis dwellings of Benjamin, exemplified by the Hervey home in the last chapter. Here, the shell is stripped away, with all its appurtenances of individuality. The image of an amorphous, receptive oyster-eye also evokes the embryonic and the primitive—a self not yet differentiated from the world it perceives. This is not the detached subject fishing in the depths, but an immersed self that is part of and at home within the flux of other subjectivities.

Yet there is also another, decidedly feminine and bodily aspect to this oyster-vision. In 1927, at the time she was working on the proofs for 'Street Haunting,' Woolf's relationship with Vita Sackville-West became strained due to Sackville-West's involvement with other women. Having learnt that Vita had spent the night with Mary Hutchinson, Woolf writes a hurt, teasing letter on the 4th of July 1927:

> Yes you are an agile animal—no doubt about it, but as to your gambols being diverting, always, at Ebury Street [Vita's London address] for example, at 4 o'clock in the morning, I'm not so sure. Bad, wicked beast! To think of sporting with oysters—lethargic, glucous lipped oysters, lewd lascivious oysters, stationary cold oysters— to think of it, I say. Your oyster has been in tears on the telephone imploring Clive [Bell] to come back to her—thats [sic] all the faith there is in oysters . . . I'm a fair minded

> woman. You only be a careful dolphin in your gambolling, or you'll find Virginia's soft crevices lined with hooks.[40] (*Letters III* 395, no. 1780)

Here oysters are a decidedly sexual, sapphic reference, but it is interesting that this is the same image Woolf chooses to describe the eye in 'Street Haunting.' Here, perhaps, is a tentative solution to the problem of the perceptions and experiences of the body figured by the fishing image in 'Professions for Women.' Coding the feminine body through marine animals like oysters offers a means to convey its embodiment and the perceptual sensitivities of that embodiment which escapes the limits of the fishing metaphor, with its split between the perceiving consciousness and what it dredges up from the depths.

We will shortly see how H.D. construes a similarly embodied, sapphic creativity via marine animals in her visionary manifestos. In the following section, however, I will first demonstrate how H.D.'s jellyfish and oysters become the metaphoric lenses through which she sees, or experiences, her creative visions. Why do these specific creatures become metaphoric eyes or lenses? We have seen the traditional metaphorics that construe thinking as fishing or diving, and how Woolf transforms these metaphors to make the perceiving subject an immersed anemone or oyster instead. H.D. transforms these metaphors of perception in a similar way, but draws on the appearance, consistency, and shape of jellyfish to construe them not only as immersed subjectivities, but more specifically as eyes or lenses.

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[40] Woolf would repeat her oyster-jibe to Vita on more than one occasion, reprimanding her in subsequent letters: ‘For my part, I should prefer solitude. For yours, you’d prefer oysters. Bad Vita, bad wicked Vita. Whats [sic] become of your fine gesture about promiscuity’ (*Letters III* 396, no. 1781). On the 5th of August 1927 she writes that ‘Clive hinted that he knew, and I knew, about a night in the oyster bed’ (*Letters III* 407, no. 1796), and in another letter she moves from musing on the porpoise in her bath to the thought that ‘some prefer dolphins – I dont [sic]. I’ve known one dolphin, the Mediterranean kind, ravage a whole bedfull of oysters. A lewd sort of brute that’ (*Letters III* 398, no. 1783).

H.D.'s JELLYFISH LENSES

In July 1919, H.D. travelled to the Scilly Islands with her lover and lifelong companion Bryher. Here, recovering from the personal and public trauma of the past five years, H.D. would have what she called her 'jelly-fish experience'—a liminal, visionary state of breakdown and vulnerability that hovered at the interstices of creativity and madness (*Tribute to Freud* 116). In 1915, H.D. had lost her first child—a stillbirth she would attribute to the shock of war news, particularly the sinking of the *Lusitania*. In 1916, her husband Richard Aldington enlisted, conducting, on his periodic returns from England, an open affair with Dorothy Yorke. In March 1918, H.D.'s brother Gilbert was killed in France, and, with Aldington's consent, she moved to Cornwall with the composer Cecil Gray, becoming pregnant with his child. In February 1919, H.D.'s father died, and soon after she contracted the wartime influenza—a condition very rarely survived by pregnant women—and almost never survived by both mother and newborn. Aldington, initially supportive of H.D. in her condition, abruptly changed tack, arriving with Dorothy Yorke at the nursing home where she was in confinement, and threatening to sue her should she give the child Aldington’s name. On the 31st of March 1919, her daughter was born alive, and two months later came the 'jelly-fish experience' on the Scilly Isles (*Tribute to Freud* 116). Here H.D. would record having a visionary experience, as of two bell-jars or lenses encompassing her, and as though seeing things underwater.

In her 1919 *Notes on Thought and Vision*, H.D. writes of what she calls the 'over-mind' as the 'lens of an opera-glass,' which opens up 'the whole world of vision to us'

(23). To be more specific, there are two lenses: the 'love-mind' and the 'over-mind' (23). These, when 'properly adjusted, focused, . . . bring the world of vision into consciousness.' She clarifies: 'the two work separately, perceive separately, yet make one picture' (23). This phrasing, despite the mystical nature of most of *Notes,* is firmly rooted in the scientific optics of the time—a field with which H.D., growing up with her biologist grandfather's microscope and her astronomer father's telescope, would have had some familiarity. In her *Optical Impersonality,* Walter traces the influence of a scientific vernacular in optics in modernist writers like Pound, Ford Madox Ford, and H.D..[41] Walter writes of the mid-nineteenth-century shift away from a Cartesian model of vision which posited the eye as a window, with the rational consciousness behind it interpreting the objective images it received (Walter 8-10). Descartes' model is symmetrical and elegant, and the eye is merely a transparent pane of glass through which the rational mind can view the world (Walter 8). Nineteenth-century advances in the field of optics revealed the material density of the retina, and the functioning of binocular vision, thus both decentring the objective observer and embroiling them in the bodily texture of sight (Walter 8-10). The popularisation of the physiological work of German polymath Alexander von Helmholtz did much to embed these ideas in public consciousness, and he furthermore stressed the role of experience and the unconscious in the structuring of perception, further troubling the objectivity of vision (Walter 8). Walter points out that von Helmholtz introduced into physics the word 'vortex,' the same word that Ezra Pound adopted in the latter stages of imagism (and which Wyndham

[41] Walter's book provides a thorough account of H.D.'s engagement with technologies of seeing, focussing primarily on *Sea Garden* and *Notes on Thought and Vision,* as well as H.D.'s writings for the POOL group's film magazine *Close Up.* While I am indebted to Walter's exposition of developments in optical science, and the physiology of vision, she pays no attention to what I consider some of H.D.'s most fascinating experiments with vision: the marine animals she turns into eyes or lenses. H.D.'s engagement with marine biology falls beyond the scope of Walter's argument.

Lewis popularised in artistic contexts) (Walter 85). What is more, around this time Pound used pseudonyms like 'Bastien von Helmholtz' and 'Baptiste von Helmholtz' (Walter 85). Whether or not H.D. knew of von Helmholtz via Pound, the binocular vision she expounds in her *Notes* and elsewhere, as well as her recurrent metaphors of the microscope, of opera-glasses, and of cinema projectors, firmly grounds her work in an engagement with contemporary optical technologies, and highlight the scientific dimension of her poetic interest in the mechanisms of perception.

H.D.'s jellyfish experience is most clearly expounded in 'Advent,' where she links it simultaneously to trauma and breakdown and to the lenses of her grandfather's microscope and her father's telescope. Technologies of seeing are insistently present:

> I cried too hard . . . I do not know what I remembered: the hurt of the cold, nun-like nurses at the time of my first London confinement, spring 1915; the shock of the *Lusitania* going down just before the child was still-born; fear of drowning; young men on park benches in blue hospital uniform; my father's anti-war sentiments and his violent volte-face in 1918; my broken marriage; a short period with friends in Cornwall in 1918; my father's telescope, my grandfather's microscope. If I let go (I, this one drop, this one ego under the microscope-telescope of Sigmund Freud) I fear to be dissolved utterly. I had what Bryher called the "jelly-fish" experience of double ego; bell-jar or half-globe as of transparent glass spread over my head like a diving-bell and another manifested from my feet, so enclosed I was for a short space in St. Mary's, Scilly Isles, July 1919, immunized or insulated from the war disaster. But I could not stay in it; I re-materialized and Bryher took me to Greece in the spring

> of 1920. There was another, a Mr. Brashaer, a famous lens-maker who fitted the lenses to my father's Zenith telescope. Was this the lens I imagined in the Scilly Isles, or the two convex lenses that I called bell-jars? (116)

H.D. cites her own personal trauma in tandem with the trauma of the war. The disasters feed into one another and threaten her psychical integrity. It is striking that this disaster is represented, to some degree, as 'death by water': the excess of her crying erases memories; the sinking of the *Lusitania* is linked to the death of her first child and her fear of drowning; she fears that the single drop that is her ego will be 'dissolved utterly.' Her visionary experience, the result of this breakdown, transforms her into a creature who can live in the depths—the jellyfish is at home in the water. She will not be drowned. What is more, this is linked to a particular kind of vision, one she associates both with Freud's analysis and with her own experience of 'double-ego': saving lenses; in the case of her jellyfish, the saving lenses of marine perception.

In the earlier *Notes on Thought and Vision*, this perception is not yet explicitly associated with the lenses of the telescopes and microscopes in her familial memory, but in her image of the opera-glass, of 'two lenses' (23), it is already binocular vision, and already to some extent drawing on contemporary scientific physiology (though this is developed further in 'Advent,' where the jellyfish and the double vision are linked to technological apparatus like the microscope). In *Notes* too, however, her vision is presented in terms of marine biology, and it is the most extensive theorising she dedicates to her jellyfish experience. This consciousness, she writes, seems like 'a cap, like water, transparent, fluid yet with definite body, contained in a definite space . . . like a closed sea-plant, jelly-fish or anemone' (18-19).

Here again, as in Woolf, we have a marine perception that is markedly tentacular, comprising many feeling fibres. Within this jellyfish or anemone of perception, she continues, 'thoughts pass and are visible like fish swimming under clear water' (19). There is a curious passivity to this metaphor. The thoughts are not the product of this state of consciousness, but exist and pass through it in a symbiotic relationship. This makes 'over-mind' thought a strikingly embodied and receptive experience. This is not the active consciousness of Kant or Husserl, categorising and sorting through perception, but the mind (rather than the Cartesian eye) becomes a screen onto (or into) which perceptions pass. H.D. continues to describe how she imagines that the 'long feelers' of this jellyfish 'reached down and through the body':

> These feelers 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 grey 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.
>
> I first realized this state of consciousness in my head. I visualize it as well, now, centred in the love-region of the body or placed like a foetus in the body. (19)

As with Woolf's anemone, there is no central consciousness here, but a sensuous whole. Rather than a distinction between the grey matter of the brain and extraneous limbs, the tentacles 'are the jelly-fish itself, elongated into long threads,' each as perceptive as the other and as the central body. It is a remarkably non-hierarchical mode of perception. This is further evinced by H.D.'s contention that this consciousness is centred in the love-region as much as it is in the head, thus stressing the degree to which it is an embodied perception. As

with Woolf's oyster, the gendering of this perception is of central importance to H.D. There are some attempts, in *Notes*, to keep the terminology a neutral 'love-region,' but for the most part she writes of 'womb-vision,' and in the striking image above the jellyfish becomes 'placed like a foetus in the body' (20-21, 19). Wondering about this gendered experience, H.D. writes, 'Is it easier for a woman to attain this state of consciousness than for a man? For me, it was before the birth of my child that the jellyfish consciousness seemed to come definitely into the field or realm of the intellect or brain' (20). This formulation is interesting: H.D. is not claiming that her child brought this consciousness into her body or 'love-region,' but into its other locus: the brain. She thus further troubles and intertwines the dual perceptions of the body and the mind, which, as she writes later in *Notes*, together form 'two lenses,' which, 'when 'properly adjusted, focused, . . . bring the world of vision into consciousness' (23). Elsewhere she asks, 'should we be able to think with the womb and feel with the brain?' (20).

Toward the end of *Notes on Thought and Vision*, H.D. turns to a different animal for her marine perception—one that will elsewhere be associated with her sapphic sexual experiences, and the same one Woolf uses as both kernel of perceptiveness in 'Street Haunting' and as *vagina dentata* in her letters to Vita Sackville-West:

> I imagine it has often been said that the body is like an oyster and the soul or spirit, a pearl. But today I saw for myself that the jelly-fish over my head had become concentrated. I saw that the state of mind I had before symbolized as a jelly-fish was just as well symbolized differently. That is, all the spiritual energy seemed concentrated in the middle of my forehead, inside my skull, and it was small and

> giving out a very soft light, but not scattered light, light concentrated in itself as the light of a pearl would be. So I understood exactly what the Galilean meant by the kingdom of heaven being a pearl of great price. (51)

Later, H.D. affirms, in a sort of mantra of marine perception, 'I am in my spiritual body a jelly-fish and a pearl' (50). Kathryn Simpson argues that one might read such images of pearls in H.D. and Woolf as clitoral metaphors, and given Hermione's description of Fayne Rabb (Frances Gregg) as the same 'pearl-of-price' we have here, this seems reasonable (*HERmione* 60). At the same time, this sensuality is importantly tied up with perception and creativity for H.D., and she speculates that 'we can probably use this pearl, as a crystal ball is used, for concentrating and directing pictures from the world of vision' (50).

PSYCHIC LENSES AND OCTOPUS EYES: THE SAPPHISM OF H.D.'S MARINE PERCEPTION

In *HERmione*, as I have just noted, Fayne Rabb becomes this pearl of great price (60), but other marine animals are also used to describe Her and Fayne's relationship. As we saw in Woolf, marine perception is not divorced from the desires of the body, or from queer sexuality. As I will now show, H.D. also construes marine perception as something entwined with and enabled by female embodiment, sexuality, and sapphic relationships.

When they first meet at a party, Fayne says to Her: 'you have an octopus quality of mind. Do you assimilate anything?' (61). The image sticks in Her's mind, and when she and George (the Ezra Pound character in the book) walk through the woods and he remarks on the gothic nature of the scene, she is tempted to tell him 'We aren't in any Gothic setting, George,' 'it's under water,' 'it's under deep-sea water' (65). At some point during the walk, Her throws

herself on the ground, and when George joins her and begins to caress her, her reflections are with Fayne:

> Conversation returned like something forgotten, like echo in delirium. Conversation that said, "You have an octopus intelligence," and staring up into trees with George lost or forgotten or simply mislaid somewhere, Hermione let octopus-Hermione reach out and up and with a thousand eyes regard space and distance and draw octopus arm back, only to replunge octopus arm up and up into illimitable distance. Something in Her should have warned Hermione. Something far and far that had to do with some scheme of biological mathematical definition had left Her dizzy. It had not occurred to Her to try and put the thing in writing. (72)

This is a striking image. Hermione's octopus with a thousand eyes provides a gloss for what we should understand regarding 'octopus intelligence.' It is interesting that the sensitive, sensuous tentacle is portrayed as being covered in a thousand eyes, meaning that the delicate, feeling antennae of the octopus arm is construed as an instrument of vision.

HERmione engages throughout with such instruments of vision. It is largely an autobiographical text about the speaker's search for a way of seeing. It is replete with lenses. The father figure is a biologist who sits poring over his microscope, continually adjusting lenses to bring the microscopic contents of water droplets into focus: 'a superimposed bit of glass on a bit of glass that had already squashed flat a bit of alga,' which Her knows 'would look odd, unholy in its beauty under the microscope that one thin hand was screwing, adjusting to his vision' (99). Apart from the scientific lenses of her father and brother, though, Her seeks an artistic vision.

The book opens with Her in the woods trying to find herself an image suitable for her frame of mind. The opacity of the trees becomes suffocating, and she longs for the transparencies of 'the inner lining of an Atlantic breaker' (7). We see Her peering, 'adjusting, so to speak, some psychic lens' to follow one image, then another, but they escape her. The 'one disc of green, pool or mirror that would refract image' eludes her vision (5), and she feels lost: 'she was nothing. She must have an image no matter how fluid, how inchoate' (5). Unable to bring things into meaningful psychical focus, she feels herself 'go out, out into this water substance' (7):

> Water was transparent, not translucent like this celluloid treestuff. She wanted to see through reaches of sea-wall, push on through transparencies. She wanted to be out, get out but even as her mind filmed over with grey-gelatinous substance of some sort of nonthinking, of some sort of nonbeing or of nonentity, she felt psychic claw unsheathe somewhere, she felt herself clutch toward something that had no name yet. (8)

Fayne Rabb will eventually offer her the psychic focus she seeks, and given the autobiographical nature of the book, we know that 'to try and put the thing in writing' is the form of expression she will come to, though it does not occur to her yet (71). Here, the psychic crab claw, and later, the eye-encrusted octopus arm, still falls short. They approach what she is looking for, but also threaten her identity, leaving her dizzy, or filmed over with the 'grey-gelatinous substance' of nonbeing (8). When, later, she does consider writing, it seems unnatural to her, 'an achievement like playing the violin or singing like Tertrazinni' (71). It feels to her removed from the 'fact that cones of green set up within green cones' (71). In the 1926 *Palimpsest,* Raymonde Ransome does write, and her writing is described in

marine terms: 'Verses, verses, verses. *Who fished the murex up?* Verses were the murex. They dyed all existence with their colour' (160).[42] In the retrospective *HERmione*, however, H.D. remembers a person with an extraordinary sensitivity of vision, struggling to find a means sufficient to express it. For the moment, writing seems insufficient to Her's character, it 'had no mere relationship with trees on trees and octopus arms that reached out with eyes, too all over-seeing' (72).

In 'Advent,' H.D. writes that she felt safe to let herself go into her jellyfish experience because Bryher was with her (*Tribute to Freud* 131). In her tentative relationships with George and with Fayne, she seeks the same thing. At times she wishes George would 'dynamite' her world away from her and force her to act (63). At times she envisages him as a spar saving her from drowning (41, 100). Yet at the same time, the water is her element. At a particularly trying moment:

> She knew she was not drowned. Where others would drown—lost, suffocated in this element—she knew that she lived. She had no complete right yet to this element, hands struggled to be pulled out. White hands waved above the water like sea spume or inland-growing pond flowers . . . she wanted George to pull her out, she wanted George to push her in, let Her be drowned utterly. (63)

Meeting Fayne, however, with her octopus words, Her begins to feel George's insufficiency. As he caresses her in the woods,

[42] Murex is a genus of predatory marine snail, and the source of Tyrian purple dye. The snail feeds by drilling into the shells of bivalves, extending its proboscis inside of these shells, and ingesting the animal within.

> Hermione, thrown flat on wood moss, regarded green seawater that was parting, that was sluicing apart like crude description of the Red Sea parting. George, standing on dry land, severing sea from sea, was man on dry land, no proper deep-sea monster. George let light through to fall on her face. She waved back the light, fastidious as a gamine in a cellar. Under the sea, deep down in her deep-sea consciousness, she was putting out premature feelers; octopus became potato in a cellar. (72)

In contrast to Octopus-Hermione, even though she is still learning to live in her deep-sea consciousness, George is 'no proper deep-sea monster,' and in this lies his shortcoming (72). He is not a suitably marine partner for Her. He is not of the sea, but of the dry land, the bronze Narcissus, to appropriate a later metaphor, to her phosphorescent jellyfish.[43]

Given these conjectures around marine perception, it is a pity, though hardly surprising, that H.D. should be famous and remembered primarily as an 'imagiste'—a writer of hard, crystalline, lapidary lyrics. It is this aspect of her style that is most closely aligned to the terse impersonality of the male modernists. Critics like Susan Stanford Friedman, Annette Debo, and Elizabeth O'Connor have noted this tension in H.D.'s poetry, focusing particularly on *Sea Garden*. The tight, crystalline verse is woven through by a more liquid leaning. The clinical, near-scientific cataloguing is washed around by seas and surges of undoing.

[43] Strikingly, H.D. makes use of this jellyfish metaphor again in *Palimpsest,* again applying it in relation to the women in her story 'Murex': Mavis, who has stolen the young man of Ermy as she stole Raymonde's Freddie ten years earlier, is described as a 'Syren' who 'moves with waves' motion, with no static power of her own' (163). Mavis' instincts move her, 'Syren within green waters; Syren to wreck ships' (163). 'For all that, she 'could not dive deep.' This leads Raymonde to compare herself and Ermy to Mavis, invoking H.D.'s jellyfish image:

> Deep through an interlayer of green that was a sort of semi-transparent huge jelly-fish that lay writhing and obscuring antiquity. Behind this world there was another world. Ermy was of it though not conscious of it. Raymond was of it, seeing only in a half-light, in a glass very darkly. Her mind was a glass that was set between this world, this present and the far past that was eternal. A glass, a lens, a living substance lies between ourselves and our final attainment. (163)

Throughout this collection, these dual tendencies are figured by the tension between a rugged coastline and the waves that sweep and mould it. In 'Contest,' the marmoreal 'you,' whose 'stature is modelled / with straight tool-edge' is 'chiselled' like a statue, but strikingly it is also 'like rocks / that are eaten into by the sea' (lines 1-4). In 'The Shrine,' the goddess who 'watches over the sea' personifies this duality (epigraph). The expectation of softness, shelter, and protection is thwarted: her realm is the zone of contact and contest between sea and rugged land, and 'when the tides swirl / your boulders cut and wreck / the staggering ships' (lines 30-32). Yet the goddess is also 'tender' and 'enchanted' and 'we thread throat on throat of freesia for your shelf' (lines 41 and 46). The poem concludes with this contrast: 'oak-beams split' and 'boats and sea-men flounder' while the 'strait grind[s] sand with sand / and cut[s] boulders to sand and drift' (lines 79-82). Perhaps because of this, we are told 'your eyes have pardoned our faults' (line 83). The conflict of the landscape is also of ourselves, and is perhaps the source of the speakers' strange devotion to this hard and destructive, yet simultaneously 'tender' goddess (line 41).

Sea Garden is, as its title indicates, straightforwardly about this tension, and the coastal landscapes H.D. depicts are a traditional and recognisable trope for the conflict she deploys. But it also persists throughout her work in formulations more subtly marine. It is a tension she recognised in herself, and so much of her autobiographical writing explores it, without resolving it. In *Asphodel*, H.D.'s Hermione encapsulates the conflict as she lies in hospital in confinement, traumatised and undone by war and personal betrayal:

> Dreams dwell in ivory and bronze, the Narcissus of the Naples gallery. "Do you remember the blue-fire phosphorescence of the huge blue deep sea sort of jelly fish

> that so fascinated me in the aquarium?" "Aquarium?" "Naples. I seem to be in two sets of perceptions . . . blue green of phosphorescent fire and static bronzes. That Narcissus, you remember. Two sets of clearly defined perceptions. (194)

The lapidary Narcissus is contrasted with the phosphorescent fire and inchoate form of the jellyfish. There is perhaps a hint of dissatisfaction in H.D.'s characterisation of the Narcissus as static, particularly in contrast with the living fire and phosphorescence of the jellyfish. Nonetheless, this seems to be a tension H.D. embraced. In a scrapbook held at the Beinecke Rare Books Library, we find, amidst various other collages, one that juxtaposes a classical male bronze statue with a montage of seaweeds and algae, labelled 'Musée Océanographique de Monaco'—one of the leading institutes for marine research of the day (founded by the Prince of Monaco) (seq. 1211290; see Appendix Image 2). We can read this visual text as an expression of the same 'two sets of clearly defined perception' we find in *Asphodel.* One is lapidary, sculptural, masculine. The other is marine—a sea plant or a jellyfish—endowed with strange phosphorescence and abundant with fronds or tentacles. Importantly, this duality we encounter in these 'two sets of clearly defined perception' is something H.D. associates with the trauma of the Great War and of her personal life. It is, she writes in *Asphodel*, a 'post-chasm' consciousness (195), which dictates that everything appears either lapidary and statuesque, or marine and fluid. In this, H.D.'s case has consonance with Paul Fussell's argument that the Great War resulted in a heightening of binary thinking and that it gave rise to a '*versus* habit' that framed relations in terms of oppositions (86).

It is a feature of H.D.'s writing that the attraction of the marine side of this binary, which draws her powerfully, is also threatening. While George is 'no proper deep-sea

monster,' Her nonetheless needs to anchor herself lest she drown in the deeps. In *HERmione*, Fayne temporarily becomes the marine companion Her needs to safely have her vision:

> Words with Fayne in a room, in any room, became projections of things beyond one. Things beyond Her beat, beat to get through Her, to get through to Fayne. So prophetess faced prophetess over tea plates scattered and two teacups making delphic pattern on a worn carpet. Pattern of little plates, of little teacups (Fayne as usual had had no lunch) and people and things all becoming like people, things seen through an opera glass. The two eyes of Fayne Rabb were two lenses of an opera glass and it was Hermione's entrancing new game to turn a little screw, a little handle somewhere (like Carl Gart with his microscope) and bring into focus those two eyes that were her new possession. Her Gart had found her new possession. You put things, people under, so to speak, the lenses of the eyes of Fayne Rabb and people, things come right in geometric contour. (146-147)

Here again we have lenses and vision, but it is the relationship between Fayne and Her—prophetess facing prophetess—that brings things into focus, making sense in delphic pattern on a worn carpet. Under the eyes of Fayne, seen through the eyes of Her, 'things come right' and are put into focus. This relationship also prompts a psychological shift in Her:

> the back of her head prompted the front of her head, slid a fraction of a fraction (of a tiny measurement on a thermometer or a microscope) away from the front of her head, actually almost with a little click, separated from the front of her head like amoeba giving birth by separation to amoeba. (118)

She attempts to explain to George: 'some plants, some small water creatures give a sort of jellyfish sort of birth by breaking apart, by separating themselves from themselves' (118). George, incidentally, tells her to stop talking rot. This is remarkably similar imagery to the sort H.D. uses in *Notes on Thought and Vision*, where part of her contention is that physical love in a necessity for spiritual vision. Or in the metaphor of the oyster and pearl—the pearl of the soul or the mind cannot come into being without the stimulation of the oyster of the body. Here, as in the oyster metaphor, the kind of reproduction we find is asexual. In the case of the amoeba, it is almost homosexual: same proliferates same.[44] We recall Bushnell's argument that this strange sexuality, excessive and spontaneous, was part of the horror that polypi—or tentacled marine creatures—held for the general public in the nineteenth century (59). It is a monstrous sexuality. When George's mother calls Her 'Undine,' she protests: Undine gives up her birthright and her voice for a human (male) lover; she 'sold her sea-inheritance and Her would never, never sell this inheritance, this sea-inheritance of amoeba little jellyfish sort of living creature separating from another creature' (120).

When they first meet, Fayne says that Her's mind seems to have a definite octopus quality (61). Strikingly, Her later describes their relationship as on octopus, stressing their unity and intertwinement, even as she worries that Fayne will leave:

> Fayne will not reach out, will not accept her greatness. You must bear a double sword, a double burden. We are an octopus (North and South Dakota) we are a creature even now seething with life cells, phosphorescent cells; will Fayne Rabb desert me. Run,

[44] See, for example, David Marsh's *Money and Modernity: Pound, Williams, and the Spirit of Modernity* for homosexuality's 'economy of the same' (113-114). Mash is writing about Pound and the concept of usury, which is seen as a sort of homosexual reproduction that is *contra natura* (we shall see this in my final chapter), but it is striking that this horror of non-heterosexual reproduction is also part of the horror that accompanied nineteenth century and modernist depictions of polypi—a horror that writers like Woolf and H.D. turn into a celebration.

> run little blood corpuscle, tell the whole inchoate mass (Dakota, Oklahoma) that we are all together. Feelers, Siberia, run, run your way, blood corpuscle, there are others (220)

Almost as though in answer to Fayne's initial question, 'do you assimilate anything?' (61), octopus-Hermione has indeed absorbed Fayne into herself, and they are combined in a compound creature, which H.D. also describes here in the metaphor of the United States. Richard Arrowsmith has speculated that Aldington might have been familiar with certain erotic prints held at the Prints and Drawings Students' Room at the British Museum (133-134), and given his extensive collaboration with H.D. in the early years of their relationship, it seems reasonable that she too might have had access to these prints. At any rate, she demonstrates a familiarity with Hokusai and with other Japanese print artists, both in her letters to Aldington and in her prose works (*Asphodel* 10; *Letters* 260). It is not entirely unlikely that as such, she might have encountered Hokusai's erotic print 'Dream of the Fisherman's Wife,' which formed part of the artist's book of *Shunga*. The image depicts a woman having intercourse with a large octopus, while a smaller one engulfs her mouth—a possible source, perhaps, for the octopus imagery used to depict Fayne and Her's relationship (Appendix Image 3). At any rate, the image of a seething, glowing octopus is simultaneously monstrous and vibrant, a reclaiming of the 'inchoate mass' of the feminine, 'seething with life cells, phosphorescent cells' (*HERmione* 220). This is very different from the lapidary perfection of the statue of Narcissus. It is messy and dangerous (Her later has a significant breakdown), but it is also Her's 'sea-inheritance' (120), her access to a marine perception that is of the body and the multifarious fibres strung out about it and intertwined with the world

and with undersea, watery lovers. It offers her a vision into a world of sensuous intertwinement that is not the renunciation required of Undine.

DEATH BY WATER: VISION OR BREAKDOWN

But here, at last, I wish to return to a lone, dark sentence that H.D. tosses into the midst of her jellyfish metaphorics in *Notes on Thought and Vision*: 'The swing from normal consciousness to abnormal consciousness is accompanied by grinding discomfort and mental agony' (19). The same dark fear is present in 'if I let go. . . I fear to be dissolved utterly' (*Tribute to Freud* 116). For H.D., as for Woolf, creativity and mental breakdown are closely and dangerously intertwined. In this section, I will examine a darker element that lurks in both Woolf and H.D.'s celebration of marine perception and of the creative blurring of individual boundaries: the threat of breakdown that lurks within the creative potentialities of marine perception.

While *On Being Ill* (1883) does not make much of marine metaphors, it does stress the hyperperceptive and near-visionary quality that comes with illness, and Woolf writes of the experience when 'the waters of annihilation close above our heads,' or surfacing from under gas in a dentist's chair (*Essays V* 195). In *The Voyage Out* (1915), however, Rachel Vinrace's illness is indeed presented in marine terms—she sinks to the bottom of a sticky pool and hears waves crashing above her head (363). She longs to curl up and fall asleep on the ocean floor, and to sink beneath its cool waves (363). Her perceptions too are altered by this illness, and she sees things as though through water—swimming, blended together (363, 369). In her 1929 essay 'Gas,' Woolf describes the experience of being under ether as a sort of visionary underwater pursuit (*Essays VI* 451-453).

In H.D,'s *HERmione*, when Her Gart is ill, she walks 'on water limbs' and has to hold onto the piano as a saving spar (174). The fact that the same metaphors are used for her search for an artistic vision and in her breakdown suggest that Her's adoption of the watery element risks tipping over into a dangerous loss of self. The same is true of the 'jelly-fish' experience, which, for H.D., came in the wake of breakdown, and which, she writes, she would have feared but for Bryher's presence. H.D.'s most sustained exploration of the overlap between madness and creativity, however, is found in her 1930 *Kora and Ka*—a very brief but remarkably closely-wrought story, in which the character John Helforth has recently suffered a neurotic breakdown, the roots of which go back to the loss of his two brothers in the war, and his sense of his mother's culpability in having let them go. As we shall see, *Kora and Ka* provides a concise exemplification of many of the concerns I have touched on throughout this chapter, specifically technologies of seeing, relationality, and mental breakdown, all presented via marine metaphors. Relationally, the story touches on Helforth's familial background, but primarily explores Helforth's relationship with his partner Kora, and to the part of his identity he calls Ka: his shadow self, but also his 'over-mind' (40). It is noteworthy that H.D. chooses the same term she uses, with emphasis on its visionary or creative potential, in *Notes on Thought and Vision*. Here, it is the dangerous side of this consciousness that she foregrounds: 'Ka partook of symptom, was neurotic breakdown' (25). Here too, this state of consciousness is presented to us through optics and lenses. Helforth's initial decision to go to the doctor is prompted when he suddenly begins to see 'the under-manager as under layers of green water, violet-laced,' and 'the numbers on his ledger shone violet-laced, nine, six, up through transparent seaweed' (15). When he goes to the doctor, he has his eyes tested. Walter’s argument that modernist writers like H.D. were

drawing on contemporary knowledge of optics is clearly borne out by the descriptions of the visual effects suffered by Helforth and the processes of the eye-test. Visual fatigue blurs colours so that black numbers become violet-laced and seem to swim; elsewhere reds and greens intermingle, and the doctor tests his eyesight with a sheet of text held at a distance. This is presumably some version of the Jaeger Test, first used in the latter half of the nineteenth century, rather than the more common Snellen Test, as it seems to include uppercase and lowercase letters as well as brackets:

> The doctor said, "shut your eyes, Mr. Helforth." He did so. The doctor said, "open your eyes, Mr. Helforth." He did so. The doctor said, "now is the large A, to the right or the left of the small script?" He told him. The doctor said, "look at the small O above the circle and tell me if the twin brackets are in or outside that circle." Helforth saw a sort of chart, placed at some distance from him. The wooden frame, on which the chart was balanced, reminded him of just such an arrangement of wood and cardboard from which he had learned his letters. Helforth said casually, "I will learn my letters." The doctor said, "I asked, was the bracket in or out" and he shoved the frame thing gradually nearer. (15-16)

As the chart looms in front of Helforth, he feels himself shrinking and separating from himself, until he is 'minute at the minimizing other-end of an opera-glass' (16). He tells the doctor he is unable to see anything, but his mind turns to an ornament Kora had placed in the house the day before, 'a globe rather the shape of Venetian glass' that 'reminded Helforth that man was a microbe' (16-17): 'he saw a world like a drop of water and himself enclosed in it,' a 'green world' without the doctor or the opera-glass miniature of Helforth in it (17). The

image is the same one H.D. later uses in 'Advent' when she writes of her jellyfish experience: 'If I let go (I, this one drop, this one ego under the microscope-telescope of Sigmund Freud) I fear to be dissolved utterly' (*Tribute to Freud* 116). The doctor repeats his question and Helforth feels himself reintegrate: the 'Helforth at the other end of the opera-glass' rejoins him and 'the two adjusted into one life-sized Helforth' (17). Helforth opens his eyes. Ka, in this story, while an aspect of Helforth's mind, is very much an effect of his eyes too. As the story opens, we have a rather sinister image of Ka waiting for Helforth's eyes to be exhausted so that she might usurp them:

> Helforth is abnormally sensitive to various interior focal planes of light. He is sensitive to all light. His eyes widen in the blinding sunlight and the sun beats down, incandescent, on his white face. The sun will sear Helforth's face away and let me come. His eyes will go blank, staring straight into the light and mine will see. I wait for Helforth's eyes to blind out Helforth. (11)

The water droplet vision in the doctor's office is also a function of Ka, as Helforth elsewhere pictures her as 'a shape of a drop of water, magnified to the size of a universe. Ka was a universe. In it, I swam, one microbe in a water-bead' (25). Man is a microbe, but the over-mind is a universe in which that microbe is dwarfed: a prospect that perhaps offers vast creative potential, but also threatens the annihilation of the individual psyche. Madness and illness are thus too, for H.D., forms of marine perception. For both Woolf and H.D., then, marine perception and the flux and intertwined vision it brings are both a source of inspiration and the threat of breakdown. Drowning is vision, but drowning is also death. H.D. even repeats here the octopus metaphorics we find in *HERmione.* Ka is described as

threatening (like the Her-Fayne union), to assimilate him. She 'wears [him] to a shred': 'it is I who am bone-thin. Soul is, I have proved it, octopus. Nevertheless, octopus cannot devour utterly. I am frame still, albeit, bone and sinew. I stretch arms. They are my arms. I, I am John Helforth' (26). The closing of the story confirms the relational echo of Fayne, as Kora, who sometimes takes on aspects of Ka, violently embraces Helforth after a quarrel: 'Her arms are round me, a terrible vice clutches, presses (octopus) breath from my body. I am frightened at this very sudden turn, this octopus-like clutch of those arms below my chest, crushing breath out' (47). Here, as elsewhere, marine perception contains threat as well as possibility.

This threat of breakdown or annihilation is also present, in a fascinating way, in the wartime writings of Woolf and H.D. We have seen how Woolf depicts the city in terms of flux and the submarine, and how she highlights the perceiving subject as an anemone or an oyster-eye within it. We have also seen how loss of self and ego-breakdown become represented in these same submarine metaphors. In what follows, I will show how these metaphors—which figure both the perceiving subject, and the threat of annihilation for that subject—function within the heightened stress and precariousness of London during the Blitz.

SWIMMING IN WAR-WRACKED CITIES

We have already seen how the maritime world bleeds into the urban in the texts of Conrad and Woolf, and how Woolf and H.D. take this blurring further, highlighting questions of perception and the problem of the modern subject. Yet another dimension is added to these metaphorics, however, when these authors bring into focus the maritime dimensions of the World Wars. There is a scene in *HERmione* that exemplifies how the underwater world combines trauma and creativity in a sort of personal exorcism. The retrospective world of

HERmione is a submerged one, and marine metaphorics pervade the text. One striking example of this is the storm that hits their house, flooding the aquariums where Her's father and brother are breeding new species. What is most notable in this scene, however, is the way in which the First World War becomes overlaid onto images of the storm: 'I feel we're shut up inside a submarine or a bomb that will burst suddenly,' Her says to Eugenia. Their faces are described as though 'seen under bottleglass . . . all green like faces underwater,' and the Virginia creeper that shows windblown through the window becomes 'the fins of tropic sea-fish' (89) or 'beats against the sea-washed window like seaweed flung up from dense mid-waters' (88). Her and Eugenia are 'flung into profound intimacy like shipwrecked mariners' (88), and the storm adopts the quality of both war in the trenches and the submarine war at sea.

> Brrrr-ooooo-ommm—the bomb burst suddenly. "This is ghastly. I thought the storm was over." The silver went platinum-white in the succeeding sudden flashes. "The whole world's blown up suddenly." The silver went lead, less than silver in the reassuring heavy downpour that almost drowned the distant BRRRooming drum, reassuring drum of raindrops beating; we're coming to help, we're coming to help, we're on the way to rescue you from lead and shot and silver turned to gunfire. . . "It may be over sometime. (87)

HERmione is set several years before 1914, but it was written in 1927, and it is impossible to read the above scene, with its bombs and submarines, its gunfire and violent onomatopoeia, without the retrospective shadow cast by the First World War. The work was only published in 1981, however, overlaying the scene with the echoes of yet another war, much of which

H.D. experienced directly during the Blitz in London. There is more, however. Eugenia suddenly muses on Her's birth, also during a storm, and her worry at the time that the doctor might not come (89). The combination of wartime trauma, submarines, and difficult childbirth seem to me to suggest, on H.D.'s part, an effort at creative exorcism of both her difficult confinement in 1919 and of the stillbirth of her first child, who died, she is convinced, due to the shock of news of the sinking of the Lusitania by German submarines in 1914. What is more, H.D. often associates herself creatively with her mother in her artistic self-styling (Mandel 310), and it does not seem to me excessive to draw parallels between her mother's experience here and her own experiences half a decade later.

In H.D.'s writing, it is noteworthy that the importance of the city which we find in Conrad is largely subsumed—even more so than in Woolf—by an increased attentiveness to the workings of the individual psyche, via the mechanisms of maritime perception. While H.D. does indeed write about the city—in the 'Murex' section of *Palimpsest*, for example, post-war London is described in terms of drift, anaesthesia, and forgetfulness, an 'island of forgetfulness' (161)—her maritime perception tends towards the spiritual and the visionary. In the case of Woolf, the same dissolution of personal boundaries and immersion in flux, while sometimes applied to illness or to the mind under gas, is most often staged with the city or the crowd, rather than the otherworldly, as its solvent.

Nonetheless, H.D's wartime writing also continues the maritime framing she uses elsewhere, merging them with an urban sensibility. In my introduction, I questioned what happens to Schopenhauer’s observant sailor when the *principium individuationes* breaks down. The shock and trauma of war, of course, are powerful catalysts for this sort of

breakdown. For example, Blitz practicalities are merged with H.D.'s visionary reflections in the two stories 'Blue Lights' and 'Tide-Line,' published in *Within the Walls*. In her introduction to this collection, Annette Debo describes the blue lightbulbs used during the Blitz black-outs, grounding H.D.'s personal reflections on the workings of her imagination within the particularities of the Blitz cityscapes (29). In the story 'Blue Lights,' H.D. describes how

> We have a blue-flame in our skull, rather like the blue-slide of my black-out lantern. There is a blue light, if you slide the little catch, on the electric torch, one way; there is the white or yellow light when you slide it in the opposite direction. It is like that. The white or yellow light is the ordinary light of human reason, the usual human mind-voltage. The blue light is for extra occasions; I switch on the blue when I go into the black-out. (120)

Here, H.D. pairs wartime London with her visionary perceptions, once again emphasising, in her chosen metaphor, the duress and danger of this frame of mind. However, in the story that follows ('Tide-Line'), she adds a marine dimension to the blue lights of black-out and the blue-flame brain:

> So the 4th dimensional world, the world of dream, of vision, of the blue-light, as I call it, high-powered thought, and the ordinary world come together. If I call the ordinary world, and its mental equivalent, the yellow light of the torch, then I suppose the intermediate world, the blue and the yellow together, should be green. It is perhaps the green world of rest, grass, trees, the level surface of the sea between tides. (121)

Here, as elsewhere, H.D. demonstrates an extraordinary sensitivity to colour and to the mechanics of sight. If the mundane world is yellow light, and the visionary world is blue

light, then the two combined give us green—a colour which, for H.D., is that of the 'world of rest, grass, trees, the level surface of the sea between tides' (121). She then moves to the marine:

> The full tide perhaps is the wash-up of externals; when the tide recedes, it leaves hidden beings and plants on that relatively infinitesimal strip of wet sand, that is ground common to both sea and land. When the tide of ordinary thought recedes, it can show these strange creatures, a phosphorescent jelly-fish, a star-fish, some trail of rare plant torn from a tropic sea-bed, a pebble of cornelian, coral-branch or amber. (121)

Like the green, vital world that is the intermediate between the ordinary and the visionary, the littoral strip between land and sea combines solid ground and the treasures of the deep. Here, H.D. returns to that favourite creature of her marine perception, the phosphorescent jellyfish, but as she continues the story, she admits that these creatures offer at best a temporary frame of mind:

> Those unusual treasures are the findings of the 4th dimensional mind, the inspirational mind or dream mind, but while we live in this world, we can not sustain that way of thinking, that way of vision for long. The tide of ordinary thought and living returns, covers the trail of exotic weed, erases the lovely print of shell, lifts the stranded jelly-fish back to its element. The high-powered image can not be sustained. It is drawn slowly back to the deep sea of universal thought. We must sadly watch it go, or more sadly watch it die, stranded above the tide-line. (121)

There are a few things worth noting in this story. The first is that it does not fulfil the expectations we might have for the sea to be associated with the visionary and the land with the ordinary. Instead, the tide that flows onto the beach is that of ordinary thought. In fact, it is the recession of the tide, the laying bare and exposing of the sea-wrack that H.D. classifies as the findings of 'the 4th dimensional mind.' But here she adds another layer: the deep sea is the realm of universal thought. These depths are something the 4th dimensional mind can tap into when the tide of ordinary thought recedes, but they are not one and the same. Instead, the receding tide allows the depths to come to the surface, and so allows the dream mind to plumb those depths, in a way, by exploring the sea-wrack left on the tide-line. As H.D. sadly notes, this cannot last, and the deeps must recover their treasures, lest they wither and die.

While this is not a sustained metaphor combining the city and the marine in the manner in which we find it in Woolf, the juxtaposition of these two stories, and their intertextuality, suggest that H.D. is describing the same thing in her image of the tide-line and in her image of the blue lightbulbs of wartime London. Both are images for something else—the peculiar state of consciousness she calls her 'dream mind'—but they are not disconnected or removed from the city of London and from the war (121). Rather, wartime London is the source of this dream consciousness, as elsewhere personal trauma or the public trauma of the Great War give rise to visionary experience.

There is, however, a yet more obvious connection between wartime London and H.D.'s marine perception, and this is to be found in a peculiar interreferentiality between 'The Walls do not Fall' (written in 1942) and her 1940 story, 'Before the Battle,' published in *Within the Walls.* The first poem in 'The Walls do not Fall' evokes the ruins of London during the Blitz.

She writes that 'the shrine lies open to the sky' (3) and 'the fallen roof / leaves the sealed room /open to the air' (3):

> we pass on
>
> to another cellar, to another sliced wall
>
> where poor utensils show like rare objects in a museum (4)

Walls and buildings lie crumbled, opened to the elements, yet H.D. ends the poem on a hopeful note:

> the bone-frame was made for
>
> no such shock knit within terror,
>
> yet the skeleton stood up to it:
>
> the flesh? it was melted away,
>
> the heart burnt out, dead ember,
>
> tendons, muscles shattered, outer husk dismembered,
>
> yet the frame held:
>
> we passed the flame: we wonder
>
> what saved us? what for? (4)

H.D. strikes a parallel between the ruins of the city and the endurance of its populace: burnt, destroyed, dismembered, but with bones still maintaining their integrity, a frame ready for renewal. In the fourth poem of the collection, H.D. figures this endurance and this urban

masonry through the image of a wall of coral. The animal within its shell is a 'flabby, amorphous hermit' (8), yet the reef itself is 'bone, stone, marble / hewn from within by that craftsman' (8)—'oyster, clam mollusc / is master-mason planning / the stone marvel' (8). This masonry, like the city skeletons of the first poem, is strangely durable in its fragility ('the sea thrust / is powerless against coral,' lines 3-4), and it follows the ebbs and flows of outer circumstance, yielding and resisting, and thus escaping destruction. Like the coral which 'prompted by hunger / . . . opens to the tide-flow' and then shuts against the waves of destruction (8), the speaker tells us

I sense my own limit,

my shell-jaws snap shut

at invasion of the limitless,

ocean-weight; infinite water

can not crack me (9)

This theme of fragile resistance against a much greater power persists throughout the poem, evoking the resistance of the individual psyche and the collective psyche of the city against the violence and duress of the war. To appropriate an image from *Asphodel,* 'strike against the wave, the advance of the wave and you are doomed' (195). Instead, H.D, espouses a supple resistance, concluding with an injunction:

so I in my own way know

that the whale

can not digest me:

be firm in your own small, static, limited

orbit and the shark-jaws

of outer circumstance

will spit you forth:

be indigestible, hard, ungiving,

so that, living within,

you beget, self-out-of-self,

selfless,

that pearl-of-great-price. (9)

Strikingly, H.D. here repeats her motif of the self-begetting pearl-of-great-price that we find in her 1919 *Notes on Thought and Vision,* and again in her 1927 *HERmione.* In each of these instances, the pearl is the visionary product of stress and self-transformation, caused by outer circumstance. Here, H.D. suggests that the Second World War might be the trauma that allows the individual or collective psyche to bring forth a vision or a transformation of great value.

H.D. expresses this train of thought yet more insistently in her 1940 story, 'Before the Battle,' comparing the strain of the war on the city of London, and the collective resistance to that strain, to waves over a coral reef. The motif of masonry and ruins is not present here; but

more so than the poem in 'The Walls do not Fall,' this story emphasises the collective, and the strength present in community:

> So things rush over us suddenly. We go along, day by day, then an inevitable moment arrives, unexpectedly, when the Battle of Britain becomes something that may actually happen, and we stand shoulder to shoulder, living bodies, like the bodies that make up coral-islands, to contribute, to sacrifice our very bones to keep back the invader. But until we are sacrificed or sanctified by a new peace, inevitable waves of terror sweep over us, cosmic tide-waves of terror drown us. Many of us are familiar with a sort of rhythm of terror, like rhythm of birth-pangs, actually we are in travail, actually and literally in the sense of the Book of Revelations, we ourselves are begetting this new age. (145)

In this passage, the pearl-of-great-price is the difficult birth, the pangs of the world in labour from Revelations. According to the passage above, this pearl, this child that is hoped for, will be a new age, and a new peace.

On the 28th of March 1941, Virginia Woolf weighed her pockets with stones and walked into the River Ouse. It was the second year of the war, and Woolf feared she was becoming mad. Public reaction to Woolf's death was mixed. On the 4th of April, T.S. Eliot wrote to Leonard Woolf, 'for myself and others it is the end of a world' (*Afterwords* 62). Elizabeth Bowen expressed a similar emotion: 'as far as I am concerned, a great deal of the meaning seems to have gone out of this world' (*Afterwords* 8). Vita described Woolf's death as 'a loss which can never diminish' (*Afterwords* 23), and wrote in a letter to Dame Ethel Smyth: 'All I can feel is that it is better for her to be dead than mad, and I do thank God that

she has not been found. The river is tidal so she has probably been carried out to sea.[45] She loved the sea' (*Afterwords* 204). Multiple newspapers, however, misquoted Woolf's suicide note, casting it in light of the ongoing war. Woolf's note referred to her previous episodes of madness and expressed the conviction that she could not 'go through another of those terrible times' (*Letters VI* 481, no. 3702); but the *Sunday Times, Gloucestershire Echo, Hull Daily Mail,* and *Derby Daily Telegraph* all quoted her as writing 'I cannot go on any longer in these terrible times,' and cited the coroner Dr E.F. Hoare as claiming that 'she was undoubtedly of an extremely sensitive nature and was much more responsive than most people to the general beastliness of things happening in this world to-day' (*Times 5, Gloucestershire* 1, *Hull* 1, *Derby* 8). This prompted scorn from some sections of the public. In a letter published in the papers, Kathleen Hicks, the wife of the Bishop of Lincoln, quibbled that 'many people, possibly even more "sensitive," have lost their all and seen appalling happenings, yet they take their part nobly in this fight for God against the devil.' She ends with a rhetorical flourish: 'Where are our ideals of love and faith? And what shall we all be if we listen to and sympathize with this sort of "I cannot carry on?"' (Hicks 4). Leonard Woolf issued a response correcting the citation and clarifying that Virginia's death had been caused by her mental illness and not by weakness in the face of the war (Woolf, Leonard 4), yet papers persisted in sensationalising Woolf's 'I cannot carry on,' with the *Sunday Times* printing Leonard's response to Hicks under this title (*Times* 3). There is a definite sense that a large portion of the public, including friends and admirers of Woolf, felt her death responded to or resonated with the wider dismalness of the war. Among those who felt this were H.D., Bryher, and May Sarton, who discussed Woolf's death in their letters. While Bryher held that suicide could be

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[45] Woolf's body was found a short way downstream on the 18th of April (*Letter VI* 487).

heroic, Sarton and H.D. both responded in a more subdued vein, with Sarton writing that Woolf's death represented 'a fearful defeat of the spirit . . . the tangible example of what Hitler means' (archival materials cited in Mandel, 'Letters Across the Atlantic,' 102). While Woolf's suicide was due to her mental illness and not to despair concerning the war, her death nonetheless became a sort of sign of the times for her contemporaries. In an obituary, the writer P.H. Wallis encapsulated this feeling by describing Woolf as 'the spiritual antithesis of all that is connoted in the phrase "Hitlerism"' (*Afterwords* xxiv).

H.D. reflects on Woolf's death in her story, 'The Ghost,' part of her Blitz writing that would be published in *Within the Walls.* The setting of the story is Renishaw Hall, the home of the Sitwells, and H.D.'s character muses on the 'new post-war generation' of 'realists' who criticise circles such as these: 'they were escapists, they lived in the much-maligned ivory-tower. They had no sense of "realities"' (141). H.D.'s character internally retorts, 'how many blitz-nights did you spend in London?':

> The effects, it was scientifically stated, of war-shock were not at once registered. You stiffened, you endured, you waited for the next bout of bombing. Were bombs reality? If so, were the realists, who theorised about the new Britain, the new England, the new World, in the thick of it? (141)

As she stares into a mirror, she imagines a film coming over her eyes, transforming the glass into a 'diviner's crystal' (141). Her mind turns to ghosts, to 'tangible presences' (141). Of course, H.D. very much believed in the spiritual world, but it is important to bear in mind that for her this is strongly tied up with histories, with palimpsests, with the continuation of the past in the present. She asks herself

> Did they know, the realists, the reality of the ghost-world? Shelley was real. Proust whom they now anathematised, was real. The late Mrs. Woolf who walked into a river, but a few weeks ago, was real. She was real. Her death was a sign of failure, or not? Having done her work, one camp protested, she was well out of it. Had she done her work? What was her work? What was the work of the artist? (141-142)

Woolf becomes the exemplar of the ivory-tower world maligned by the 'realists.' H.D.'s questions contrast the unreality ascribed to Woolf with an insistence that she is real, and links this, furthermore, to her work as an artist. She leaves her questions unanswered, but in the conflation of the Blitz and war-shock with Woolf's death, the literary world, and the artist, she is making an implicit argument for the legitimacy of the kind of perception and reality exemplified by writers like Woolf.

Woolf's own wartime fiction is markedly land-bound. The distance from the sea is a recurrent comment in *Between the Acts*. It also uncannily foreshadows Woolf's own death in its legend of the lady who drowned herself in the fishpond (32). Woolf does, however, write of the war through maritime metaphors, albeit in passing. In a diary entry on the 19th of August 1940, playing with perspective, she describes seeing enemy planes up close like a minnow looking up into the belly of a shark (*Diary V* 312). In *Three Guineas*, she writes of the threat of fascism abroad as the manifestation of a dangerous masculinity she perceives in English society as well. Abroad, she concedes, 'the monster has come more openly to the surface' (180), but the implication is that the violence and will to dominate exemplified by leaders like Hitler and Mussolini is also present in the domineering masculinity of Englishmen. The metaphor is a Freudian suggestion of the monsters of violence and

destruction that lurk beneath the respectability of modern society. It also echoes, in a sinister way, the fishing metaphor Woolf deploys elsewhere. It is striking to compare how shocking she thinks men find the discoveries of the girl fishing on the shore in 'Professions for Women' to the violent issue of what Woolf describes as the masculine subconscious. The scandal of the woman's body, which proved so dangerous to the mores and sensibilities of men, seems piteous compared to the emergent monstrosities of fascism and totalitarianism.

Woolf's decidedly masculine submarine monsters, however, present an interesting contrast to male 'narratives of marine monstrosity' (Stott 305), with their grotesque and suffocating octopuses, and their 'jellyfish attributes' like 'a lack of energy,' a 'permanently mesmeric state,' and 'almost purely emotional reactions' (Lewis 334). These creatures, which in authors like Woolf and H.D. constitute celebrations of a rhizomatic subjectivity, are by contrast, in male authors, decidedly feminine threats to the male subject. In 'Prufrock's Pervigilium,' T.S. Eliot dramatises the male neurasthenic tortured by this feminine octopus:

> I tossed the blankets back, to watch the darkness
>
> Crawling among the papers on the table
>
> It leapt to the floor and made a sudden hiss
>
> And darted stealthily across the wall
>
> Flattened itself upon the ceiling overhead
>
> Stretched out its tentacles, prepared to leap (18-24)

Eliot's early poetry is pervaded by such submarine neurasthenia, by marine creatures both alluring and horrifying. In my next chapter, I will trace images of sea-change and drowning in

Eliot's poetry, and show how he moves from an early fascination with and repulsion by the submarine, to a more consolidatory performance of Atlantic identity, mythologising his seafaring ancestors in poems like 'Marina' and 'East Coker.'

CHAPTER 3

SEA-CHANGE, OYSTERS, AND OCEAN-CROSSING: THE WATERY PERSONAE OF MR ELIOT

In a footnote to his 1925 'A Background for Contemporary Poetry,' I.A. Richards attached a Conradian phrase to *The Waste Land* that is by now nearly inextricable from it: 'In the destructive element immerse. That is the way' (520; *Lord Jim* 162). 'Mr Eliot,' he argues, has effected 'a severance between his poetry and *all* beliefs,' and has thus 'shown the way to the only solution of [the] difficulties' of salvaging the modern individual from 'a sense of desolation, of uncertainty, of futility, of the groundlessness of aspirations, of the vanity of endeavour, and a thirst for the life-giving water which seems suddenly to have failed' (520). This tracing of a redemptive trajectory in Eliot's poetry was further validated by the poet's public conversion to Christianity (Gordon 223), and is a point of consensus in most New Critical approaches to his work after 1927,[46] while Eliot himself masterfully performs this trajectory in poems like *Ash Wednesday* and *Four Quartets.*

What is striking in contemporary responses to *The Waste Land*, however, is that it seems largely to have bewildered its readers, and this should call into question, I think, to what extent it ever was a redemptive, salvaging poem in the first place. John Crowe Ransom damns it as 'one of the most insubordinate poems in the language' (108). A variety of

[46] As a cautionary note, it is worth mentioning that I.A. Richards' work preceded and influenced New Criticism (and was also critiqued by various New Critics for its psychological bent), despite his being persistently counted as part of the movement. Also, while the New Criticism is largely a critical movement that sprung out of American Agrarianism in the Southern states, I.A. Richards was, of course, British. It should also be noted that initial responses by the New Critics to *The Waste Land* were not all positive. John Crowe Ransom bemoaned its lack of prosody and its incoherence (106-108). By the end of Eliot's life, however, he reads religion everywhere, making the somewhat baffling argument that the 'overwhelming question' in Prufrock is that gentlemen's pressing urge to discover whether or not his beloved is religious ('The Overwhelming Question' 369).

reviewers accuse Eliot of 'walking very near the limits of coherency' (Rickword 111), of 'extreme disconnection' (Ransom 106), and of giving us 'a kaleidoscopic movement in which the bright-colored pieces fail to atone for the absence of an integrated design' (Untermeyer 93). Eliot chooses to depict dissolution, they complain, and the 'breaking-down of the very structures on which life has modelled itself' (Untermeyer 93). He neglects, in so doing, the duty of the artist, who is 'by the very nature of creation, pledged to give form to formlessness' (Untermeyer 93). Even in more positive reviews, the poem is persistently described as 'expressionist' or 'romanticist'—a striking contrast with the near-impossibility of now thinking of it as anything other than a classicist work *par excellence.*[47] Later, in 1939, Cleanth Brooks would contend (not unlike Richards), that the very dissolution of the poem, giving an unflinching diagnosis of the modern world, constitutes the purgative moment that will lead to greater renewal (157-159).

In critical responses to Eliot, both early and current, this dissolution, immersion, and purging is often presented in marine imagery. (Edmund Wilson Jr, especially, as we shall see, relishes images of destructive floods and drowned cities.) And indeed, throughout Eliot's oeuvre, sea-change, or the 'trial and judgement of the sea,' is a crucial image ('Dry Salvages' III line 42). As I will show, it defines how he thinks about poetry and creativity, how he construes his New England identity, and how he expresses his religious convictions. However, particularly in his earlier works, it is also a nihilistic, self-destructive image, figuring the temptation of un-selfing. It is a mistake to read Eliot's multiple deaths by water

[47] Allen Tate and John McClure both call the poem (and Eliot) 'romanticist' (110, 105), while Helen McAfee, Edmund Wilson, and Elinor Wylie all characterise it as 'expressionist' (108, 79-80, 96). For an early formulation of Eliot's classicism see Stephen Spender, *The Destructive Element* (12-17). This classicism was also strongly defended by critics like Jim McCue and Peter Howarth in the wake of Lawrence Rainey's *Revisiting* The Waste Land (McCue 24; Howarth 284).

as invairably heralding rebirth (though at times they do). It is also a mistake to construe death by water as a universally frightful prospect in Eliot's writing. Often, the loss of the self is fraught with libidinous temptation.

In this chapter, I will tease out a few of the drowning (or purging) roles Eliot gives us—those of self-destruction, of poetry, of nationality, and of male camaraderie—focussing on the image of sea-change. As in my discussion of H.D. and Woolf, I am interested here in how Eliot performs modern subjectivity through marine imagery. Sometimes, as with Woolf and H.D., this involves a dissolution of the self, though Eliot's un-selfing is markedly different from those of the women writers I have discussed; elsewhere, particularly by the time we get to *Four Quartets*, it is an Exodus-like ocean-crossing that more firmly consolidates a national identity. Throughout his life, the erotic, transgressive space of the Atlantic Ocean also serves as a vehicle for male bonding and a ribald brotherhood of artists. Composed from his time at Harvard up until the end of his life (McIntire 13-15), the voyages of Columbo (Eliot's Columbus) become a specifically marine performance of masculinity and male community, via the medium of transgressive sex, the space of the ship, and watery immersion.

THERE ARE NO EYES IN THE SEA

Eliot somewhat mockingly responded to Richards' 'destructive element' essay: 'we await … (as Mr. Richards is awaiting the future poet), the great genius who shall triumphantly succeed in believing *something*' ('Note on Poetry and Belief' 17). In the following years, Eliot and Richards became friends, with Eliot occasionally travelling to visit Richards in Cambridge ('On TSE' 5). In his memorial to Eliot, Richards recalls his personality as follows:

> What was peculiar to TSE in this sort was the delicately perceptible trace, the ghostly flavor of irony which hung about his manner as though he were preparing a parody. Not too much, I think, should be made of these 'deliberate disguises,' but he did have a repertory of more or less confessed poses which his friends were not debarred from seeing through. 'Sometimes I pose and sometimes I pose that I pose,' as Stella Benson beautifully put it. ('On TSE' 6)

He remembers too that on visits, Eliot, in marked contrast with the 'casualness of Cambridge,' evinced 'a formality, a precision, a concern for standards in dress and deportment, a kind of consciousness of conduct' (6). Some of this, he concedes, may have been due to Eliot's status as a foreigner, but he contends that this consciousness of conduct was an individual trait of Eliot's rather than a cultural one (6).

This self-consciousness is evident everywhere in Eliot's poetry. It is evident too, in his personal life, or more specifically, in how he represents this personal life to the public. Think, for example, of his announcement, in the preface of his essays *For Lancelot Andrewes* (1928) of his religious conversion (Gordon 225). Or, in rather the opposite spirit, the threat to sue John Peter for an essay suggesting that *The Waste Land* was an elegy for a dead, male beloved (Peter 165). Perhaps the least pleasant side of Eliot's careful management of his public image was recently unveiled to the public in Eliot's cutting statement discovered on the opening of the Emily Hale letters at Princeton, in which he states that 'Emily Hale would have killed the poet in me' ('Directions to my Executors' 2). Eliot glosses over his own treatment of Hale, disavows what was once evidently an intimate and meaningful relationship, and attacks Hale's character, citing 'evidence of insensitiveness and bad taste,'

and speculating that 'what she liked was my reputation rather than my work' ('Directions to my Executors' 2).[48]

In Eliot's early poetry, this self-consciousness is acute. Eyes are everywhere. In 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night,' the corner of a prostitute's eye 'Twists like a crooked pin' (21-22), while our speaker can see 'nothing behind that child's eye' (40), and sees yet more 'eyes in the street / Trying to peer through lighted shutters' (41-42). In 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,' he has 'known the eyes already, known them all—the eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase' (55-56). In 'The Hollow Men' he is haunted by 'Eyes I dare not meet in dreams' (II line 1 and 20). In the antisemitic 'Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar,' the Jewish Bleistein has a crablike, 'lustreless protrusive eye' that 'stares from the protozoic slime' (lines 17-18). These eyes are the exact opposite of what we found in Woolf and H.D.; nowhere in Eliot do we encounter some great marine eye, perceptively enmeshed in the surrounding world. Throughout his early work, rather, we find blind or 'lustreless' eyes, and feel in his poems the discomfort of being watched, and a disgust and anxiety in the observation of others. His personae are ever self-conscious, observed by 'leering houses' ('First Debate Between the Body and Soul' line 11), tormenting eyes that pin with a formulated phrase ('Prufrock' lines 56-57), and 'evil' streets where buildings, 'leaning all together / Pointed a ribald finger at me in the darkness / Whispering all together, chuckled at me in the darkness' ('Prufrock's Pervigilium' lines 15-17). Eliot's watery immersions, in this early poetry, are drownings, self-annihilations. When Prufrock wishes he were 'a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling over the floors of silent seas' (lines 73-74), what strikes one is the

[48] One is tempted to wonder whether Eliot ever considered that Hale might have liked the man himself rather than his work or his reputation.

eerie disembodiment and unobtrusiveness of the image: blind pincers moving unseen through the sea of life. In *The Waste Land*, Tiresias is simultaneously blind and voyeuristic. An early reviewer of *The Waste Land* gives a striking account of her impressions of Eliot's earlier poetry (though she retracts them in the matter of *The Waste Land*):

> I confess that once upon a time I believed Mr. Eliot to be a brutal person: this was when I first read the "Portrait of a Lady." I now recognize my error, but my sense of the hopeless sadness and humiliation of the poor lady was perfectly sound. I felt that Mr. Eliot had torn the shrinking creature's clothes from her back and pulled the drawing-room curtains aside with a click to admit a flood of shameful sunlight, and I hated him for his cruelty. Only now that I know he is Tiresias have I lost my desire to strike him blind as Peeping Tom. (Wylie 95)

I contend that Eliot's Tiresias remains Peeping Tom. Time and again, Eliot's characters wonder what might have happened 'if we could have given ourselves the slip' ('Entretien dans un Parc' line 28), and they consider the need 'to prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet' ('Prufrock' line 27). When we do encounter a character, like the comedian in 'Suite Clownesque,' who is eminently successful in their 'self-embodied rôle' (I line 24), they are treated with a mixture of scorn and envy: 'Here's one who has the world at rights / Here's one who gets away with it / By the simple spreading of the toes' (I lines 21-23).

Unlike Woolf and H.D.'s submarine imagery, Eliot's is one of utter dissolution.[49] There is no perception here. Eliot's ideal writer, as we saw in the previous chapter, is both a

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[49] Martin Lockerd and Cassandra Laity have convincingly shown how Eliot's images of drowning and immersion in his early poetry participate in the decadent trope of the destruction and decay of the body. See Lockerd's 'Into Cleanness Leaping: Brooke, Eliot, and the Decadent Body' (2013) and Laity's 'T.S. Eliot and A.C. Swinburne: Decadent Bodies, Modern Visualities, and Changing Modes of Perception' (2004).

God and a diver—beings from above who might immerse themselves momentarily, but are not themselves creatures of the depths:

> I like to feel that a writer is perfectly cool and detached, regarding other people's feelings or his own, like a God who has got beyond them; or a person who has dived very deep and comes up holding firmly some hitherto unseen submarine creature. (*Letters 1* 220)

In the previous chapter, I noted the tension between the 'God who has got beyond' all feelings, and the diver who plunges into them and comes up holding his catch. What is fascinating here is that, despite presenting them as examples of the same thing, Eliot is presenting two distinct trajectories: one is a transcendence, and the other is a plunging.

Importantly, of course, Eliot's writer-diver comes to the surface again, but the submarine, here and elsewhere, does constitute a genuinely alluring realm, albeit one that is associated with feeling, the unconscious, and the unseen. There are no eyes in the depths, at least until the diver comes. Unlike H.D.'s jellyfish-turned-eye, Eliot's jellyfish are insensate, brutish creatures, untroubled with consciousness, as in 'Suite Clownesque,' where the self-satisfied comedian is 'A jellyfish impertinent, / A jellyfish without repose' (I lines 10-11).[50] The jellyfish reference is certainly not meant to be flattering, and is not unlike the similarly submarine, crablike Bleistein. These are images of an insufficiently completed natural evolution. At the same time, the self-confidence of this floating buffoon, the

[50] Eliot's only other reference to jellyfish occurs in his philosophy dissertation, 'Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley,' shortly after a chapter on solipsism. In his conclusion, he muses, in quite a lovely turn of phrase, that 'truth on our level is a different thing from truth for the jellyfish, and there must certainly be analogies for truth and error in jellyfish life' (166).

jellyfish-comedian, does bring into focus the speaker, 'Neat, complete, / In the quintessential flannel suit' (III lines 22-23), worriedly querying, 'But say, just be serious, Do you think that I'm all right?' (III lines 25-26). It is hard not to read a note of envy in 'Here's one who gets away with it' (I, line 22).

'Suite Clownesque' shares this self-satisfied submarine figure with another of Eliot's poems, 'Mr Appolinax,' published in September 1916 in *Poetry,* along with three other poems, under the collective title 'Observations'—an apt phrase with which to caption the cautious, watching poetry of Eliot around this time (Ricks and McCue *I* 434). 'Mr Apollinax' also shares in 'Suite Clownesque's Laforguean influence. 'Clownesque' is Laforgue's word, occurring in his 'Pierrôt Suite.' Pierrots are naive, comedic characters—ridiculous and gullible, but at the same time poised, adaptive, and beautiful (Forrest 82-83).[51] It is not hard to see what Eliot would have found attractive about this character, and about Laforgue in general: deathly serious, tormented by self-consciousness, but also self-ironising to the point of ridiculousness.[52] This is the predominant tone of *Salomé,* Laforgue's first parody in his *Moralités Légendaire.* As Michele Hannoosh has argued, in this story, Laforgue both contributes to and thoroughly pokes fun at *fin-de-siècle* decadence (56). His solipsistic heroine does not dance, but gives an inane lecture, expatiating on nothingness and the Unconscious. Strikingly, the central image in this story is a barely altered version of Laforgue's prose-poem, 'l'Aquarium' (Hannoosh 52). Hannoosh argues that it represents the

[51] For a thorough exploration of this figure, from its inception in commedia dell'arte through its adaptations by Laforgue, Eliot, and Wallace Stevens, see Robert F. Storey's *Pierrot: A Critical History of a Mask* (1978).
[52] The influence of Laforgue on Eliot has been well documented (see for example Moody's 1979 *Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet,* especially the chapter 'Prufrock Observed,' pp. 17-52). Eliot himself would write that he owed more to Laforgue 'than to any one poet in any language' ('To Criticise the Critic' 465), and would highlight especially the attractive irony of the French poet, used to 'express a dédoublement of the personality against which the subject struggles' ('A Commentary' 516).

ideal 'to which the Decadents of the Isles aspire: perfect tranquility, stillness, and satisfaction, unlike the tormented, restless existence of men, perpetually unfulfilled' (62). In Salomé's palatial aquarium, we find (as in the one in Berlin), '*toute une flore fœtale et claustrale et vibratile*' (117), and the religious leader of the palace gives us the following oration:

> *Ô monde de satisfaits, vous êtes dans la béatitude aveugle et silencieuse, et nous, nous desséchons de fringales supra-terrestres. Et pourquoi les antennes de nos sens, à nous, ne sont-elles pas bornées par l'Aveugle, et l'Opaque et le Silence, et flairent-elles au delà de ce qui est de chez nous ? Et que ne savons-nous aussi nous incruster dans notre petit coin pour y cuver l'ivre-mort de notre petit Moi?*
>
> [O world of satisfied creatures, you are in blind and silent beatitude, while we parch ourselves with supra-terrestrial cravings. Why are the antennae of our senses not bounded by Blindness, Opacity, and Silence, and why do we seek what is beyond us? Why do we, too, not know to embed ourselves in our little corner to sleep off the dead drunkenness of the little 'I'?] (117-118)

As in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,' the submarine world is a blind, silent chamber where the ego can dissolve. There is no luminous oyster-eye in this aquarium. In 'Mr Apollinax,' generally accepted to be a parodic sketch of Bertrand Russell (Ricks and McCue *I* 435-437), the submarine world is similarly self-satisfied and solipsistic:

> He laughed like an irresponsible foetus.
>
> His laughter was submarine and profound
>
> Like the old man of the sea's

Hidden under coral islands

Where worried bodies of drowned men drift down in the green silence

Dropping from fingers of surf. (lines 7-12)

As in 'Suite Clownesque,' Eliot is somewhat mocking of this 'irresponsible foetus'[53] who laughs like 'the old man of the sea' (lines 7 and 9). Like the jellyfish-comedian playing his 'self-embodied rôle' (I line 24), the comparison of Mr Apollinax with the old man of the sea suggests the watery Proteus, metamorphosing god of many guises. The submarine foetus inevitable brings to mind Laforgue's '*flore foetale'* (117), and like Laforgue's aquarium, the watery world of Mr Apollinax offers an escape, a dissolution, an ego-death: 'worried bodies of drowned men' may drift (line 11), but the men themselves are now free of care, sinking down to rest here on the sea-floor, released from the tormenting grasp of life's currents and 'fingers of surf' (line 12). Then the sinister side of Eliot's submarine world obtrudes:

I looked for the head of Mr. Apollinax rolling under a chair

Or grinning over a screen

With seaweed in its hair. (lines 13-15)

We are reminded again of *Salomé*, and the fate suffered by Iaokanann, who has foolishly succumbed to the temptations of the *petite mort*, and whom Salomé has beheaded in revenge for having made herself vulnerable to him (132, 134). Ego-death is a dangerous thing. It is tempting to read this dissolution as a subtle dig at the philandering Bertrand Russell, a 'Priapus in the shrubbery' (line 4), who was at the time openly pursuing Vivien Eliot. Still, Mr

[53] One is reminded of Conrad's fondness for describing self-satisfied characters as overgrown babies; think of Mr Vladimir in *The Secret Agent*, or the 'other man' in *The Return*.

Apollinax becomes the prophet, the Laforgean John the Baptist who prepares the way for all those worried men who abandon themselves to a blissful drowning (perhaps at Ottoline Morrell's Garsington cottage, with its bohemian circles dabbling in 'dry and passionate talk' (line 17) and having tea at 'Professor Channing-Cheetah's' (line 6)). But Mr Apollinax's head also reminds us that the men drifting down to rest here are all drowned, and will soon be decomposing, themselves becoming rolling heads and fingers of surf. In this poem, Eliot presents both the temptation and the destruction of sea-change; it is a space with no eyes and no speech, where one can lose oneself, cease to be watched and to watch, as limbs and tissue disarticulate and liquefy. One senses, though, that Eliot himself is not one of those 'drowned men.'

'THOSE ARE PEARLS THAT WERE HIS EYES'

In H.D.'s seas, pearls become eyes; in Eliot's seas, eyes become pearls. One of the most persistent images in Eliot's oeuvre, and one which we can readily link both to the Atlantic performances of poems like *Four Quartets*, and to the destructive drowning we find in the early poetry, is the Shakespearean image of sea-change. The frequency with which this image has been used has to a large extent separated it from any necessary connection with its original context in *The Tempest*, which references the supposed death at sea of the shipwrecked King Alonso, and his watery decomposition—and recomposition—from living, seeing man, into something 'rich and strange' (*Tempest* 1.2.397-403). Yet Eliot's use of the image warrants a closer look. Firstly (and we shall see the importance of this point later), it is an Atlantic image. It is difficult to imagine that Eliot would have been unaware of the

contentions in the early twentieth century (now generally accepted)[54] that Shakespeare's primary source in writing *The Tempest* was a text by William Strachey entitled *A true reportory of the wracke, and redemption of Sir THOMAS GATES Knight; vpon, and from the Ilands of the Bermudas: his comming to Virginia, and the estate of that Colonie then, and after, vnder the gouernment of the Lord LA WARRE, Iuly 15. 1610.* This source material, as well as the colonial depictions of Caliban and Sycorax, places the inspiration for *The Tempest* in the early seventeenth-century naval expansion of England to the Americas, and makes the shipwreck we find therein an Atlantic one. Secondly, the image construes un-selfing as a libidinous fall into the unconscious, or preconscious: it is the death of the ego. Finally, this un-selfing offers some potential gain in value, where personality is unmade and remade into the beautiful, calcified death of 'pearls that were his eyes' (*The Waste Land* line 125). In fact, Eliot will use this unmaking of the self in his arguments for the sublimation of the individual author into the vast body of tradition. The drowning of the king, as figure of authority, is remarkably resonant with his own argument, in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent, 'that the 'progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality' (108), particularly when taken in combination with Eliot's own frequent use of the image of sea-change to describe artistic creation: images stored up in the poet's memory from actual events or emotions in life are transmuted into a palimpsest of past and present: a crystallisation of various things that were in flux into something hard, valuable, and beautiful. In his 1927 'Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca,' for example, Eliot writes of

[54] This argument had already been made in Eliot's time, for example in Charles Mills Gailey's strikingly titled, *Shakespeare and the Founders of Liberty in America*, published in 1917. For recent research, see Alden Vaughan's 'William Strachey's "True Reportary" and Shakespeare: A Closer Look at the Evidence' (2008).

> the struggle—which alone constitutes life for a poet—to transmute his personal and private agonies into something rich and strange, something universal and impersonal. The rage of Dante against Florence, or Pistoia, or what not, the deep surge of Shakespeare's general cynicism and disillusionment, are mere gigantic attempts to metamorphose private failures and disappointments. The great poet, in writing himself, writes his time. (253-254)

The sea-change image thus becomes an analogue to Eliot's catalyst image in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent': the poet's personal emotions are transmuted, and memories are metamorphosed into the matter of poetry. This connection between the creative process and the 'problem' of the present is also evident in Eliot's use of the image of sea-change in his 'London Letter' of July 1921, for example, when he praises the *Ballets Russes* of Sergei Diaghilev and the music of Stravinsky as being 'more sophisticated' than earlier ballet, yet as simultaneously boasting a greater simplification: 'and what is needed of art,' Eliot affirms, 'is a simplification of current life into something rich and strange' (363). This is an interesting formulation on Eliot's part, as we tend to think of the change into 'something rich and strange' as a complication rather than a simplification: that which was a unity dissolves into multiplicity, into various 'currents' of life, even. Arguably, Eliot is thinking here of lapidary pearls rather than rich and strange currents.

This use of the image of sea-change seems to correspond very nearly to Richards' image of the destructive element and, in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1930), the transmuted memory takes on a divine character, though pagan rather than messianic. Eliot writes of Shakespeare:

> Again and again, in his use of a word, he will give a new meaning or extract a latent one; again and again the right imagery, saturated while it lay in the depths of Shakespeare's memory will rise like Anadyomene from the sea. (687)

To this Shakespearean death and rebirth, Eliot contrasts the lesser art of Coleridge, who nonetheless also effects a sea-change in his poetry. Eliot imagines how 'Kubla Khan,' having its origins in some material read by its author, 'sank to the depths of Coleridge's feeling, was saturated, transformed there—"those are pearls that were his eyes"—and brought up into daylight again' (687). Coleridge achieves this sea-change of images only 'fitfully,' whereas in a truly great poet like Shakespeare, Eliot holds, 'it happens almost incessantly' (687). The idea that it is the individual memory that effects these metamorphoses is important too. In a 1927 letter to Geoffrey Faber, Eliot reminds him that 'Plato had something valuable to say about the theory of value. Remember his oyster' (*Letters III* 713). Plato's oyster is what man would be if he had no memory: 'If you had no memory you could not even remember that you ever did enjoy pleasure . . . your life would not be that of a man, but of a mollusc or other shell-fish like the oyster' (*Philebus* 21c). For Eliot, *because* the artist does have a memory, he is no mere oyster, but one that produces a pearl from the material that enters his sphere of existence. Rather characteristically for Eliot, this is not a conscious process, but something that occurs in the depths of the unconscious. There may once have been eyes, but they are now pearls, and this permanence and deadness feels, in Eliot, like a relief.[55]

And yet, the origins of this image for Eliot are not primarily or invariably concerned with poeisis, and there are not always pearls to be got for one's drowning. At times, the

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[55] Compare Eliot's famous statement that 'only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things' ('Tradition and the Individual Talent' 111)

surrender to the waters of one's unconscious life is purely libidinous and self-destructive. The earliest dating of the 'Death by Water' section we later find reproduced in *The Waste Land* is from 1916 or 1917, in 'Dans le Restaurant,' and there it is an image of sexual fall (for dating see Ricks and McCue *I* 526). The speaker finds himself imposed upon in conversation by a lecherous waiter who confides in him an illicit sexual experience from his childhood. The speaker is annoyed by the imposition, but is also disconcerted by the similarity in their sexual experiences. The poem closes, somewhat strangely, with 'Plébas, le Phénicien pendant quinze jours noyé' (line 25), of whom we are told that he

> *oubliait les cris des mouettes et la houle de Cornouaille,*
>
> *Et les profits et les pertes, et la cargainson d'étain:*
>
> *Un courant de sous-mer l'emporta très loin,*
>
> *Le repassant aux étapes des sa vie antérieure*
>
> *Figurez-vous donc, c'était un sort pénible;*
>
> *Cependant, ce fut jadis un bel homme, de haute taille* (lines 26-31)
>
> [forgot the cries of the gulls and the surf of Cornwall,
>
> And the profits and the losses, and the cargo of tin:
>
> An undersea current carried him far away,
>
> Through the stages of his previous life
>
> As you see, it was a sorry fate;

However, he was once a handsome man, of great standing]

Of course, this drowned Phoenician is not quite the Shakespearean king drifting at 'full fathom five' (*Tempest* 1.2.397), yet both function as the same image of death at sea and bodily undoing that pervades Eliot's work. He explicitly connects the two, in fact, in 'Dirge,' his antisemitic version of the fragment (see especially lines 1-7).[56] In 'Dans le Restaurant,' the liquifying effects of drowning and sea-change become displaced images for the *petite mort* of a sexual fall, and the drowned sailor links and warns both the lecherous waiter and implicated speaker. It is worth noting, in addition, the triangulation constructed between the two men and the young girl of the waiter's story. To some extent, she is insignificant: what is at stake here is the homosocial bonding of two men via the body of another (albeit quite an unwilling connection on the speaker's part).

Sea-change is thus not a straightforwardly positive and redemptive image in Eliot's writing, but a multivalent one. *The Waste Land*'s images of sea-change partake of this multivalence, and comprise numerous different incarnations, from the drowned sailor simulacrum of the charlatan Madame Sosostris' tarot deck, through poignantly remembered 'pearls that were his eyes' (line 125), to the dissolute Mr Eugenides, and the mute, blank nihility of the drifting Phlebas. Nonetheless, death by water and the process of sea-change has been read, by critics from Richards onward, as a sort of redemptive baptism on Eliot's part—a crucial, purgative immersion in the poet's creative renewal of the modern word. In this

[56] 'Dirge' opens with the line, 'Full fathom five your Bleistein lies,' and continues by speculating about 'When the crabs have eat the lids' of his eyes,' how his nose might become 'lace'—open and web-like—and how bones peep through his ragged toes. This bodily undoing is the 'sea-change' he 'suffers' (line 5), 'Still expensive rich and strange' (line 6). The decomposing Bleistein certainly has something in common with the drowned Phoenician sailor we find at the end of 'Dans le Restaurant': this is a dissolution rather than a creative salvation like we find in Eliot's use of the image of sea-change in his prose. In fact, in 'Dirge,' Eliot mocks the idea of transformation into greater value in describing rotted flesh as lace, and dwelling on the gold fillings in the man's now lipless mouth.

reading, death by water constitutes a deliberate, momentous Jordan-crossing after the great Exodus staged by *The Waste Land,* a carefully crafted epic with one clear aim: the redemption of modern life. It is worth bearing in mind, however, as Lawrence Rainey has shown, that it is a poem composed unevenly, and at times stitched together out of pre-existing fragments.[57] We should be wary of reading too much retrospective unity into the poem. In a 1923 review remarkably different from the messianic readings of New Critics like Richards and Brooks, Eliot's friend Conrad Aiken expressed his impatience with Eliot's notes and supposedly unifying plan, arguing that the poem was intensely personal, and gave the reader a summary of Eliot's individual psyche. He argues that it succeeds as

> a brilliant and kaleidoscopic confusion … We are invited into a mind, a world, which is a 'broken bundle of mirrors'; a 'heap of broken images' … We thus reach the conclusion that the poem succeeds—as it brilliantly does—by virtue of its incoherence, not of its plan; by virtue of its ambiguities, not of its explanations. Its incoherence is a virtue because its 'donnée' is incoherence. Its rich, vivid, crowded use of implication is a virtue, as implication is *always* a virtue;—it shimmers, it suggests, it gives the desired strangeness. (35-36)

I suggest that Aiken's combination of Eliot's theory of poetic impersonality (effected through a recapitulative allusion to memories, fragments, and events) with those final descriptors—'*rich*, vivid, crowded use of implication' and 'the desired *strangeness*' (36; my emphases)—draws on the Shakespearean image of sea-change as a meta-poetic means

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[57] See Lawrence Rainey, *Revisiting* The Waste Land (2005), especially 'With Automatic Hand: Writing The Waste Land,' pp. 1-70. When reading Rainey, it is important to take into account Jim McCue's eviscerating review, published in *Essays in Criticism* in January 2006, which provides a seemingly endless list of errors and misprints on Rainey's part. Nonetheless, in the dating of drafts, poems, and fragments, Ricks and McCue's recent editions of *The Poems of T.S. Eliot* do tend to defer to Rainey.

through which to figure Eliot's poiesis. To use another of Eliot's poem-titles, *The Waste Land* constitutes a 'mélange adultère du tout' (*Poems I* 41).

Drowning in *The Waste Land* does, at times, provide pearls, but they are strangely marginal, and don't strike the same note of value or achievement that they do in Eliot's writing about poeisis. In the most extensive sea-change section of the poem, they are absent:

> Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,
>
> Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
>
> And the profit and loss.
>
> A current under sea
>
> Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell
>
> He passed the stages of his age and youth
>
> Entering the whirlpool. (lines 312-318)

There is no remembering here to salvage something permanent from the dissolution (though these lines are followed by a warning to 'consider Phlebas' (line 321)); nor is there poetic matter sunken deep into the memory that produces a pearl. Phlebas has forgotten all, and passed into oblivion. Value, profit, and loss all lose meaning, and the currents that pick his body apart show no signs of recomposing him into anything. He becomes part of the whirlpool. There is an utter nothingness here. We are not given even a thoughtless jellyfish, singing sea-girls, or a laughing, rolling head. This is Eliot at his most nihilistic, the 'shell with

no machinery in it,' as he would express his state of mind to Virginia Woolf in 1925 (*Letters II* 583).

However, for all its bleakness, the poem is not without more personal, feeling moments. The final section's 'awful daring of a moment's surrender' (line 403) by which alone 'we have existed' (line 405) and the 'boat' responding 'Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar' (418-419) do something to alleviate the blank horror of 'Death by Water,' and even the remembered 'pearls that were his eyes' (line 125), for all its eeriness, gives us something recalled, something salvaged from the whirlpool. 'Death by Water,' however, sits at the heart of the poem, and given the utter annihilation it describes, and the lack of any signs of re-emergence from that whirlpool, it goes wholly against the tenor of the poem to read this drowning as a catalyst for a baptismal renewal.

Along with the nihilistic tinge of drowning in *The Waste Land*, there are also well documented homoerotic currents at play. We have, for example, Mr Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant with currants in his pockets who propositions the speaker with 'a weekend at the Metropole' (line 214). In the final section of the poem, we have, too, the allusion to inversion and vampirism of the man who 'crawled downward down a blackened well' amidst upside down towers (380-382). So too, the striking tableau of the hyacinth girl has long been read as a veiled reference to Jean Verdenal.[58] The sequence, as it stands, has the speaker overwhelmed with the intensity of his emotion:

when we came back, late, from the hyacinth garden,

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[58] John Peter first made this argument in his 1952 'A New Interpretation of The Waste Land,' and it has since been taken up by James E. Miller, most recently in his 2005 *T.S. Eliot: The Making of an American Poet.*

> Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
>
> Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
>
> Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
>
> Looking into the heart of light, the silence (37-41)

In the drafts of the poem, this moment is tied explicitly to the poem's central image of drowning and sea-change: 'I remember / The hyacinth garden. Those are pearls that were his eyes, yes!' ('The Waste Land: An Editorial Composite' lines 179-180). So too, the fragment from which the vampire image is derived (dated either 1913 or 1914, Ricks and McCue 1161), accompanies this traditional figure of inversion with another:

> A deaf mute swimming deep below the surface
>
> Knowing neither up nor down, swims down and down
>
> In the calm deep water where no stir nor surf is
>
> Swims down and down
>
> And about his hair the seaweed purple and brown. ('So through the evening, through the violet air' 28-32)

A deaf mute who could not speak, whose eyes perhaps failed 'looking into the heart of light, the silence' (line 41), knowing neither up nor down, an invert, a drowned, unmade man, with pearls for his eyes. Such drowning and submersion often carry erotic overtones in Eliot, often echoing too, the sensual aquariums of the subconscious he encountered in Jules Laforgue.

Of course, making mention of homoeroticism in Eliot's writing inevitably brings up the ghost of arguments like those of John Peter or James E. Miller, and their attempts to prove that Eliot was a closet homosexual. This strikes me as both futile and uninteresting, and it seems an impoverishment of a poem as unsettling as *The Waste Land* to read it simply as a coded love poem for a gay lover. At the same time, I agree with Suzanne Churchill that there are undeniable homoerotic currents and anxieties in Eliot's work, and that it is possible and profitable to tease these out without needing to ask the question 'was Eliot gay?' (7). While the latter approach is oversimplifying, so too is the former: an Eliot devoid of his homoerotic currents, homosexual preoccupations, and intense male friendships is one stripped of some of the most striking passages in his oeuvre. In short, in the rich and strange subcurrents of Eliot's early poetry, there are some that are homoerotic.

'COLUMBO AND HIS MERRY MEN / THEY SET SAIL FROM GENOA'

If Eliot was not necessarily aware of the potential homoerotic valences in his images of sea-change, Ezra Pound certainly was, and he exploited them gleefully. In a January 1922 letter to Eliot, Pound provides the following poems as comical squibs to accompany *The Waste Land*, joking that he was their begetter and their midwife:

> These are the Poems of Eliot
>
> By the Uranian Muse begot;
>
> A Man their Mother was,
>
> A Muse their sire.

How did the printed Infancies result

From Nuptials thus doubly difficult?

If you must needs enquire

Know diligent Reader

That on each Occasion

Ezra performed the caesarean Operation (in Ricks and McCue *I* 551)

Wayne Koestenbaum has made much of this midwifery and homosexual birth in '*The Waste Land:* T.S. Eliot's and Ezra Pound's Collaboration on Hysteria' (123-124). But the poems continue in a way that also evokes Venus Anadyomene and rebirth from a destructive sea. From the 'Uranian Muse' of the opening lines (2), we finally get to a masturbatory 'E.P. hopeless and unhelped / Enthroned in the marmorean skies' (in Ricks and McCue *I* 551). Yet alas,

Balls and balls and balls again

Can not touch his fellow men.

His foaming and abundant cream

Has coated his world. The coat of a dream;

Or say that the upjut of his sperm

Has rendered his senses pachyderm

Grudge not the oyster his stiff saliva

Envy not the diligent diver. et in aeternitate (Pound in Ricks and McCue *I* 552)

The juxtaposition of the oyster and an upjut of sperm that achieves embodiment suggest the birth of Venus from the severed genitals of Uranus, 'enthroned in the marmorean skies'. The oyster with his 'stiff saliva' makes of Eliot (the man whom Pound describes as the 'mother' of these poems) a receptive, vaginal field (or sea), which 'the diligent diver,' or the Uranian phallus of Pound will fertilise. This, too, is a kind of death by drowning for the king, and a destruction of the authority of the past that leads to vital new birth. There is also, perhaps, a subtle confession on Pound's part that he feels his student has surpassed the master. More importantly, it is a creative-erotic coming together of male collaborators, neither of them enthroned in the skies, but dissolving the boundaries of the self within a sea of desires, connections, currents, and aspirations. As Juliet Flower McCannell describes it, the modernist era is no longer characterised by the tyranny of the father, but by the 'regime of the brother': a coterie of male equals who take the place of power after the death of the authority figure, but who are not, for that reason, any more inclusive or expansive beyond the limits of their own kind (2-3).

In fact, throughout his life, Eliot will play on the masculine clichés associated with the space of the ship in letters to his close male friends. The 'Bolo and Columbo' poems, in a similar way to Eliot's use of black dialect in his correspondence with Pound (North 77-78), constitutes a sort of in-joke performance of an over-the-top, violent, misogynistic, and racist masculinity. Columbo is, of course, Columbus, and King Bolo and his queen are the native

monarchs he encounters in the West Indies. As an American, Eliot would obviously have been familiar with the cultural veneration of Columbus as a founding figure and the 'discoverer' of America. He would also likely have been familiar with Nietzsche's use of the figure of Columbus to evoke a fearless spirit of philosophical exploration (a number of his Bolo and Columbo poems poke fun at the German academic institution).[59] In fact, one of the contemporary reviewers of *The Waste Land*, Burton Rascoe, cites Columbus in the same vein as the Grail legends—as an image of 'driving faith' which the modern world lacks. *The Waste Land*, Rascoe writes, laments the lack, in modern life, of 'the great dreams and illusions which sent men in quest of the Holy Grail, impelled Columbus to cross the Atlantic and made possible all the great epochs in history we call progress' (92). Eliot and his urbane intellectual friends (many of them whom he met at Harvard) thoroughly mock such 'great dreams and illusions' in their own transatlantic Bolo and Columbo correspondence

In a way, the Bolo and Columbo poems—with their transatlantic voyage, replete with rapes and dissolution—perform the same role of immersion in the destructive element that Richards ascribed to *The Waste Land,* albeit in a very different manner. They revel in their iconoclasm, deliberately shock, and intentionally take aim at sexual, racial, and religious mores. Critics like Jonathan Gill and Michael North have argued that these poems, along with the racial (and racist) performances of Eliot and Pound provide a sphere of playful dissolution and affront within which male writers could safely experiment with the extreme transgressiveness that would also characterise, in a more muted and sophisticated form, their

[59] For the figure of Columbus in Nietzsche's writings, see especially *The Gay Science* (162, 268); see also Adrian Del Caro, 'The Columbus Poems of Hölderlin and Nietzsche' (1988). Eliot writes to his mother in November 1915 that he is reviewing a book on Nietzsche, as well as 'reading some of Nietzsche's works which I had not read before' (*Letters 1* 132). For the Eliot's mockery of the German academy, alongside Bolo material, see his letter to Conrad Aiken in July 1914 (*Letters 1* 44-47).

serious poetry (see North 81, 89).[60] In addition, this performative transgression also consolidated them as a coterie of witty, heterodox friends.

Eliot's most recent biographer Robert Crawford is right, I think, in his opinion that Eliot reverts to these poems especially at times when he feels out of his depth, and he employs them, in these instances, as a means of 'protective recourse to a former self' (245), playing a knowing and urbane role to his companions that serves to alleviate very real anxieties in his own life. For example, he writes a wartime mockery to Aiken just after the outbreak of the First World War. The young poet jokes that he'll be submitting a 'war poem, for the $100 dollar prize, entitled UP BOYS AND AT 'EM,' '*to the tune of C. Columbo lived in Spain*.'

Now while our heroes were at sea

They pass'd a German warship.

The captain pac'd the quarterdeck

Parading in his corset.

What ho! they cry'd we'll sink your ship!

And so they up and sink'd her

But the cabin boy was sav'd alive

[60] Gill goes so far as to write about the Bolo and Columbo poems that 'Eliot's route back to the artistic experience of primitive culture, and therefore to a redemption of modern life, was through blackface 'minstrelsy' (79-80). As I have shown, I do not think *The Waste Land* aims for a redemption of modern life, which by extension robs the Bolo and Columbo poems of the redemptive primitivism Gill argues for them. I do agree, however, that they have a quasi-redemptive or consolidatory function as a bonding mechanism between a ribald brotherhood of iconoclastic men.

> And bugger'd, in the sphincter
>
> The poem was declined by several musical publishers on the ground that it pays too great a tribute to the charms of German youth to be acceptable to the English public. I acknowledg'd the force of the objection, but replied that it was only to be regarded as a punitive measure, and to show the readiness and devotion to duty of the British seaman. (Letters I 64; also in Ricks and McCue *II* 251)

In this passage Eliot plays with gender and male attraction as the crux of his ditty, and the homosexual attraction between the two warring crews lies at the very heart of the poem. Eliot, who was dismayed at the outbreak of the First World War and by subsequent Germanophobia, here mocks the violence between England and Germany by imagining the war as an outburst of uncontainable desire. We have a miniature watery baptism for the cabin boy, who is then saved from drowning, only to be 'bugger'd.' Eliot relishes clichéd tropes of shipboard homosexuality, as well as life-changing near-drownings, and exaggerates them to the point of ridiculousness (as well as violently exploding the loftier expectations that might accompany the cabin boy's salvation from death by water). At the same time, this joking poem registers the cultural importance of the British and German navies, and their role in the war, which was in part precipitated by the naval arms race between those two nations (Clark 147-152; MacMillan 100-130). Eliot accompanies his ditty with a joking commentary, disavowing the violence and desire of the preceding lines. What is at stake is not a matter of allure or attraction—'the charms of German youth,' as he coyly puts it—but rather the 'readiness and devotion to duty' of the British seaman (64). Their actions are therefore not at all to be read as springing from any natural and disturbing inclinations on their own part: the

corsetted captain and the buggered cabin boy are objects of desire and objects for violence purely because they have been sanctioned as such by the British government, and the eruption of violence in the poem is simply the conscientious enactment of duty.[61]

In 1916, Eliot again writes to Aiken at a moment of crisis in his own life. He sends his apologies for not having written, and explains that

> my wife has been very ill, that I have been taken up with the worries of finance and Vivien's health, that my friend Jean Verdenal has been killed, that nothing has been seen of [Martin] Armstrong, who is now a captain in Kitchener's army, that compulsion is coming in, that my putative publisher will probably be conscripted, that we are very blue about the war, that living is going up, and that
>
> King Bolo's big black bassturd kween
>
> That airy fairy hairy un
>
> She led the dance on Golder's green
>
> With Cardinal Bessarion.
>
> King Bolo's big black bassturd kween
>
> Her taste was kalm klassic
>
> And as for anything obscene

[61] Despite this mockery of the war and the naval powers involved, Eliot would attempt to join the US Navy just four years later in 1918, and actually left his job at Lloyds Bank, but an administrative error prevented him from being assigned (*Letters 1* 287).

She said it made her ass sick (*Letters* 137)

The build-up of losses, anxieties, and uncertainties suddenly gives way to a juxtaposition of extreme decorum with the excesses of 'Kind Bolo's big black bassturd kween.' Her person, with its queer and racial coding, becomes an escape valve for Eliot's incoherent and overwhelming emotions around Vivien, Verdenal, finances, friends at war, and his own anxieties about finances and conscription. Crawford also points out that this letter occurs at a point in Eliot's marriage where Vivien had just left on holiday with Bertrand Russell (245).

Unsurprisingly, the correspondence between Pound and Eliot from this time period also features King Bolo's Queen, as well as 'Rear Admiral Barry'—the former commander in chief of the US Navy's Pacific Fleet, who was forced to retire in 1911 due to allegations of a homosexual liaison with a cabin boy (Ricks and McCue *II* 254). Eliot evidently relishes the familiar homosexual overtones of the word 'rear,' and weaves both Bolo and Admiral Barry into his complaints and disillusionment regarding the publication of *The Waste Land.* On the 30th of August 1922 he writes that '99% of the people who "appreciate" what one writes are undisguisable shits' (*Letters* 735); he thanks Pound for his editing, and mocks the reception of *The Waste Land* as follows:

For below a voice did answer, sweet in its youthful tone,

The sea-dog with difficulty descended, for he had a manly bone.

(From The Fall of Admiral Barry).

offering $150 for the "Waste Land" · · ·

More presently.

King Bolo's big black basstart kuwheen,

That plastic elastic one,

Would frisk it on the village green,

Enjoying her fantastikon (in Ricks and McCue *II* 254; the Bolo poem is excised from the collected letters edited by Valerie Eliot)

Eliot here mocks the publication offers and expressions of appreciation he received for *The Waste Land* via the image of the aroused Admiral Barry, and he gives his own response in the frisking and uncultured queen. It is hard to imagine Eliot being quite so thorough in his mockery if *The Waste Land* were indeed a poem designed to redeem the modern world, although of course he might then still poke fun at those who misunderstood it. At any rate, he seems to enjoy demonstrating, in this letter, how little he cares for being culturally 'appreciated.' It is a markedly different act from his later elder statesman performances.

One of Eliot's most remarkable Bolo letters was sent to James Joyce on the 21st of May 1921. Though they had met in August 1920, the two men were certainly not on the same terms as Eliot and Pound, or Eliot and Aiken. Nonetheless, Eliot, admiring and envying the author for the writing of *Ulysses*, remarks

> I am delighted to hear that even a limited and very expensive edition [of *Ulysses*] is to appear. Has it been properly circularised in England? If not, I might supply a few names. (*Letters 1* 562)

He continues, however:

> I wish that Miss Beach would bring out a limited edition of my epic ballad on the life of Christopher Columbus and his friend King Bolo, but
>
> Bolo's big black bastard queen
>
> Was *so* obscene
>
> She shocked the folk of Golder's Green (*Letters 1* 562)

Eliot evidently admires Joyce's writing and wishes to establish links with him as a fellow artist, but promoting his own doggerel verse (and including an example!) is a bizarre manner of doing so. Drawing on the obscenity-case around *Ulysses,* Eliot boasts that he is even *more* scandalous and subversive than Joyce is. Perhaps the aim is to demonstrate his own sexual nonchalance, particularly given his reputation for prudishness. Pound would in fact use these poems to reassure the unfortunate Harriet Monroe to that end, writing on the 28th of June 1915: 'If you think he lacks vigour merely because he happens to have portrayed Prufrock the unvigorous, vous vous trompez. His poem of Christopher Columbus is vigorous, and male, not to say coarse' (in Ricks and McCue *II* 248). Read along these lines, Eliot's letter to Joyce might be taken as highly self-conscious affirmation of Eliot's own urbanity.

The 'Bolo and Columbo' poems thus constitute a revelry in the destructive element that enables them, celebrating the transgression and ruination of traditional mores and values. This Atlantic revelry then seeks, through its blasting, dismantling powers, to revivify and liberate artistic creation from all constraints. Or nearly all—for this revelry is only possible, and this liberated artistic creation only desirable within a select homosocial coterie of male

writers. What is more, it requires, for its functioning, the racialised and sexualised bodies of some 'other' that can allow these white male authors their space of transgression.

'THE TRIAL AND JUDGEMENT OF THE SEA'

Yet for all Eliot's eruptive Atlanticism, there is an opposite pole in his poetry where sea-crossing becomes a highly conservative trope. Eliot's poetry after 1927 takes on the kind of redemptive engagement with the destructive element which the New Critics had prematurely read into *The Waste Land*. For Eliot, these mature poems are belated formulations, written in a New Critical mould long after the New Critics had claimed him as their man. In Eliot's 1929 poem 'Marina,' which tells the story of Shakespeare's *Pericles*, the travails of the sea voyage achieve a resolution, and are justified, in the figure of a child, and the futurity that this child grants the speaker. The speaker has completed his sea-voyage, and 'scent of pine and woodthrush singing through the fog' legitimise the trials of the sea (3), now 'become insubstantial, reduced by a wind, a breath of pine' (14-15). The threat of shipwreck or watery dissolution, the fact that the 'garboard strake leaks' and the 'seams need caulking' (28) is overcome in the figure of the child:

> This form, this face, this life
>
> Living to live in a world of time beyond me; let me
>
> Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken,
>
> The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships. (29-32)

In this poem, the sea is no longer a space of transgression, self-destruction, or libidinous currents, but is a constitutive, abyssal 'other' at the heart of a more solid conservatism. In

'Marina,' the child provides the poem with the redemptive futurity of heterosexual reproduction. The image of granite shores and pine trees, and the hope for a new life and 'new ships' also hint obliquely at Eliot's New England lineage. This is the same heterosexual futurity Eliot sacramentalises in 'East Coker,' in 'the association of man and woman / In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie' (38-39). Importantly, the threat of the abyssal sea still lies at the heart of this futurity, but the threat of transgression and annihilation is re-contained in a movement that makes its very threat the legitimisation of a reconsolidated order.

In *Freedom's Empire: Race and the Rise of the Novel in Atlantic Modernity, 1640-1940,* Laura Doyle makes a convincing argument for the ways in which crises and constitutions of identity have historically been depicted in Anglo-American literature through destruction at sea. She sketches out a longstanding association between 'an Atlantic crossing and a psychological or corporeal "unhinging",'—an association which, she argues, 'encodes the seventeenth-century Anglo-Atlantic experience of migration, civil war, kidnapping, forced overseas labor, and radical public challenges to class and gender assumptions' (7). These trials and their destructive power in turn become the grounds for rebirth and re-consolidation, so that the disastrous sea-crossing becomes a constitutive and legitimising backdrop for Anglo-American racial identity and self-understanding from the seventeenth century onwards. The myth of exilic sea crossing is an origin myth of an Anglo-Saxon flight to freedom, spanning the Atlantic from its inception as it was taken up by the Puritans who fled persecution in England and established colonies in Virginia and Massachusetts. It is a narrative that likewise animated the English Revolution. Doyle outlines an important

> Atlantic imaginary structured by this narrative in which the state, phoenix-like, falls into revolution, dissolves, reclaims its racial birthright to liberty, and is reborn into the freedom of a modern nation. What makes this narrative "Atlantic" is that the Anglo-Saxon race's entry into a "state" of liberty is from the beginning associated with an Atlantic crossing and trauma of exile that, moreover, resonates richly with Old Testament narratives of sea-crossing by another, affiliated, freedom-seeking race. (4)

Doyle traces the ways in which, in Anglo-American novels across the centuries, this narrative finds expression in the scene of the unmaking of an individual subject, via an Atlantic crossing, which then becomes the source of renewal and rebirth: 'overwhelmed by force or betrayal,' she writes, 'protagonists swoon into dissociation or seeming, fall under threat of utter forgetting, yet rise (sometimes) into their full (e)state' (2).

Or, 'In the destructive element immerse. That is the way' (Richards 520; *Lord Jim* 162). Ian Watt has remarked on the 'openness to almost any meaning' of Conrad's phrase (*Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* 328). 'What can be more universally acceptable,' he writes, 'than a saying which announces that its user has survived his ritual immersion in life's destructive traumas and has now emerged into the maturity of tragic acceptance' (328). And indeed it is a highly resonant phrase, and one that Stephen Spender used as the organising principle of his book, *The Destructive Element* (1935), which explores modern literature in relation to the idea of a purgative immersion, which Spender glosses as 'the experience of an all-pervading Present, which is a world without belief' (14). Strikingly, the Conradian phrase makes no mention of any emergence, into tragic maturity or otherwise. Nor, if we apply it to

Jim (who is the subject under discussion) is it easy to make a case that he does ever emerge from the destructive element.

For Eliot post 1927, however, there is emergence. In poems like 'Choruses from "The Rock"' and 'The Dry Salvages,' the futurity we saw evinced in 'Marina' is displaced beyond a messianic horizon, and the sea voyage is cast as the earthly struggle toward a paradise in the afterlife. There are storms and drownings and destructions, but these are in service of a greater redemption. As Maxwell Uphaus suggests, 'The Dry Salvages' also enacts a disingenuous naturalisation of destruction and suffering, occluding its sociopolitical dimensions (211). Eliot's use of tempestuous, destructive seas to evoke political or personal unrest is, of course, part of a long tradition of this metaphor stretching back to Horace (*Shipwreck with Spectator* 11). But it is a strangely apolitical, or rather, veiledly political stance to take during the Second World War at the advent of the Battle of the Atlantic, when destruction at sea was a stark reality for many, rather than a timeless metaphor.[62]

This emphasis on the apolitical and on geological time throughout the poem, figured throughout by the clanging of the sea bell on the swell, grounds the poem in Eliot's paradisal futurity. In the fourth section of the poem we find a prayer of salvation to Mary who acts beyond time, beyond the 'perpetual angelus' of the sea bell (15), and who stands as an intermediary both for 'those who are in ships . . . concerned with every lawful traffic' and for those who 'were in ships, and ended their voyage on the sand, in the sea's lips / Or in the dark throat which will not reject them' (IV 2-4, 11-13). In the fifth and final section of the poem, the point of intersection of the timeless with time is revealed to be the Incarnation, 'the

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[62] For a comprehensive and up-to-date historical account of the Battle of the Atlantic, see David White's *Bitter Ocean: The Battle of the Atlantic, 1939-1945* (2006)

impossible union of spheres of existence' made actual (V 33-34), and the person in whom 'past and future are conquered, and reconciled' (V 35-36). This is the great hope underlying the poem, the hope of a Christian salvation that will redeem all the suffering and destruction of the past. To apprehend Christ, the Incarnation, 'the point of intersection of the timeless with time' (V 18): that is the 'occupation for the saint' (V 19), to which Eliot contrasts all secular human efforts to pry into the unknown.

Given this messianic tone, there is an interesting contrast to be drawn between the third section of the poem, with its famous injunction to 'fare forward, travellers!' (III 14), and Eliot's early prose poem 'The Engine.' In this piece, the rhythmic technology of the engine, the drumming of feet, and the ship's purposeful progress across the ocean suddenly fall away, the wash subsides, the engine falls silent, and the speaker is confronted with 'a spider taut as a drumhead, the life of endless geological periods concentrated into a small spot of intense apathy at my feet' (*Poems I* 274). An almost comic, yet unsettling, echo of Moby Dick, with a tiny apathetic spider as the counterpart of Ahab's indifferent nemesis, this tableau highlights the fragility of human constructions and enterprise against the 'endless geological periods' of the sea, encapsulated here in the spider (274). 'And if the ship goes down' the speaker thinks, 'he is prepared and will somehow persist, for he is very old. But the flat faces...' (274).[63] Nearly thirty years later, Eliot again gives us a scene of passengers 'on the deck of [a] drumming liner' ('The Dry Salvages' III 19) and what is more, the apathy, meaninglessness, and aporia of the destructive world are still major concerns for Eliot. Here, however, there is for Eliot something that supersedes the life and death of the individual. Death itself 'shall

[63] One is reminded of Melville's argument that the whale will somehow persist in 'Does the Whale's Magnitude Diminish?—Will He Perish?'

fructify the lives of others,' as the trials and deaths of Eliot's ancestors are present in the culmination of his own life (III 37). Thus, he enjoins, 'Fare forward':

> O voyagers, O seamen,
>
> You who come to port, and you whose bodies
>
> Will suffer the trial and judgement of the sea,
>
> Or whatever event, this is your real destination. (38-42)

Here, unlike in 'The Engine,' death is a frightfully meaningful destination, both in terms of tradition and lineages, and, as the latter part of the poem makes clear, in terms of Christian salvation. Thus, 'Dry Salvages' ultimately concludes,' we should be 'content at last / If our temporal reversion nourish / (not too far from the yew tree) / The life of significant soil' (V 47-50). As 'East Coker' commences near the small village graveyard, where the 'dancers are all gone under the hill' (II 50), and as it closes with the cry 'of the petrel and the porpoise' off the shores of Cape Ann (V 38), so 'The Dry Salvages' moves through river and sea to return to the significant soil of the English graveyard. These two poems in *Four Quartets* constitute, therefore, a highly sophisticated and highly performative rehearsal of Eliot's Anglo-American lineage, and a celebration of tradition, Christianity, and the transatlantic history of the poet's own family via the destructive element that lies at its heart.

THE EXAMPLE OF 'EAST COKER'

On the 21st of April 1952, at a lecture at the University of Rennes, T.S. Eliot compared the rough coastline of Brittany to the shores of his childhood and reflected, as he often did, on the Atlantic history of his forebears:

> In the 17th century my ancestors left, rather hurriedly, the west of England to seek refuge on the New England coast. When I first saw the coast of the Armorican land, I thought I noticed a resemblance to the landscape of my childhood. Granite coastlines, exposed to the tempests from the Atlantic, land of daring sailors, skilful and brave. And in the 17th century, another similarity: New England providing shelter also to a great number of witches whom my ancestor started to exterminate immediately. ('Notes for Speech at the University of Rennes' 726-727)

Indeed, Andrew Eliot had left the town of East Coker in Somersetshire around 1699, emigrating, for religious reasons, to the Massachusetts Bay Colony, where he would become one of the jurors in the Salem Witch Trials (Gardner 42; Ricks and McCue *I* 472).

Forty-three years before his lecture at Rennes, and thirty years before the publication of his highly self-conscious New England émigré performance in 'East Coker' (1940), Eliot published a paean to his seafaring ancestors in *The Harvard Advocate*. This 1909 piece, written for an institution of learning itself inextricably linked with the history of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, celebrated those New Englanders who had been 'founders of commerce' and 'pioneers of education,' with an 'enterprise which 'sent American shipping round the world, and started the printing press in many small communities' ('Gentlemen and Seamen' 23).

In a striking passage, Eliot mourns the bygone naval glory of Salem, which seems 'now always to be in dignified mourning for its former grandeur, for the ships which do not leave and the ships which do not return' (22). 'One feels that noisy mirth is a profanation there,' he writes, 'the town is so populous with ghosts' (22). Laughter that profanes and a town

populated with ghosts cannot help but bring to mind the deaths that resulted from the Salem Witch Trials, or, more broadly, the myriad deaths brought about by the persistent Indian Wars. However, Eliot is not memorialising those deaths, but mourning instead the passing of an order of printing, learning, and seafaring on which he has constructed his American identity.

Eliot returns to and reconstructs this identity forcefully in 'East Coker,' which rehearses the landscapes of the Somerset town his family emigrated from and to which he would later request his ashes be sent (Gordon 388), and the New England landscape of his youth, and where his ancestors settled after leaving England. Eliot was certainly aware of these connections growing up, as evinced by his early sea stories and his comments, in 1928, that despite living in St Louis, his 'family guarded jealously its connexions with New England' ('Preface to *This American World*, by Edgar Ansel Mowrer' 492) His letters to his brother also indicate that their father owned Walter Graeme Eliot's *A Sketch of the Eliot Family* (see Ricks and McCue *I* 926), which outlines their English provenance as follows:

> Nestled among the hills and meadows of the heart of Somersetshire, the garden spot of England, is the little hamlet of East Coker, three or four miles S.W. from Yeovil, on the London and Southwestern Railway. Here, almost under the shadows of a fine old parish church, dating back to the fifteenth century, was the home for a century or more of the Eliot family previous to their departure for America and religious liberty. (11)

By the time we get to *Four Quartets,* and certainly throughout the rest of his life, Eliot's relationship to his past takes on quite a performative aspect. Writing about 'East Coker,' he

maintains that the reader need not know anything beyond what is in the poem, but he then goes on to supply more:

> East Coker, however, is a small village in Somerset, whereby my family lived from about the middle of the fifteenth century until 1671 when they went to New England. It serves, accordingly, for the author's purpose, as a place for a meditation on beginnings and ends (unpublished letter to R.P. de Menasce, 31 May 1940, cited in Ricks and McCue 925)

The poem 'East Coker' encapsulates this biographical performance, opening with 'in my beginning is my end' (I line 1) and closing with 'in my end is my beginning' (V 38). Much of the poem rehearses a sort of *via negativa* or cyclical affirmation that 'In order to possess what you do not possess, / You must go by the way of dispossession' (III 40-41), thus embodying the redemptive interpretations given to *The Waste Land* by the New Critics. This poem, more than any other, does what Richards claims *The Waste Land* does, in offering redemption out of the destruction. East Coker is the historical home Eliot's ancestors left behind, crossing the Atlantic to settle in the Massachusetts Bay Colony; it is also, in accordance with his wishes, the place where Eliot's ashes were laid to rest. Thus, in my end is my beginning, and in my beginning is my end (Gordon 388).

The spectre of the Second World War and the cultural crisis it entailed lies heavily on this poem, and this is perhaps the 'destructive element' at the heart of 'East Coker,' as it is most explicitly in 'Little Gidding.' Yet here, as 'The Dry Salvages' will do with the geological aeons of the non-human, apocalyptic sea, this destruction is naturalised and de-historicised (see Uphaus 211-212). It is in fact this very historically specific anxiety that lies behind

Eliot's sage meditations on rise and fall and the succession of houses. It crops up in the 'triumphal cars / Deployed in constellated wars' (II 9-10) and it is hard not to read echoes of the aerial warfare that characterised much of the Second World War and its build-up in the 'rolling stars' (II 8), the weeping comets and Leonids that 'Hunt the heavens and the plains' in 'a vortex that shall bring the world to that destructive fire' (II 13-16). Guernica had been bombed by German forces in April 1937 (see Corum 53-55; Murray 16); the RAF underwent rapid expansion between 1934 and 1939, and even more so after war with Germany was declared (see, for example, Biddle 110-127; Buckley and Beaver 47-50); air warfare played a pivotal role in the Invasion of Poland in the last months of 1939 (Murray 29-33); and in July 1940, just four months after the publication of 'East Coker,' the Battle of Britain began (Murray 47-48). Here, as elsewhere, however, Eliot steps back from the particularity of the present: the destructive fire 'burns before the ice-cap reigns' (II 17), and is something as old as time. Destruction is part of the vast natural history of the world. Similarly, Eliot's lament in the third part of the poem—'O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark' (III 1)—links together 'captains,' 'merchant bankers,' 'eminent men of letters,' 'statesmen,' 'rulers,' 'chairmen of many committees,' 'the Almanach de Gotha,' 'the Stock Exchange Gazette,' and 'the Directory of Directors' (III 3-8) in a way that makes no distinction between wars, depositions, the Great Depression, and natural deaths.

In the fifth and final part of the poem, the speaker does in fact situate himself: 'here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years—Twenty years largely wasted, the years of *l'entre deux guerres*' (V 1-2). Here we have allusions to Dante's middle way and purgative journey through hell towards paradise, but also an explicit historicisation of this poem,

placing it at the beginning of the Second World War. The terms in which he then goes on to describe his poetic enterprise are remarkably militant:

> And so each venture
>
> Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
>
> With shabby equipment always deteriorating
>
> In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,
>
> Undisciplined squads of emotion. And what there is to conquer
>
> By strength and submission, has already been discovered
>
> Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope to emulate (V 7-14)

Venture, raid, deteriorating equipment, and undisciplined squads that seek to conquer by strength or submission all suggest a military manoeuvre, and in conjunction with the phrase about *'l'entre deux guerres'* this becomes a striking metaphor comparing Eliot's attempts to put things into poetry with historical, geographical conquest and warfare. The last lines sit uneasily within this otherwise quite European military metaphorics: 'what there is to conquer . . . has already been discovered / Once or twice, or several times, by men one cannot hope to emulate' (V 11-14). The use of the words 'discovered' and 'already' inevitably brings to mind not warfare but the New World that sits as a metaphoric pole throughout *Four Quartets*, as the geographic destination of Eliot's ancestors, as his own 'beginning' (V 38), and beyond that as a paradisal image of a different, post-historical New World. While these lines seem to refer to poetry and expression, the fact that Eliot is aligning himself here with his ancestors' flight, 'discovery' (V 12), and conquest of America should give us pause. It is a striking contrast

with the tone of the Columbo poems. With his 'men whom one cannot hope to emulate' we imagine, of course, great writers and thinkers who have said things better, as per the broadly understood parameters of the anxiety of influence, but it is hard not to hear a distant echo of the 'gentlemen and seamen' Eliot eulogises and mourns in his early essay. Here, as thirty years previously, he paints himself as haunted by his Atlantic ancestors.

The end of the poem confirms this, and will serve as the point of departure for the more overtly Atlantic *Dry Salvages*:

> Old men ought to be explorers,
>
> Here or there does not matter
>
> We must be still and still moving
>
> Into another intensity
>
> For a further union, a deeper communion
>
> Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,
>
> The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters
>
> Of the petrel and the porpoise. In my end is my beginning. (32-38)

Writers like Carl Schmitt, David Adams, and Laura Doyle have all argued, in various ways, that the 'here or there' of the Atlantic world does in fact matter a great deal, or rather that the universalism implied in the purported not-mattering occludes histories of trauma and oppression. Here, as elsewhere in 'East Coker' and much of 'The Dry Salvages,' the rehearsal of religious motives of exile and homecoming are enacted upon historical geographies.

Historical exile and freedom here become religious metaphor, as religious exile and freedom became political metaphor. Is the 'further union' and 'deeper communion' some future heaven (line 35), or a political reality? Regardless of the future-orientedness of the metaphor, its historical derivation is the conquest and appropriation of a new continent by exiled explorers (European, or specifically, as in Eliot's background, political or religious English dissidents) and the search there (through conquest and erasure) of a greater freedom, a deeper communion.

THAT IS A PEARL THAT WAS *THE WASTE LAND*

In 1917, however, Eliot had made an explicit mockery of this sort of maritime redemptionism, in 'Airs of Palestine, No. 2,'[64] which paints British war propaganda as a purgative flood that, like the Jordan river, will cleanse all citizens of their heresies, and grant them entry into the promised land. He writes of wartime propaganda in the Westminster Gazette as 'viscid torrents' (line 14) and 'floods of bilious green' (20) that flow along the maritime districts of London—'Canning Town and Rotherhithe,' and 'Bermondsey and Wapping Stair' (16-17)—before also flooding the fashionable neighbourhoods of 'Leicester and . . . Grosvenor Square' (19). In these torrents, Eliot writes, the 'risen souls'

> purge themselves of all their sin
>
> Up to the navel or the hip

[64] It is worth noting the antisemitism implicit in this poem, given that 1917 saw the circulation of the Balfour Declaration, which proposed 'the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people' (MS 41178 A, f.3r). The Balfour Declaration was a propaganda effort on the part of the British government to raise support for the Allied war effort ('Balfour Declaration'). Of course a critique of Zionism does not equate to antisemitism, but in this poem Eliot also parodies the Judaic religious figure of Moses, who here strikes 'the living Rock' from which issues the Westminster Gazette (line 9); in addition, any engagement of Eliot's with questions of Judaism and the Jewish people cannot be read in isolation from his well-documented antisemitism elsewhere, in poems like 'Gerontion,' and 'Dirge.'

> And such as have the skill to swim
>
> Attain at length the farther shore
>
> Cleansed and rejoiced in every limb,
>
> And hate the Germans more and more. (30-36)

The flood of newspapers swill through the city like a sea, purging its citizens and remaking them into good nationalists. It is an interesting metaphor especially given the watery mythology that surrounds Britain and Israel. The destructive element that surrounds and defines the national character of the island nation becomes the rationale and justification for its maritime dominance; the difficult crossing of the Jordan river transforms the Jewish people from exiles wandering in the desert, to a free people coming into their own estate. Eliot mockingly suggests, however, that rather than any trial and redemption by water, it is government propaganda that effects that role.

'Airs of Palestine, No. 2' is a mocking performance of immersion in the destructive element that leads to ideological redemption. The poem, written only a few years before *The Waste Land*, makes a mockery of the same watery purgation that has been construed as the latter's central tenet. This mockery, I think, should prompt us to proceed with caution when we encounter these images of drowning in Eliot's poetry from around the same time. Yet in I.A. Richards' reading of *The Waste Land,* immersion in the destructive element is, very decidedly, a means of redeeming modern life. However, one striking characteristic in the vast body of critical literature that exists on *The Waste Land* is the inability to come to a consensus about what we are to make of drowning. I posit that this very persistence of dissent and confusion around sea-change and death by water confirms the intractability of the image and

of the poem as a whole. For Helen Emmitt, we are to take literally the injunction to 'fear death by water,' and to read drowning as a terror of losing one's individuality within a feminine element (315). For many it is a purgative baptism. Brooks argued that the 'Death by Water' section should be read in contrast to the desert, and as suggestive of the drowned god of the fertility cults, who in being offered up to the water makes the rains come again (157-159). More recently, Martin Lockerd has argued that *The Waste Land* transforms the self-destructive decadent body Eliot encountered in Wilde, Laforgue, and Swinburne into the Fisher King 'whose impotence takes new shape in the decay of his kingdom and whose journey toward rejuvenation begins with the bodily destruction of Phlebas the Phoenician' (9). In contrast, Cassandra Laity reads drowning in Eliot as a Swinburnian echo, but one in which the decadent body cannot hope for rebirth (425-427). For Colleen Lamos, it is the figuring of what she calls Eliot's elegiac mode of desire (27). For some contemporary reviewers, however, the desert of *The Waste Land* can also be described as a sea, and the desert and the sea are one and the same: we are already flooded and drowned, submerged in the destructive element. In Edmund Wilson's argument, the city of *The Waste Land* presents us with the drowned seascape of the modern metropolis, not unlike the briny London of Joseph Conrad:

> To the eyes of many, even of the wisest of those who came to maturity in the nineteenth century, the last few years have seen what looks like the complete disintegration of literature. The dykes of the mind have been broken and are flooded by a furious sea—in which the order which so many centuries have labored to impose on human thought, the harmony which uncounted hands have molded for the imagination, are awash as dishonored fragments among the ordures and detritus of the

> world. Our elders can but pace the shrinking shore and lament the engulfment of their city; they have despaired of the integrity of art with the wreck of the shapes they have known. Yet if they would only row out a little way and fix their eyes on that turbulent ocean, they might observe that their familiar city had been reorganized below the tide and they might even, when they had got used to the new element, come to find themselves at home there again. (77-78)

In Wilson's formulation, modern life is the destructive element, and there is no immediate emergence to be had. Instead, 'our elders' are urged to grow accustomed to 'the new element,' and become at home in the city that has been 'reorganized below the tide' (78). These are not quite Eliot's nihilistic drowning-scenes; the landscape is as sea-washed as that of Conrad's London. But Wilson suggests this need not be a threatening prospect, and we need not drown in the modern metropolis. Is this perhaps a move towards the urban immersions of Woolf or H.D.? Again, not entirely, for Wilson goes on to speculate that 'the age of bewilderment [will] pass' and that 'when we do become capable again of believing in something, we shall probably begin to censor the record of our consciousness in the interests of our faith' (81). In future, he argues, if we are 'to have even the illusion of controlling [our] own fate,' 'some selection will have to be made among the instincts which make a menagerie of every human being—that certain impulses and ideas will have consistently to be suppressed while certain others are cultivated with a superlative intensity' (81). Thus, for Wilson, immersion in the destructive element is merely a dip, however laudable, and he turns, in closing, to a subtly unsettling language of a eugenics of ideas—a necessity if we are to have 'a genuinely vigorous society' (81). The city below the tide is not such a society.

For John McClure, writing in May 1923, 'The Waste Land is the agonized outcry of a sensitive romanticist drowning in a sea of jazz' (105). Yet he contrasts this 'sea of jazz,' in which Eliot 'finds himself submerged—a "drowned Phoenician Sailor"'—with classicist fragments that swirl about like valuable pearls within the tide'—a tide which McClure defines as 'the garish and to [Eliot] not charming swirl of animalistic, illiterate human life, now seething on both sides of the Atlantic' (105). This is not entirely fair, given Eliot's well-documented interests in popular, or 'low' culture,[65] as present in *The Waste Land* as the classicist 'pearls,' and all-pervasive in the Bolo and Columbo poems, which include references to Charlie Chaplain and Eugene Sandow (*Poems II* 252, 281). For McClure, however, these constitute the 'maelstrom' within which Eliot is caught (105), and from within which

> he catches glimpses of the world of drama and romance and stable beauty which he would prefer and which, no question, he has found in books. From that ideal world come floating ghostly cadences, images, and reminders. To these straws he clings, as a sort of salvation.
>
> O swallow swallow
>
> *Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie*
>
> These fragments I have shored against my ruins

[65] See especially David Chinitz's *T.S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide* (2003).

> The fragments from the other world which Mr. Eliot clings to in The Waste Land, like the fragments which he quotes in The Sacred Wood, are of the very heart of poetry: "Those are pearls that were his eyes" echoes throughout. (105)

In later life, Eliot would admit that the elaborate 'notes' that explained some of these pearls, and that seemed to confirm an overarching plan to *The Waste Land* had been added to fill the number of pages required for Boni and Liveright to publish the poem as 'a little book' ('Frontiers of Criticism' 127). The poem by itself, Eliot explained, 'was inconveniently short' (127). In an interview in 1959, he admitted that the poem was 'structureless' ('The Art of Poetry' 96). 'In *The Waste Land*,' he explained,' 'I wasn't even bothering whether people understood what I was saying. . . . These things, however, become easier to people with time. You get used to having *The Waste Land*, or *Ulysses*, about' ('The Art of Poetry' 105).[66] That people 'get used to' disruptive modernist works is a fascinating statement, especially when viewed alongside the New Criticism and the establishment of the Anglo-American academy that orchestrated that familiarisation (Jancovich 67-69, 80, 98-101). The admission seems to confirm what I have argued concerning *The Waste Land*—that it was not, to begin with, a New Critical poem, but something far more unstable and unsettling. With time, however, Eliot certainly writes himself into a culturally consolidating New Critical position, masterfully performing his role as a 'classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion' ('Preface to *For Lancelot Andrewes*' 513). And with this culturally redemptive status, long proclaimed for him by the New Critics, and carefully enacted through

[66] Lawrence Rainey cites this interview, along with the 'Frontiers of Criticism' speech, in the final chapter of his *Revisiting The Waste Land*, where he contends that we should continue to view Eliot's poem as 'IMMENSE. MAGNIFICENT. TERRIBLE' (128). While I agree that these words characterised the poem when it first appeared, it remains to ask whether it is possible to recapture such a response after a century of cultural reintegration (Rainey felt that it was (126-127)).

his own criticism and later poetry, the disruptive and irritant presence that was *The Waste Land* becomes smoothed over, layer by layer, into an artefact of great cultural value: 'Those are pearls that were his eyes' (*The Waste Land* line 125)

CHAPTER 4

MARE LIBERUM AND *MARE NOSTRO*: MARITIME TRADE AND IDEOLOGY IN *THE CANTOS* OF EZRA POUND

On the 6th of November 1941, Ezra Pound addressed the causes of the war in a radio broadcast. In part, he claims, the older generation and 'the worst gang in Europe' want 'to kill off the present younger generation before the IDEAS of my generation go into effect' (*Ezra Pound Speaking* 17). Those ideas are ones about natural commerce and monetary reform. After urging America not to enter the war, Pound explains

> we could with honor advocate freedom of the seas. For EUROPE as well as for a few Jew controlled shipping firms. We could, with honor advocate NATURAL commerce; that is, a commerce wherein each nation would exchange what it has, what it has in superfluity or abundance, with what other nations can spare.
>
> We could stand for that sort of commerce instead of trying to throttle it.
>
> Why do we NOT?
>
> Why should all men under 40 be expected to die or be maimed in support of flagrant injustice and a dirty attempt to strangle and starve out 30 nations?
>
> For whom?
>
> It is NOT even for the people of England, to whom a ten years war means death by starvation. (*Speaking* 19)

In this remarkable speech, Pound takes up the narratives of encirclement and suffocation propounded by Germany and Italy in the build-up to the Second World War (though with typical exaggeration Pound construes these 'strangled' countries as all of 'EUROPE,' or as '30 nations'). While he states it more subtly here than he usually does (and it is still not very subtle at all), he implies that Jews are controlling the world's shipping, depriving 'EUROPE' of its natural right to maritime trade and the freedom of the seas. Finally, he stresses England's dependence on maritime trade for food and survival, and the very real possibility that with shipping and commerce disrupted, its people might starve. Earlier in his speech, however, he makes a distinction between the freedom of the seas he would like (for 'EUROPE as well as for a few Jew controlled shipping firms') and a false 'freedom of the seas' he sees as being touted by England and the United States:

> HAVE you read the DETAILS of British blackmail on Chile, on the men in Chile who want to trade with the outer world? Details of Roosenstein's "freedom of the seas," NAVICERT, that was what they tried on Italy and Italy came in on the German side. (*Speaking* 17)

The British had adopted the Navicert system during the naval blockade of the First World War, and reprised it during the Second, issuing certificates that specified the cargo contents of neutral ships ('Navicert').[67] Without these certificates, neutral vessels risked having their cargoes seized, or being denied entry to various ports. For Pound, this is a false 'freedom of the seas,' implemented by Britain and by a pseudo-Jewish president ('Roosenstein') of the United States. These unjust constraints, as far as Pound is concerned, are what caused Italy to enter the war on the German side.

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[67] See also Hugh Ritchie Scott's, *The "Navicert" System During the World War.*

This radio speech highlights the centrality of maritime trade to Pound's conception of civilisation, law, and natural commerce. Here, as elsewhere, he asserts that 'we need more communication between the five continents' (16). By 1941, however, Pound is engaged in a kind of special pleading, promoting a narrative of unjust constraints (one touted by Germany and Italy) versus the natural right of all people to the seas and to maritime trade. In what follows, I show that maritime trade, and maritime myth-making are pervasive presences throughout Pound's work, ranging from his earliest musings on European civilisation and the troubadours, through oceanic heroes and deities, casual references to D'Annunzio (who deploys those same heroes and deities), and culminating in his adopting the maritime ideologies of Italian Fascism.

While Pound's views on economics, and their relationship to his politics, have been addressed at length by a range of critics such as Tim Redman, Alec Marsh, Daniel Swift, and Leon Surette, what has not been discussed is the maritime dimension of Pound's economics, and the ways in which these would come to interact with and be influenced by the maritime rhetoric of Italian Fascism. Critics such as David Barnes and Jennifer Scappetonne have begun to address this lacuna in their admirable works on Pound, Fascism, and the city of Venice, but they do not give sufficient attention to the economic sphere of the maritime, nor to its presence in Pound's work prior to and concurrently with his allegiance to Fascism.

This occluded world of maritime trade and the metaphorics that surrounds it will occupy us in this chapter.[68] Focussing on Pound's poetry and prose, and his engagement with the writings of Burkhardt, John Adams, and D'Annunzio, I argue that the sea is a crucial

[68] Pound's interests in economics have been widely studied, as has the pervasive presence of the sea in his oeuvre. They have not, however, been studied in conjunction. For Pound's economics, see especially Peter Nicholls' *Ezra Pound: Politics, Economics, and Writing,* Tim Redman's *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism*, and Alec Marsh's *Money and Modernity: Pound, Williams, and the Spirit of Jefferson.*

economic exemplar in *The Cantos* and in Pound's prose, ranging throughout his writings in the ancient maritime economies of Venice, Rome, and Athens, in the maritime contestations of the American Revolution by US president John Adams with the British and French, and finally in the imperialist ideology of Italian Fascism. What will emerge is the rather sorry trajectory of Pound's maritime interests, as they progress from an early celebration of cultural exchange, expansiveness, cosmopolitanism, and a resultant world peace, through frustration at the elusiveness of such a maritime peace, and finally ending with the adoption of fascist and proto-fascist maritime myth-making. This, we shall see, is ultimately inextricable from Pound's more famous 'godly sea' of Canto I, and from his use of oceanic figures like Aphrodite and Ulysses.

I begin, in the first section, by outlining the idea of *mare liberum,* or the freedom of the seas, before turning to maritime trade more broadly, focussing especially on its inextricable entanglements with modern finance. In the second section, I trace Pound's persistent engagement with maritime trade, drawing particular attention to two aspects: the emphasis on maritime commerce as a means for peace, and the association of maritime usury with finance and economic exploitation. I then turn to Canto LXV in Pound's 'Adams Cantos,' tracing the themes of the freedom of the seas, natural rights, and economic oppression in the poet's treatment of the maritime history of the United States. At the same time, I emphasise that when Pound writes this Canto in 1938/39 (Ten Eyck 13), he already hero-worships Mussolini, and the themes treated here should be read alongside contemporary maritime myth-making in Italian Fascism. Finally, I turn to Pound's engagement with D'Annunzio and with Venice's maritime past, demonstrating how natural law, maritime mythology, and

Fascism all become interwoven to the extent that it becomes increasingly difficult to separate Pound's 'godly sea' from his fascist sea (Canto I 3).[69]

THE SEA, TRADE, AND FINANCE

In this section, I will discuss the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius' thesis of the freedom of the seas, which posits that the sea belongs to all people by natural law, and examine the reception of this thesis during the two World Wars. I will pay particular attention to the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt's 1942 critique of Grotius, *Land and Sea*, which argues that the universalist claims of 'the freedom of the seas' are a disingenuous naturalistic fallacy that masks and justifies the economic supremacy of the British.[70] I then turn, via the contested case of the *Santa Catarina*, to the historical development of trading companies and the rise of financing, outlining Marx's analysis of their inextricable entanglement, by way of introducing Pound's own fascination with this particularly maritime tangle.

Toward the end of Pound's 1910 *The Spirit of Romance,* we find the following passage:

> If one were to prove that all that part of art which is not the inevitable expression of genius is a by-product of trade or a secretion of commercial prosperity, the following facts would seem significant. Shortly before the decline of Portuguese prestige, Houtman, lying in jail for debt at Lisbon, planned the Dutch East India Company. When Portugal fell, Holland seized the Oriental trade, and soon after Roemer Visscher

[69] When I use the spelling 'Fascism' or 'Fascist' (with an uppercase 'F'), I am referring specifically to Italian Fascism.

[70] At the time of its publication, when England was in fierce competition with the Dutch for the control of world trade, Grotius's *Mare Liberum* was contested by the English jurist John Selden in a book entitled *Mare Clausum.* Far from being a neutrally occurring universal truth, the idea of the freedom of the seas has been championed or opposed dependent on economic and political interests.

> was holding a salon, wherewith the following names are connected: Rembrandt, Grotius, Spinoza, Vondel (born 1578) "the one articulate voice of Holland," Coonhert, Sphieghel, Coster, Hoof, Raeel, Vossius, Erasmus, and Thomas-à-Kempis. (221)

This passage is nested within Pound's discussion of Luis de Camoens, one of the authors he characterises elsewhere as 'symptomatic,' registering the themes and concerns of his milieu without shaping or contributing to it in the way 'donative' authors might (*PPI* 49, C28).[71] Camoens registered the commercial and imperial successes of Portugal, celebrating the Age of Exploration. It is in this context that Pound refers to the Dutch commerce that superseded Portuguese maritime monopoly. The commercial success of Portugal provided the right cultural milieu to produce a Camoens; the Dutch monopoly that succeeded it provided a milieu for the likes of Rembrandt, Grotius, Spinoza, and Erasmus.

Ronald Bush argues that this list belongs to the point in time which Pound sees as marking the degeneration of art in a newly commercialized world (*The Genesis of Ezra Pound's Cantos* 124). As Pound would write in 1928:

> The metamorphosis into carnal tissue becomes frequent and general somewhere about 1527. The people are corpus, corpuscular, but not in the strict sense 'animate,' it is no longer the body of air clothed in the body of fire; it no longer radiates, light no longer moves from the eye, there is a great deal of meat, shock absorbing, perhaps—at any rate absorbent. (*PPV* 24, C710)[72]

[71] For ease of reference, I will be using this abbreviation for the 11 volume series of *Ezra Pound's Poetry and Prose: Contributions to Periodicals*. I also provide page numbers and item or 'contribution' numbers (here, C28).

[72] This does seem to be a later view, for Pound. See, for example, 'Il Grano' (*PPVIII* 138-140, C1610).

This later passage seems to confirm Bush's argument regarding historical degeneration. In the passage in *The Spirit of Romance*, however, there is no radical distinction made between Camoens and the later Dutch thinkers and artists: the list of names appears only to suggest exemplars of those certain types of consciousness that Pound would describe in 1912 as resting 'in what the Greek psychologists called the *phantastikon.* Their minds are, that is, circumvolved about them like soap-bubbles reflecting sundry patches of the macrocosmos' (*PPI* 91, C55). This is more or less of a piece with his description of Camoens himself, in 1911, as a 'symptomatic' author, giving 'a reflection of tendencies or modes of a time,' a 'mirror [of] obvious and apparent thought movements'; 'They are what one might have expected in such and such a year and place' (*PPI* 49, C28).

The mention of Hugo Grotius is especially interesting. While Pound does not make reference to Grotius elsewhere, *The Cantos* (as well as Pound's critical writing) is replete with references to maritime law and trade. What is more, while it is not clear whether or not Pound had a first-hand familiarity with Grotius, the American statesmen he quotes throughout *The Cantos* did, and we find the Dutchman's ideas echoed in their citations. Pound would no doubt have been familiar with Woodrow Wilson's assertion of the freedom of the seas in his Fourteen Points. Wilson, however, is naïve and incompetent in Pound's judgement.[73] By contrast, in Canto XXXIV, Pound quotes Thomas Jefferson asserting 'Freedom of admission

[73] At his most generous, Pound concedes that Wilson was not the *only* person to blame for the 'error' of America's late entry into the First World War: 'President Wilson, whose prose style is deplorable, has not been the sole committer of errors, before or since August 1914.' (*PPIII* 170, C386). In an angrier mood, for example in 'Ezra Pound and the League of Ideas (1919), Pound opines that 'Y.M.C.A. clerks' and the 'American passport bureau' are attempting to 're-establish sefdom and tie all men to the soil of their native parishes, with only a few 'just men struggling against the general drift and his eminence, W. Wilson, in an attempt to preserve vestiges of freedom and sanity (*PPIII* 371, C521). Notably, Wilson is included in the company of Lloyd George in the Hell of Canto XIV, under the censored spelling '.....n' (Terrell 65; *Cantos* 61).

for ships, freedom of departure, freedom of purchase and sale,' as against boycotts on American trade in French and British ports (*The Cantos* 165).

In 1609, Grotius was commissioned by the Dutch East India Company to defend their case in the capture of the Portuguese vessel, the *Santa Catarina*. Against Portuguese claims of maritime monopoly, Grotius argued the case of *mare liberum*, or the freedom of the seas, claiming that in terms of natural law, the sea is and has always been a common realm to all people and can never be the private property of any individual or state. Drawing an analogy between the oceans and the air, both of which 'cannot be possessed' and also 'oweth a common use to men,' Grotius contends that 'for the same cause the element of the sea is common to all, to wit, so infinite that it cannot be possessed and applied to all uses, whether we respect navigation or fishing' (25). As he reiterates throughout the work, the sea 'by the law of nature is common unto all,' a 'public utility' that is not to be hoarded by any one nation (22, 78, 88).

Failing to respect this, through claiming dominion over the seas or curtailing the trade and navigation of other nations, is condemned by Grotius as 'contrary to the law of nature' (38, 54).[74] Deferring to Seneca, Grotius explains that 'the greatest benefit of nature' was that 'even by the wind she hath mingled nations scattered in regard of place and hath so divided all her goods into countries that mortal men must needs traffic among themselves' (11). And do not these winds, he asks, 'sufficiently signify that nature has granted a passage from all nations unto all?' (11). Grotius infers from this that those who 'take away that most laudable

[74] This charge is directed, amongst others, at the Pope, who had distributed maritime territories to the Portuguese and the Spanish (38), and at the Portuguese themselves, who pretend a right to oceanic monopoly (54).

society of mankind . . . take away the mutual occasions of doing good and, to conclude, violate nature herself' (11).

The persistence of this line of argument underscores the extent to which maritime trade routes had become integral to the world economy, and now constituted contested sites of international conflict. The sea here becomes the theatre of national interests, and, as much as the fertility of the earth itself, the foundation upon which the prosperity of the solid ground is built. It is worth noting, too, the etymology of the word 'economy,' which derives from the Greek *oikonomia*, meaning 'household management,' and is also related to *oikoumene*, meaning 'the inhabited earth.'[75] When the sea becomes central to the world economy, it thus becomes part of this inhabited earth, this 'household' of humanity, becoming integral to a modern way of being-in-the-world.[76]

In 1916, at the height of wartime debate surrounding free shipping, Grotius's *Mare Liberum* was first published in an English translation by Oxford University Press and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.[77] In his 'Introductory Note' to the volume, James Brown Scott wrote: 'since the month of August, 1914, the expression "Freedom of the Seas" has been on the lips of belligerent and neutral, and it seems as advisable as it is timely

[75] '*οἶκος*' means both 'house' or 'dwelling,' and 'native land' (*Etymological Dictionary of Greek*).
[76] For more on the fertile connections between *oikoumene* and the maritime, see Dawid de Villiers' '*Okeānos* contra *Oikoumenè*: The Nineteenth-Century Resurgence of an Adversarial Paradigm.'
[77] *Mare Liberum* had been previously translated contemporaneously by Richard Hakluyt as *The Free Sea,* but this translation (from which I will cite) was only printed in 2004 (*Free Sea* xxi-xxii). The British naval blockade and Navicert system (requiring neutral ships to carry certificates stating their cargo) was highly controversial, and was contested, especially in the United States, under the thesis of the freedom of the seas. Woodrow Wilson was roundly criticised for tolerating an illegal blockade that violated neutral nations' shipping rights and freedoms, including the confiscation of neutral cargoes that were not satisfactorily certified. In June 1915, Wilson's Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan, resigned over the matter. For further reading see Miller's *Europe and the Maritime World: A Twentieth Century History* (213-244); Jan Martin Lemnitzer's 'Woodrow Wilson's Neutrality, the Freedom of the Seas, and the Myth of the "Civil War Precedents" (2016); Mark Bailey's 'Supporting the Wartime Economy: Imperial Maritime Trade and the Globalised Maritime Trade System, 1914-1916 (2017).

to issue—for the first time in English—the famous Latin tractate of Grotius proclaiming, explaining, and in no small measure making the "freedom of the seas"' (v). In 1919, it was published in German as *Von der Freiheit des Meeres.* The question of the freedom of the seas became a central issue in the conflict and its aftermath: an issue exacerbated by economic blockades and the advent of submarine warfare, and in no measure allayed by the reparations required by the Treaty of Versailles, which stripped Germany of much of her merchant marine.

As Schmitt would point out in his *Land and Sea,* the question is not nearly as self-evident as Grotius had cast it in *Mare Liberum.* The Dutch jurist's argument, for all its invocations of the law of nature, was commissioned by the Dutch East India Company, which had vested interests in breaking up the maritime monopoly of its trade rivals. For Schmitt, a Nazi jurist writing in 1942, Britain's claim to the freedom of the seas served as a convenient mask for its own profit, enabling it to lay claim to a universal economy—a universal world habitation, as it were—while passing this off as a natural and neutral state of affairs. While nation-states had partitioned off the earth among themselves, Schmitt writes, 'the sea, on the other hand, would belong to nobody, or everybody, but in reality, it would belong to a single country: England' (46). Schmitt picks out several refrains, such as Walter Raleigh's 'Whosoever commands the sea commands the trade; whosoever commands the trade of the world commands the riches of the world, and consequently the world itself,' and 'All trade is world trade; all world trade is maritime trade,' and 'All world trade is free exchange' (Schmitt 47; Raleigh 325). Pound quotes the first of these in Canto XXXV (176). Schmitt contends

that, far from expressing any kind of natural law or 'absolute and eternal truths,' they are the formulations of 'the zenith of England's maritime and global power' (47).

A noteworthy detail in the case of Grotius is the fact that the seizing of the *Santa Catarina* was condemned by the Dutch Admiralty Court (Edmond 188), so that in contesting its indictment, the Dutch East India Company was acting independently of its nation state. This suggests the onset of economic independence from the Netherlands, and the possibility of an uprooted and fluid commercial entity beyond its original national base. As we shall see, this separation between individual companies and the state is one that will come to obsess Pound, particularly as the lack of state control lends itself, in his view, to potential exploitation, and to economic actions that are counter to the interests of the nation state. It is interesting to note, as integral to this phenomenon, the connection both Grotius and Schmitt make between the economic and the ecumenical. As noted above, the two words are etymologically related, both having to do with a way of being-in-the-world or inhabiting the earth (*OED*). Grotius defends the commonality of the seas by claiming that the law of God (and of nature) gives them to all men, and he contests the authority of the Papal Bull that partitioned the sea between Spain and Portugal. He argues that the Pope has no natural authority to make such an endowment since this would require him to be the owner of the seas: something no one man can be (38). By contrast, as Schmitt argues, the universality of the seas (something Grotius argues from a Protestant standpoint as against the Catholic trade rivals of the Dutch), frees up the possibility of their unrestricted economic exploitation.

The thesis that the rise of Protestantism paved the way for mercantile capitalism by undermining the authority of the Church has been formulated by, amongst others, the German

sociologist Max Weber in his turn-of-the-century *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Karl Löwith in *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History,* as well as Hans Blumenberg in his *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age.* This shift in authority is epitomized by the rise of entities like the British and Dutch East India Companies, making Pound's citation of the latter's founding in *The Spirit of Romance* an example of one of his 'luminous details': a piece of data that gives significant insight into a cultural or historical context, or reveals the shifts and metamorphoses in a particular cultural paideuma (*PPI* 44, C26). The companies that merged to form the Dutch East India Company in 1602 have been described by historians as 'true capital associations, divested of political interests, and probably the first organisations of that kind in the European expansion in Asia' (Steensgaard 127), while the company itself has been called 'a real corporation of the modern type' (Sée 22). Unfortunately, and rather typically, with allegiances firmly set by now within Italian Fascism and his mythos blending Roman Catholicism with the pagan rites of Eleusis and Bacchus, when Pound writes in 1941 he will construe the rise of Protestantism as resulting from the corrupting influence of Judaism.

It is noteworthy that the hidden influence of the maritime trade upon the world economy had been theorised, in the late nineteenth century, by Marx and Engels, who described Holland as 'the model capitalist nation of the seventeenth century' (*Capital I* 916-919).[78] Their discussions of finance, national debt, and the carrying trade have a good deal in common with Pound's writing on the connections between usury, banks, and maritime trade, and therefore merit close attention. Pound read *Capital* in Italian translation during the

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[78] 'The system of public credit, i.e. of national debts, the origins of which are to be found in Genoa and Venice as early as the Middle Ages, took possession of Europe as a whole during the period of manufacture. The colonial system, with its maritime trade and its commercial wars, served as a forcing-house for the credit system. Thus it first took root in Holland' (*Capital I* 919).

1920s, at a time when he was solidifying his own economic theories (Redman 108). As Redman tells us, it is one of the most heavily annotated books Pound owned (108). Marx and Engels point out that international trade necessitates the exchange of currencies, which, as it increases, is gradually taken over by specialists and agents who expedite the process. They further observe that individuals or nations involved in the carrying trade or in dealing with commodities are not themselves the producers of those commodities. They are middlemen and the profit they receive is dependent not on the value of the product but on the labour of mediation they perform. Marx explains this as follows:

> The dealer in commodities . . . seeks to transform [a certain sum of money] from x (the original value) into x + Δx (this sum plus the profit on it). As he is not just a capitalist, but a commodity dealer at that, it goes without saying that his capital has to appear on the market originally in the form of money capital, since he does not produce any commodities himself but simply deals in them, facilitating their movement. (*Capital III* 380-381)

In the course of trade, this dealer in commodities is continually exchanging money, making and receiving payments from many people. This circulation of money, which Marx and Engels described as a 'merely technical operation,' nonetheless 'makes it necessary for accounts to be drawn up and balanced' (*Capital III* 432), which betokens the beginning of modern finance. Insofar as trade is international, the individual must also continually exchange currencies—a task that is soon taken over by banks and specialists in the trade of money. This occurs particularly in coastal trading cities, especially where it is inconvenient to move around actual precious metals. In addition, the often-protracted delays in the return of

ships gradually led to the establishment of banking companies and trade on credit (see *Capital III* 747). Marx and Engels cited the early banking companies of Venice as an example:

> Because of Venice's needs, and its peculiar geography, which made it more troublesome to carry bullion around than in other places, the merchants of this city set up cashiers' associations with appropriate safeguards, supervision and management. The members of such an association subscribed certain sums on which they drew drafts for their creditors, whereupon the sum paid was deducted from the debtor's account on the page of the book set aside for that purpose, and the sum with which the creditor was credited was added to his account. Such were the first beginnings of the so-called giro banks. (*Capital III* 436; they are citing Karl Dietrich Hüllman's *Staedtewesen des Mittelalters*)

Maritime trade is precarious, however, and valuable cargo ships run the risk of being looted or wrecked in the course of their long journeys. As depicted in *The Merchant of Venice*—which both Marx and, as I shall discuss, Pound cite in this regard (*Capital I* 399; Pound *PPIV* 343-344, C666)—this maritime precarity laid open the possibility of massive profit for individual creditors. Given the risks of sea voyages, interest rates on credit were inflated, and the misfortune of these vessels would be to their creditors' gain. This led to the foundation of institutes for public credit, a concept which, in the form of Major C.H. Douglas' Social Credit theories, Pound vehemently propagated. As Marx and Engels explain,

> The credit associations set up in the twelfth and fourteenth centuries in Venice and Genoa arose from the need of the sea trade and the wholesale trade based on it to

> emancipate themselves from the rule of old-fashioned usury and from the monopolizing of money-dealing.. . . [T]he banks proper that were founded in these urban republics were at the same time institutions for public credit, from which the state received advances against taxes anticipated. (*Capital III* 736-737)

It is not hard to see what Pound would find appealing in both the emancipation of individuals from their usurers and in the emancipation of the government itself from international money trade. Furthermore, much in Marx's account of mercantile capitalism, maritime transport, and colonialism caused by overproduction and the need to expand into external markets resonates with Pound's economic concerns about over-accumulation as a cause of war. Most importantly, however, Marx makes the same connections between maritime trade and usury that Pound will make himself, and he does so via the ancient maritime economy of the Republic of Venice.

In this section, I have outlined some of the economic questions that surround Grotius' thesis of the freedom of the seas, particularly given that these are formulated around natural law, and I have touched upon the reprisal of these concerns in the twentieth century. I have shown, via Grotius, Schmitt, and Marx, how maritime trade and the questions that surround it—freedom of trade, maritime insurance, monetary exchange, and the relations between individual companies and the nation state—have shaped the world economy of the twentieth century. I turn now to Pound's treatment, throughout his prose and poetry, of maritime trade and financing, exemplified especially in the Republic of Venice.

MARITIME USURY AND ECONOMIC PEACE

As we shall see, Pound's early Venetian focus ultimately lends itself to a Fascist apologia, and a justification of Italian imperialism via the myths of Venice's maritime past. In this section, however, I show how maritime trade initially serves for Pound as a vehicle for world peace, the exchange of ideas, and a spirit of tolerance and cosmopolitanism fostered via the connecting of different states. We shall see also how this spirit of tolerance metamorphoses into an indictment of those whom Pound believes are preventing it. For Pound, natural law dictates a specific economic system of trade that will lead to prosperity and peace, and the elusiveness of these ideals leads Pound to a series of indictments against all things that are *contra natura.*

Pound's economic education, as Redman points out, began during his friendship with A.R. Orage, editor of the *New Age,* to which Pound contributed from 1911 to 1921. The *New Age* was a weekly magazine dedicated to literature, politics, and the arts. It had a socialist bent under Orage's editorship, publishing original works by modernist writers such as Pound, James Joyce, and Katherine Mansfield alongside important economic debates of the day, with contributors including Arthur Kitson and Major C.H. Douglas (Redman 38). One influential view discussed in a number of *The New Age*'s economic articles was J.A. Hobson's thesis that imperialism inevitably results in war (Redman 59-60).[79] This claim would significantly influence Douglas' analysis of international conflict, and it resembles Marx's view of the relations between the colonial system, maritime trade, and commercial wars.

[79] It is worth pointing out Hobson's own antisemitism: his critique of imperialism operates by identifying a group of Jewish financiers as the responsible party.

In 1918, Pound met Douglas in the offices of the *New Age*—a meeting that would have a lasting impact on him. Douglas' economic theories constituted an attempt to diagnose and remedy the economic ills of post-war society, which saw poverty and scarcity amidst a seeming abundance of wealth and production. Wartime measures had paradoxically generated a spell of economic success. Alec Marsh writes that the 'enormous expansion of industry made necessary by the war effort, financed by government credits, produced real economic prosperity' (84). The post-war economic slump no doubt provided the impetus for ideas like Douglas's Social Credit theory. If direct and strong government intervention through the provision of credit could artificially prop up the wartime economy, there seemed to be no reason why this should not be able to continue in times of peace.

While the growth of Pound's interest in economics coincides with his assimilation of Douglas's theories, it would be a mistake to suppose this tutelage to be the source and inception of all things economic as far as Pound is concerned. As I have shown, the germs of these interests predate Pound's encounter with Douglas. I opened this chapter with Pound's reference, almost a decade earlier, to the founding of the Dutch East India Company, and the artists and thinkers produced in the economic milieu of early modern Holland. This is an early expression of Pound's awareness of the entanglement of art, commerce, and politics. The chapter of *The Spirit of Romance* in which that reference occurs opens with a description of the fall of Constantinople and the economic and political shifts that followed, as European states set out on large-scale world explorations in search of alternative trade routes (214). Within this context, the cross-section he gives us of the economic and artistic climate of early-modern Holland has all the characteristics of what Pound calls a 'luminous detail' (*PPI* 44).

In the first article of a series entitled 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris,' published in the *New Age* between December 1911 and February 1912, Pound contrasts this symptomatic detail, which gives particular insight into a specific moment in a culture's history, with the sort of information that remains a mere accumulating of facts. Of interest in this article is the economic nature of both the 'luminous detail' and the brute facts Pound chooses to cite:

> So-and-so was, in such-and-such a year, elected Doge. So-and-so killed the tyrant. So-and-so was banished for embezzling State funds. So-and-so embezzled but was not banished. These statements may contain germs of drama, certain suggestions of human passion or habit, but they are reticent, they tell us nothing we did not know, nothing which enlightens us. They are of any time and country. By reading them with the blanks filled in, with the names written, we get no more intimate acquaintance with the temper of any period; but when in Burckhardt we come upon a passage: 'In this year the Venetians refused to make war upon the Milanese because they held that any war between buyer and seller must prove profitable to neither,' we come upon a portent, the old order changes, one conception of war and of the State begins to decline. The Middle Ages imperceptibly give ground to the Renaissance. A ruler owning a State and wishing to enlarge his possessions, could under one régime, in a manner opposed to sound economy, make war, but commercial sense is sapping this régime. (*PPI* 46, C26)

The passage mentioned is from Burckhardt's *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy,* as are the data Pound opens with. Burckhardt's account of the development of the Italian Renaissance winds through lists of tyrants and Doges, murders, wars, and exiles, and, in the

midst of this, pockets of culture briefly flourishing under the auspices of this or that tyrant (Sigismondo Malatesta, Borso d'Este, and Francesco Sforza all crop up). The first section of his work, entitled 'The State as a Work of Art,' traces the progression from individual despots, through family dynasties (like Malatesta and Este), to the City States of Venice and Florence. Burckhardt emphasises the 'spirit of calculation' which was put to practical use for Venice's commercial success (71), describing

> the crowded Piazza before San Giacometto at the Rialto, where the business of the world is transacted, not amid shouting and confusion, but with the subdued hum of many voices; where in the porticoes round the square and in those of the adjoining streets sit hundreds of money changers and goldsmiths, with endless rows of shops and warehouses above their heads. (63)

He notes that the Venetians 'were united by the most powerful ties of interest in dealing both with the colonies and with their possessions on the mainland, forcing the population of the latter, that is, of all the towns up to Bergamo, to buy and sell in Venice alone' (65). In the course of their history of trade and commerce, Burckhardt writes, they developed the statistical sciences (69). This was an inevitability for 'a power whose foundations were so complicated, whose activity and interests filled so wide a stage' that these necessitated a 'systematic oversight of the whole,… a regular estimate of means and burdens, of profits and losses' (68). The decisive passage which so impressed Pound is cited during this discussion: it is the fact that at a given moment, in the fifteenth century, Venice would not form an alliance with Florence against Milan, because the latter bought up Venetian goods, and practical economic calculations showed war between the two to be unprofitable (70).

As with the Dutch East India Company passage in the 1910 work *The Spirit of Romance*, the fact that in 1911 Pound picked out this particular passage in his reading of Burckhardt shows that his sense of economics as a determining force in politics and world history began early in his career. It must be conceded, however, that the economic bent of the Burckhardt passage feels somewhat out of place in the 'Osiris' articles, which are largely concerned with literature and art, and with their proper appreciation. Pound makes use of frequent biological or mechanical analogies to illustrate his point, but some of these analogies are also economic: for example, his opening contention that it would be economically unsound for the owner of a mine to trade in the entire volume of dirt he excavates, rather than selecting from it the few jewels he has found (*PPI* 46). The Burckhardt passage, however, is not an analogy but is proffered as an example of one of those jewels picked out of the dumb dirt of history. In 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris,' the jewels Pound presented to readers of the *New Age* were for the most part literary. It seems safe to suggest that in 1911, although already present, Pound's interest in economics and his sense of its importance as a driving force in civilization remained undeveloped. The emphasis remains literary.[80]

The Burckhardt passage crops up again, however, in Pound's fourth article for his 1917 series in the *New Age*, 'Provincialism the Enemy.' The shift from its pre-war to wartime deployment is noticeable. Pound's 1917 articles inveighed against 'provincialism' as '(a) An ignorance of the manners, customs, and nature of people living outside one's own village, parish or nation' and '(b) A desire to coerce others into uniformity' (*PPII* 231, C266). These

[80] As the Dutch East India Company passage suggests, the two seem already to be interlinked in Pound's mind: certain literary texts give insight into the specific temper of a society at a given time, as do certain economic facts. Pound's interest in the troubadours, for example, was not purely literary but intricately entangled with their economic and political reality. What interests Pound is a certain way of inhabiting the world at a given historical moment, and literature, history, politics, and economics all feed into this.

articles constitute Pound's attempt to come to terms with the causes of the First World War. As the volume's title suggests, the articles criticise a spirit of 'provincialism' and advocate for greater traffic and circulation of ideas, goods, and people among nations. The Burckhardt passage is given as follows:

> Wars are not ended by theorizing. Burckhardt notes as the highest point of renaissance civilization the date when Milan refused to make war on Venice because a 'war between buyer and seller could be profitable to neither.' The 'Peace of *Dives*' was recognized for an instant and forgotten. Historically, peace has not been doctrinaire. It has been not unlike a rolled snowball. Burgundy and Aquitaine no longer make war on each other. England and Scotland no longer make war on each other. Dante propounded a general central judiciary for all Europe, a sort of Hague tribunal to judge and decide between nations. His work remains a treatise. What peace Europe acquired she acquired by an enlargement of nations, by coalitions, such as that of Castille, Leon and Aragon. (*PPII* 251, C274)

This is a remarkable passage. For one thing, in 1917 Pound is already in some sense proposing that economics might be the vehicle of peace. This is before his 1918 meeting with Douglas, although of course he had read and contributed to the *New Age* since 1911 and would have absorbed some of the economic thoughts of his contemporaries. The use he makes of Burckhardt here is notably different from its citation as a 'luminous detail' in the 'Osiris' articles (*PPI* 44). There, although given central status, it is neutrally conveyed. The only judgment Pound makes is in expressing a preference for this sort of insight-provoking fact over and above generic data. In the fourth article of the 'Provincialism the Enemy' series,

the Burckhardt passage is cited in the context of the current war, via 'wars' generally, as the remedy to the problem of provincialism. It is furthermore interesting, particularly given his later turn to fascism, that the solution propounded here is expansive and open rather than prescriptive, doctrinaire, and provincial. He opens this article with an allusion to Kipling: 'transportation is civilisation' (*PPII* 251; Kipling 1, 20).[81] He lauds plans for building the Channel Tunnel. Napoleon is compared to a mercenary *condottiere* from a bygone era, a petty Italian Renaissance tyrant from before the saner commercial wisdom of Venice and Milan (*PPII* 251-252). Noteworthy, too, is his lack of patience for theorizing, the doctrinaire, and Dante's proposal of a judicial solution (here an oblique criticism of the 1907 Hague conventions on the conduct of war). Peace is to be fostered through enlargement, coalition, trade, and commerce. It is obvious under which of these auspices Pound would have placed the Treaty of Versailles.[82]

Pound would again mention Burckhardt's citation of the peace between Venice and Milan in 1938, in 'For a New Paideuma.' Here both the tension and the continuity between the expansive, non-doctrinaire approach of 'Provincialism the Enemy' and the didactic approach of his later work come to the fore. The arguments of the former imply that an education in the ways and ideas of other peoples and nations might remedy the dangerous closed-mindedness that leads to war. Yet by the 1930s Pound has a very definite canon, a prescriptive list of what that education must include. His citation of Burckhardt in 'For a New Paideuma' borders on exasperation:

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[81] Pound paraphrases this as 'intercommunication is civilisation' in the third article of the series (*PPII* 235, C268)

[82] Unlike the 'Osiris' articles, in 'Provincialism the Enemy' literature takes a definite back seat.

> All war in Europe is civil war henceforth, it is man tearing at his own viscera. It is in perspective four centuries since Milan declined to make war on Venice, on ground that war between buyer and seller could profit neither. Ideas do not go into mass action the day they are born. (*PPVII* 292-293, C1431)

Ideas going into action is, of course, a major preoccupation for Pound.[83] It resonates with his early conception of the 'germinal' mind (*Spirit of Romance* 92).[84] So, in his 1942 'A Visiting Card,' we find: 'Thought is organic. It needs these "gristly facts",' followed by 'The idea is not achieved until it goes into action' (*SP* 334). One is reminded of his indictment that Dante's idea of a central judiciary system for all Europe 'remains a treatise' (*PPII* 251). He is willing to concede, as above, that 'this does not mean, of course, that it has to go into action half an hour after it's born' (*SP* 334). One gathers, therefore, that Pound is still awaiting the 'going into action' of the economic wisdom that led to peace between Venice and Milan. One also senses Pound's lasting conviction that the source of this peace will be economic.

The Burckhardt passage is interesting for its economic and political bent, and because it emerges from Pound's early writing, remains apparent in his attempts to come to terms with the war in 1917, and lasts into the more politically polarised 1930s. Here, however, I am particularly interested in the maritime background implicit in this evocation of Venetian economy and politics. For this purpose, I would like to place the Burckhardt passage alongside another which might be taken as its gist, or as the summary of what Pound took

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[83] In *Guide to Kulchur,* Pound repeatedly emphasises this idea, writing that 'the history of culture is the history of ideas going into action' (44), and that 'ideas are true as they go into action' (188).

[84] Of these minds, Pound writes: 'their thoughts are in them as the thought of the tree is in the seed, or in the grass, or the grain, or the blossom. [T]hey affect mind about them, and transmute it as the seed the earth' (*Spirit of Romance* 92-93).

from it: 'transportation is civilization' (*PPII* 251; Kipling 1, 20).[85] As I have mentioned, this passage, which Pound takes from Kipling (and quotes in the seventh of his earlier 'Patria Mia' series) in fact epigraphs the 'Provincialism' article in which Pound also cites Burckhardt (*PPI,* 102, C58; *PPII* 251, C274). Venice, of course, like early modern Holland, built its economic success on maritime trade. For Pound, the economic exchange of goods has a parallel in the exchange of ideas (contra 'provincialism'), but the economic dimension is no mere metaphor for the circulation of thought, as the peace between Venice and Milan should illustrate. The circulation of goods between nations inevitably brings with it contact with, and consideration for, other nations; in this way, it fosters cultural exchange.

I have referred to Marx's view that mercantile capitalism and the carrying trade gave rise to the credit system, and I have traced Pound's enshrinement of the Venetian economic peace as an exemplum for the modern world. While Pound seems to celebrate the latter, it is worth pointing out that this moment marks for him the commencement, in the history of human societies, of economic motives for war and peace, and it is worth noting, furthermore, Pound's ambivalence elsewhere toward the economic prosperity of Venice. In the same text that Pound cites approvingly with regard to economic peace, Burckhardt describes the Rialto in Venice, 'where the business of the world is transacted,' as being populated by 'hundreds of money changers and goldsmiths' (63). Compare Pound's contention that one could 'make a fairly good case against Athens as the mother of rascality, did one not see her as the grand-daughter of a long line of markets and Mediterranean trading posts' (*Guide to Kulchur*

[85] It is worth noting that the Kipling story from which Pound takes this citation, where it appears as the motto of the Aerial Board of Control, is quite an authoritarian, and certainly and anti-democratic one. The A.B.C. controls world trade and ensures economic fairness and the continuation of trade above all other concerns, but it constitutes a sort of world government. While Pound's citation of this passage is in itself in the spirit of cosmopolitanism and expansiveness, it is important to note the authoritarian strain that already lurks behind it.

35). It is not, however, trade itself that Pound associates with rascality, and he recognises its benefits in both the Burckhardt passage and in Kipling's 'transportation is civilisation' (*PPII* 251; Kipling 1, 20). His description of Athens nonetheless echoes Burckhardt's Venetian scene: 'There sat the scoundrel conjugating the verb hemerodanaidzein [day-loaning], lending out his shilling a day to young traders and taking his farden or ha'penny profit. Further along a bloke with a table performing the next grade of usury' (*GK* 36). His case against Athens, then, as the rest of the passage makes clear, is that fraud and usury came to prosper through the money changing and maritime insurance associated with sea trade. In 1944, comparing the economics of the United States prior to 1860 to that of the City State of Venice, Pound writes that '[i]t was the period of the cult of business, which continued an Italic tradition, the tradition of the great City Republics of Venice and Genoa, the Superba and the Dominante. Economic affairs were not wholly sordid. Usury, however, is a cancer. Finance a disease (*Selected Prose* 175-176).

In a 1924 article entitled 'Law and the Merchant of Venice,' Pound quotes the historian Heinrich Leo and his contention that 'Venice in the eighth century plunged actively into the slave trade "and was then as is Siout in our day, the most important eunuch factory in the world"' (*PPIV* 343, C666). Given Pound's characterization of usury as a perversion of the natural fertility of reproductive nature, it is safe to deduce that here the slave trade is also a sin *contra naturam*. Counter to this, justice is represented by Charlemagne, who 'prohibited the sale of any slave to foreigners under pain of death and prescribed the same penalty for anyone who mutilated a man "*as occurred in that traffic*"' (*PPIV* 344). Charlemagne serves as a figure of law and orderliness, also exemplified by Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* whose 'legal learning is solid' (*PPIV* 344). Fourteen years later, in *Guide to Kulchur*, Pound again

comments on the tension between law and usury in the play, and explicitly links it to his contemporary context:

> Lombard law behind Venetian penalties against mayhem. The ethical barrage versus usura. The undercurrents in the *Merchant of Venice*, glossed over in Victorian treatment and popular acceptance of that play, in the low and vile era "of usury" the century of Victoria and Franz-Jozef reaching its maximum squalor in such administrations as that of U.S. Grant, Herbert Hoover and Baldwin. For we are not yet out of this filthiness by a long chalk. (149)

One of Pound's favourite examples of right law and order, recurring throughout *The Cantos* and his prose, is the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius, who felt the injustice of companies or the state profiting from the misfortune of victims of shipwreck, and who wished to lower the rates of maritime credit to the general Roman interest rate of 6%. In *Guide to Kulchur,* Pound summarises the case as follows:

> In 138 A.D. Antoninus Pius was considering the difference between Roman Law and the Law of Rhodes, between agrarian usury and maritime usury, he was concerned as to whether the Roman State shd. profit by sailor's misfortune and batten on ship-wreck. (40)

Antoninus and maritime usury are also mentioned in the 1937-1938 'The Jefferson-Adams Letters as a Shrine and a Monument' (*Selected Prose* 57), in the 'Money' section of his 1942 'A Visiting Card' (*SP* 311), and in 'The Individual and His Milieu,' published in *The Criterion* in October 1935. Here Pound contends that

> The archaeologist and serendipidist can wander back through Claudius Salmacis and find the known beginnings of usury entangled with those of marine insurance, sea lawyers, the law of Rhodes, the disputed text of Antoninus Pius on the limits of his jurisdiction. … Vast mines of anecdote lie still unexploited. (*PPVI* 317, C1252)

'Vast mines' calls to mind the mining metaphor of the first 'Osiris' article, suggesting that we might take Antoninus' contention with the Law of Rhodes as one of Pound's luminous details, one of the solid jewels excavated from the debris of history. The gist is that the emperor Antoninus Pius was, after some hesitation, compelled to concede the limits of his jurisdiction, and allow for the Law of Rhodes or *lex Rhodi* (the '30 per hundred' as opposed to the '6% average roman usury') to 'rule at sea' (Terrell 170-171; the citations are from *Guide to Kulchur* 34). Pound encountered Antoninus Pius in Claudius Salmasius's *De Modo Usurarum,* and refers to him in several Cantos.[86] The fullest of these references, in Canto XLVI, is as follows:

> 'I rule the Earth' said Antoninus 'but LAW rules the sea'
>
> meaning, we take it, lex Rhodi, the Law Maritime
>
> of sea lawyers
>
> usura and sea insurance

[86] See Cantos XLII and XLVI ('the Fifth Decad of Cantos'), LXXVIII (the 'Pisan Cantos'), LXXXVII-LXXXIX and XCIV ('Rock-Drill De Los Cantares'), XCVI-VIII, CII, and CV-CVII ('Thrones de los Cantares'). Most of these Cantos reference Antoninus' admission of the limits of his jurisdiction and adoption of the law of Rhodes at sea, but there are a few interesting differences, particularly in the 'Thrones de los Cantares' section, where Canto XCVI has 'Under Antoninus, 23 years without war' (673), and Canto XCVII laments that there is 'very little about Antoninus left in their records' (699), and again 'Of Antoninus very little record remains' (702). The treatment of Antoninus is this section seems indicative of something forgotten, of something which might have been salvaged had people paid more attention. Canto CVII refers to Alexander the Great as 'Antoninus in blot-out' (780).

> Wherefrom no State was erected greater than Athens. (234)

When, in *Guide to Kulchur,* Pound designates Athens as the 'mother of rascality' and launches into a discussion of Greek decadence (35-36), we again find an allusion to Antoninus.[87] Pound contrasts the Athenian system with that of Sparta, where a proper understanding of money as mere medium of exchange prevailed. In the section that precedes his 'Sparta 776 B.C.' Pound makes the following curious case:

> anyone with Gaudier-Brzeska's eye will see Greek art as a decadence. The economist will look at their usury. He will find the idea of it mixed up with marine insurance. The New Economist will say that with such *neschek* no empire-building was possible. I offer another axis of reference: the difference between maritime and agrarian usury, the difference between 30 per hundred and 6% average roman usury. (*GK* 33-34)

This provides the clue to his case against Athens: it is usury, sprung from marine insurance, which constitutes Athenian decadence.

> Ships took coin on their voyages at risk of the owner, that is of the owner and lender of the coin, and paid a composite tax covering rental and risk. The higher financiers had agents in near eastern ports, credit existed, and 'bad credit.'
>
> Demosthenes argued a case wherein a bloke sailed out of Sicily, without taking the borrowed money on board, and carefully sank his ship which was worth less than the money, and was caught by the informal Lloyd's of the day. In fact, the records of rascality (as conserved in fragments of law records) are so good one grudges them to

[87] It is likely that Pound first drew this connection through his reading of Salmasius's *De Modo Usurarum*, which he cites in relation to Pius Antoninus and maritime insurance. He may also have come across the association of credit and the carrying trade in Marx.

> the prose page, and wants to reserve them for poetry. But from all this the true function of money as MEASURE emerges. (*GK* 36)

In a radio speech on the 6th of April, 1943, he goes on to apply the 'rascality' of maritime insurance to the current war:

> Ships are sunk IN ORDER TO HAVE SHIPS SUNK. When ships are sunk, there is a greater demand for new ships. The sinking augments the MARKET for new ships. More ships are wanted because more ships have been destroyed. And LOAN CAPITAL, usurer's capital, money made by a stroke of the banker's pen is wanted for FINANCING new construction. (*Speaking* 272)

It is important to note that this association of usury and maritime trade exists for Pound as early as the composition of Canto XII between 1922 and 1923 (Pearlman 302), in which we find the 'Tale of the Honest Sailor' (*The Cantos* 55). This story, which was apparently told to Pound by John Quinn, incorporates the themes of usury, banking, and maritime trade. The story itself features a sailor who had a homosexual liaison with a merchant in Stambouli, an encounter reminiscent of Eliot's Smyrna merchant and the weekend at the Metropole. Waking up in hospital after a spell of heavy drinking, he is tricked into thinking he has given birth to a baby while unconscious, and that the father is his merchant lover. To provide for his child, he accumulates a vast store of wealth: 'bought shares in the ship / and finally had half shares, / Then a ship / and in time a whole line of steamers' (56).

As critics such as Alec Marsh have argued, the mechanics of this tale draw on the characterisation of homosexuality as *contra naturam,* against natural fertility and increase, to posit the merchant's economic increase as similarly sterile (124-126). As discussed, the

carrying trade does not itself produce wealth but increases it through an 'economy of the same,' and for Pound this economy is aptly exemplified in the homosexual reproduction of the sailor (Marsh 113). Pound adds another layer to this tale in Canto XII by having 'Jim X' recount it to a room full of usurious bankers, thus further cementing the analogies between sterility, artificial inflation, maritime trade, and usury.

In the passage from *Guide to Kulchur* cited above, however, the dishonest sailor is 'caught by the informal Lloyd's of the day' (*GK* 36). The reference to Lloyd's is interesting because of the role played by this company in maritime trade during the First World War. In August 1914, Lloyd's of London introduced the State Insurance Scheme in conjunction with the British government to allow shipping to continue despite heightened risk due to submarines (Miller 216). Given that this scheme corresponds to the kind of social credit Pound wanted outside of wartime, one might speculate that he approved of State Insurance. In fact, in the Pisan Cantos, Pound continually cites the public funding of the Greek fleet at the Battle of Salamis as proof 'that the state *can* lend money' (*The Cantos* 431, 440, 468). This example appears in nearly every one of the Pisan Cantos, several times in some. It appears in his radio speeches too:

> For years economics professors have been lying, even going so far as to deprecate loans BY THE STATE, when the fleet that won the battle of Salamis was BUILT with money lent by the Athenian state to the ship builders, INSTEAD of morgagin' the whole nation to kikes, Biddies, swine, and enemies of the people as has been done in damn near every nation since the Stank of England was founded. (*Speaking* 390)

I have already cited Marx and Engels' analysis of the foundation of banks for public credit in Venice. In Canto XL, Pound similarly makes use of a Venetian example to illustrate what these institutions should be like:

> Independent use of money (our OWN)
>
> toward holding OUR bank, own bank
>
> and in it the deposits, received, where received.
>
> De banchis cambi tenendi….
>
> Venice 1361
>
> '62.. shelved for a couple of centuries..
>
> "whether by privates or public…
>
> currency OF (O, F, of) the nation. (197)

This notion of banks serving to provide public credit and benefiting the general public, refers back to the case Martin Van Buren made against the Bank of the United States, which features prominently in Canto XXXVII, and it refers forward to the principles behind the founding of the Monte Dei Paschi, the subject of Cantos XLII-XLIII. The particular example cited in the passage above, however, is one Pound came across in Pietro Rotas' *Storia Della Banche* (1874), which recounts how a Venetian Senate proposed the founding of a bank for public credit in 1361; Rotas also goes on to outline the founding of the Monte Dei Paschi (Walkiewicz and Witemeyer 91). In a 1933 defence of his *ABC of Economics*, after lamenting

the incapacity of his critics to understand 'either Douglas or the relation of algebra to Economics,' he writes as follows:

> Try this on your piano. Venetian archives for A.D. 1361:
>
> quod debeant consultare de banchis cambi tenendi vel pro communi vel pro spetialibus personi sicut videbitur bonum
>
> Went into committee of five and apparently no more was heard of that distressing question until 1584, an interval of 233 years. (*PPVI* 35, C397)

The question at stake is whether the bank or the 'exchange mart' should be for the common good or the good of specific persons (Terrell 162).[88] The delay in its having any effect makes it one of Pound's 'ideas' that did not 'go into action half an hour after it [was] born,' but the principle of the common good is one he sees as operative in a bank like the Monte dei Paschi (*SP* 334).

CANTO LXV AND *MARE LIBERUM*

I have shown so far that Pound was intimately acquainted with the economic importance of the sea, and with the degree to which maritime trade underpins financial practices. While in what precedes, the maritime economies Pound cites hark back to antiquity, they have clear links with what Pound saw as the usurious system of modern economics. In what remains, I turn to the ideological function of maritime economics within Italian Fascism, via the somewhat unlikely-sounding stepping-stone of Pound's 'Adams Cantos.' The rhetoric of these

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[88] Pound refers to this record again in his 1934 article for the *Chicago Tribune,* 'Mussolini defines state as "Spirit of the People,"' writing that 'Marx based values on labor (an idea that had been current for centuries, just as Lenin's decree on banks had been proposed in the Venetian Senate in 1363 a.d.)' (*PPVI* 168, C1057).

Cantos and the time of their writing align them subtly and insidiously with Pound's espousal of Mussolini and his political ideologies.

Pound composed the 'Adams Cantos' very rapidly in 1939. They have by and large been considered an artistic failure, and a hodgepodge of poetic distortions of *The Works of John Adams*, which Pound first read in 1931, and reread shortly before writing this section of *The Cantos* (Ten Eyck 2-5, 17, 27). Reed Way Dasenbrock has argued that these Cantos are to be read contrapuntally with both Pound's 'Chinese History Cantos' and his commitment to Italian Fascism, and to Mussolini particularly (522-523). Playing on Pound's *Jefferson and/or Mussolini*, Dasenbrock suggests that 'Jefferson and/or Adams' serve as a 'shifting mirror for Mussolini' (504). Similarly, Ronald Bush argues that the 'Adams Cantos' were written to 'propagandize a Confucius-John Adams-Mussolini ideogram of good government at a time when Europe was falling apart' ('"Quiet, Not Scornful"?' 171). Massimo Bacigalupo goes so far as to call this section of *The Cantos* a 'glaring example of regime art,' or 'what we could call "fascist realism"' (*The Forméd Trace* 98).[89] Pound sent a copy of Cantos LII–LXXI to Mussolini (Ten Eyck 5-6), and his annotations on the flyleaf of Volume X of *The Works of John Adams* bear out the critical views outlined above, including references to 'Mus' (Mussolini), 'navy,' and 'fisheries' (Ten Eyck 172-173). Given the ideological significance sea power would come to have for Fascist Italy, I will briefly turn to Canto LXVI, the Adams Canto in which Pound deals most thoroughly with the political and economic importance of the maritime world in the history of the United States.

[89] In *Ezra Pound's Adams Cantos*, the most thorough study of these Cantos to date, David Ten Eyk broadly concurs with the association between John Adams and Mussolini, but cautions against reading Adams as a straightforward cipher for the Italian dictator (119).

John Adams was well-read in the European legal tradition of natural law theory, and his position on maritime trade is essentially the same as the Grotian position discussed earlier. He writes, for example, that

> The United States of America have propagated far and wide in Europe the ideas of the liberty of navigation and commerce. The powers of Europe, however, cannot agree as yet, in adopting them to their full extent. … For my own part, I think nature wiser than all the courts and estates of the world, and, therefore, I wish all her seas and rivers upon the whole globe free. (*Papers* 109)

In Canto LXV, which treats America's petitions for France and Holland to free up maritime trade from British monopoly, we find Pound emphasising the same view: 'FISHERIES / our natural right' (377). Throughout the Canto, Pound gives us George Wythe's assertion that trade and commerce should be opened up altogether (Terrell 291), and Adams' advocation for the development of an American Navy:

> Wythe says: better open our trade altogether
>
> Why shdn't America have a navy? We abound in firs, iron ore, tar
>
> the Romans suddenly built one against Carthage
>
> RESOLVED that two vessels be fitted.
>
> 6th April: to remove all restrictions on trade
>
> oblige Britain to keep up a navy
>
> that will cost her twice as much as she takes from us.

FAECE Romuli non Platonis republica!

'America' (Wythe) will hardly live without trade. (366-367)

The relevance of Pound's rhetoric to my argument should be apparent when read alongside the maritime rhetoric of fascists or proto-fascists like Mussolini and D'Annunzio. Their arguments stress Italy's natural right and geographical predisposition to maritime trade and military power, and they couch expansionist aims in a rhetoric of freedom. D'Annunzio writes in his 1919 *Lettera ai Dalmati* of '*nostro mare asservito*' [our enslaved sea] and urges the (coastal) Dalmatians to cast off the slavery imposed on them by joining with Italy as '*uomini liberi tra uomini liberi*'*:* 'free men among free men' (*Lettera* 40). Likewise, in several speeches, Mussolini laments that Italy is imprisoned within her seas, and urges an opening up towards the ocean. In a 1940 speech, he proclaims:

> *noi vogliamo spezzare le catene di ordine territoriale e militare che ci soffocano nel nostro mare, poiché un popolo di quarantacinquemilioni di anime non è veramente libero se non ha libero l'accesso al l'Oceano.*
>
> [We wish to break the territorial and military chains that suffocate our sea, for a people of forty-five million souls can never truly be free without access to the ocean.] (*Opera Omnia XXIX* 404)

Elsewhere, Mussolini outlines Italy's maritime position as one constrained by the territorial possessions of France and Britain. In a 1939 speech to the Grand Council of Fascism, he denies that Italy wants a larger European territory, but construes a variety of nations as enemies to the rightful liberty of the Italian people:

l'Italia è realmente prigioniera nel Mediterraneo.. . . Le sbarre di questa prigione sono la Corsica, la Tunisia, Malta, Cipro: le sentinelle di questa prigione sono Gibilterra e Suez. La Corsica è una pistola puntata sul cuore dell'Italia; . . . Grecia, Turchia, Egitto, sono Stati pronti a far catena colla Gran Bretagna e a perfezionare l'accerchiamento politico-militare dell'Italia.

[Italy is in truth a prisoner in the Mediterranean.. . . The bars of this prison are Corsica, Tunisia, Malta, and Cyprus. The sentinels of this prison are Gibraltar and Suez. Corsica is a pistol pointed at the heart of Italy; . . . Greece, Turkey, and Egypt are ready to form a chain with Great Britain and to complete the politico-military encirclement of Italy.] ('Relazione per il Gran Consiglio' ff000039)

Having outlined the bars and prison guards that threaten to stifle Italy, Mussolini urges a twofold agenda:

1. . . . *di rompere in primo luogo le sbarre della prigione.*

2. *Rotte le sbarre, la politica italiana non può avere che una parola d'ordine: marciare all'oceano.*

[1. . . . first of all to break the bars of this prison

2. Once the bars are broken, Italian policy can only have one motto—to march to the oceans.][90] ('Relazione per il Gran Consiglio' ff000040)

[90] Mussolini will echo this provocation a year later in his 'Il Memoriale Panoramico al Re,' proclaiming Italy's demands to be 'freedom on the seas, and a window on the oceans' (*'libertà sui mari, finestra sull'oceano'*). He continues:

L'Italia non sarà veramente una nazione indipendente sino a quando avrà a sbarre della sua prigione mediterranea la Corsica, Biserta, Malta, e a muro della stessa prigione Gibilterra e Suez.

As in the Adams Canto discussed above, the language is one of liberty and the casting off of unjust constraints. Italy is not seeking more than it has a natural and geographical right to, but it has as much right as Britain and France to the freedom of the seas. I have noted the critical view that Adams serves as a mirror for Mussolini, and traced Italian parallels of the contended freedom of the seas of the American Revolution. When Adams cites Rome as a historical precedent for the United States, this further reinforces such parallels: 'the Romans suddenly built one [a navy] against Carthage' (Canto LXV 367). Here again, the exemplar is that of a much-beleaguered party at long last standing up to its stronger oppressor. This may not be ideal, and indeed may tempt towards corruption, but as Pound cites from Adams' retort that 'we are in the FAECE Romuli non Platonis republica'—we are in the dregs of Rome not in the Platonic Republic (367). We might read this in two ways. In the context of Adams' letters, which bemoans the 'spirit of venality' that threatens America, the dregs of Rome seem to be a warning as to what might become of the nation should it give in to decadence (specifically, for Pound, economic corruption) (Adams *Familiar Letters* 232, just preceding '*faece Romuli non Platonic republica*'). Yet we might also read it as a positive indication of what America might practically achieve, particularly in the context of the American navy in which Pound cites it in Canto LXV. In a Platonic utopia such pragmatism might not be desirable, but given the ravages of the British Navy, and the past example of Rome against Carthage, America might take the same approach, and built a navy.

The rest of Canto LXV records Adams' journeys to France and Holland to negotiate treaties of commerce. Pound cites as follows:

[Italy will never be a truly independent nation while she is contained by the bars of her Mediterranean prison Corsica, Bizerte [coastal city in Tunisia], Malta—and by the walls of this prison, Gibraltar and the Suez.] (*Opera Omnia XXIX* 365)

and commerce be opened, laws of Gt Britain on

plantation trade contrived solely to benefit Britain

said Dutch vessels had gone to America

loaded with linens, duck, sailcloth etc

copper corrodes ships' iron

most agreeable day I ever spent at Versailles

(17 June '83) (379)

It seems reasonable to suggest that this 'most agreeable day at Versailles' is meant to reflect poorly on the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, which largely stripped Germany of her navy, and reneged on the secret 1915 Treaty of London, which had promised Italy dominion of the Adriatic Sea should she fight for the Allies. In 1915, Churchill had claimed he saw no reason 'not to acquiesce to the Adriatic becoming strategically an Italian lake,' provided that this would protect against Austro-Hungarian expansion (FO 371/2508, file 41174, pp. 382-383). There is a clearer parallel with Mussolini, however, when Pound describes how during Adams' presidency,

From perils of the sea, intrigues, business wangles

rural improvements are brought down to the water's edge. (370)

Pound was aware of Mussolini's imperialism and its specifically maritime dimension, although the example of the dictator's success he most often cites is the reclaiming of fertile land by the draining of the Pontine Marshes. In his speech at Fiume on the 22nd of March

1919,[91] Mussolini spoke of a '*necessità mediterranea*' that exists, for Italy, '*nella natura delle cose*' (a Mediterranean fate that exists in the very nature of things), given the narrow, sea-bound peninsula that constrains its forty million Italian citizens (*Opera Omnia XIII* 142). He claimed that Italy's future '*si determineranno fatalmente nel Mediterraneo*' [will be ultimately determined in the Mediterranean] and that only maritime power would allow the Italian people to forge a new, grander destiny, and to carry forward the sign and symbol of a new future (143).[92]

One of the ways in which this belief in Italy's maritime future found symbolic expression was in the construction of the Via del Mare, which served to open Rome towards the sea again (Nelis 410). The construction of this road is cited, in *Jefferson and/or Mussolini,* as an example of Mussolini's ability to get things done, or to put ideas into action. 'When Mussolini has expressed any satisfaction,' Pound writes, 'it has been with the definite act performed, the artwork in the civic sense, the leading of the Romans back to the sea, for example, by the wide new road into Ostia' (*Jefferson/Mussolini* 100). But apart from the road to the sea, the draining of the Pontine marshes itself might be read as the bringing of 'rural improvements down to the water's edge' (Canto LXV 370).

The writings and speeches of Mussolini are replete not only with claims of Italy's natural right to the seas, but also with an ideological mythologising of Rome and of Venice's maritime past. In his 1926 *Roma Antica Sul Mare,* for example, Mussolini traces the maritime history of Rome, from the establishment of a trading and shipbuilding colony at Ostia by

[91] As we shall see, Pound followed the conquest of Fiume—motivated by an Italian maritime expansionism—with interest.
[92] See also Jan Nelis, 'Constructing Fascist Identity: Benito Mussolini and the Myth of "Romanità",' in *The Classical World* 100.2 (2007) pp. 391-415.

Anco Marzio, through the burgeoning naval competition between Rome and Carthage, and the Punic Wars (*Opera Omnia XII* 213-227). The work itself is a powerful indicator of Mussolini's maritime and imperial preoccupations, but of particular interest here is his citation of the historian Ettore Pais to describe how *il litorale paludoso e malarico respingeva piuttosto che attirare i romani verso il mare*: how the marshy and malarial coastline repelled rather than attracted the Romans towards the sea (215-216). In the 1930s, Mussolini realised one of Julius Caesar's unaccomplished ambitions when he drained the Pontine Marshes, reclaiming the area for fertile farmland.[93] While increasing agricultural productivity, this draining of the marshes, along with the construction of a new road to the ancient port of Ostia, might simultaneously be read as maritime trade—or maritime aspirations—bringing down rural improvements to the water's edge.

I have argued that Pound's engagement with John Adams in Canto LXV echoes contemporary maritime rhetoric by D'Annunzio and by Mussolini, particularly in its focus on the freedom of the seas, maritime trade, and the contesting of unjust economic oppression. I turn now to a more detailed examination of Pound and D'Annunzio in relation to the maritime mythologisation of Venice. I show that the natural or godly sea we encounter in the later Cantos becomes closely entwined with this political myth-making, to the extent that we can

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[93] In his *Life of Julius Caesar,* Plutarch writes that Caesar

> intended also to divert the Tiber just below the city into a deep channel, give it a bend towards Circeium, and make it empty into the sea at Terracina, thus contriving for merchantmen a safe as well as an easy passage to Rome; and besides this, to convert marshes about Pomentinum and Setia into a plain which many thousands of men could cultivate; and further, to build moles which should barricade the sea where it was nearest to Rome, to clear away the hidden dangers on the shore of Ostia, and then construct harbours and roadsteads sufficient for the great fleets that would visit them. (579)

Of note here is the fact that the draining of the marshes is recounted not only as an agricultural project, but as part of Rome's wider maritime ambitions.

no longer separate Pound's 'dimension of stillness' from a natural order—a natural law—that is informed by Fascist ideology (Canto XLXIX 245).

THE VENETIAN MARITIME PAST AND FASCIST IDEOLOGY

In Canto XCIII, composed some time between late 1954 and early 1955, Ezra Pound cites the Italian poet, Gabriele D'Annunzio: '"mai tardi. . ./ per l'ignoto" / and the soul's job? (Ocellus) / "Renew"' (649).

'*Non è mai tardi per tentar l'ignoto*,' or 'it is never too late to try (or to brave) the unknown,' is a quote from D'Annunzio's 1907 play *La Nave*, performed in Venice in 1908, in the year Pound moved to that city from the United States (*La Nave* 232; Terrell 566-567; Moody 63). It was reprised for three nights in 1938 in commemoration of D'Annunzio's death (Hughes-Hallett 643). Canto XCIII, within which the citation occurs, falls within the five Cantos (XCI-XCV) which Pound conceived of as the beginning of his 'Paradiso.'[94] The themes are familiar: we find the 'hoax of the bankers' and 'Zaharoff' contrasted with Cadmus, Antoninus Pius, Dante, and Confucius, along with a general mix of goddesses and nymphs: Isis-Luna, Venus, and Persephone. What is interesting here, however, is Pound's reprisal of D'Annunzio's irredentist play, which he first cites in his 1911 articles 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris.' There, '*non è mai tardi per tentar l'ignoto'* functions as a sort of motto for Pound's 'donative author'—he who draws into his art something new and original, rather than simply reflecting his surrounding culture and influences. Here, it is the movement that ushers in

[94] 'the title is: SECTION: ROCK DRILL which applies specificly to 85/89. The Paradiso proper starting with 90. However, the reader will have to find THAT out for himself' (23 November 1954 Letter, EPP, 2738, cited in Kindellan 69)

Pound's hoped-for Paradiso, rhyming thematically with Pound's conglomerations of an Eleusinian crossing of 'Persephone's threshold,' the birth of Venus out of the sea-foam (or here, the sea-caves), and perhaps the Dionysian dolphins of 'volucres delphinasque ad auditum,' all leading to manifestation (the ideogram 'hsien') of the 'nuova vita' and the flame of love ('e ti fiammeggio') (Canto XCIII 650). This is all of a piece with many of Pound's celebrated paradisal cantos, but the lines shortly following the D'Annunzio citation should give us pause:

> &there is no doubt that D'Annunzio
>
> could move the crowd in a theatre
>
> or that the stone rose in Brescia,
>
> Amphion!
>
> And yet for Venus and Roma
>
> a wraith moved in air
>
> And Rapicavoli lost for a horse-jump.
>
> Quarta Sponda
>
> transient as air
>
> Waste after Carthage. (650)

Here it is worth mentioning D'Annunzio's public roles as a playwright (of such politically charged works as *La Nave*) and orator. In *Il Notturno*, for example, he recalls his speech on the 17th of May 1915 to a crowd in Rome at the Campidoglio, spurring Italy on to join the

war (72 and note on 314)—an enterprise motivated by the hope of reclaiming the Adriatic territory that had once belonged to ancient Venice. Brescia also recalls the Venetian Empire: it is scattered about with sculptures of the Lion of St Mark, indicating that it was once Venetian territory (Terrell 567). This lion 'rose' in 1849 when, during the Ten Days of Brescia, citizens revolted against the city's Austrian rulers in a series of bloody street-battles, holding out alone against the recapture of the city by the far larger Austrian Army for ten days, and earning themselves the nickname of the 'Leonessa d'Italia' (Breganze 82; Onger & Porta 48, 59). The reference to Amphion joins this Brescia with the idealised city of Thebes, where walls arose of themselves via divine music (Terrell 541).

Venus and Roma recall *The Aeneid* and the founding of the Roman Empire. Pound often references Anchises' encounter with Venus/Aphrodite throughout *The Cantos*, and her association with Rome here reminds us that she guides Aeneas and his men through Libya and towards Italy. However, Pound's 'and yet' makes the 'wraith' that moves in the air a dark omen for Venus and Roma (Canto XCIII 650), and we are reminded that in Book VI of *The Aeneid*, after his descent into hell where he is shown visions of the glory of the Roman Empire, Aeneas sees a young man, 'very handsome and clad in shining armour, but with face and eyes downcast and little joy on his brow' (173). Anchises, weeping, warns him of the punishment the gods will visit on a Rome that has become too powerful. After this, we are given the lost Rapicavoli (Terrell's *Companion to the Cantos* identifies the Rapicavolis as a noble Italian family), and the transience of Quarta Sponda—that is, the 'Fourth Shore,' or Fascist Italy's colonial possessions in Africa, especially Libya (Terrell 567). Carthage recalls this 'Fourth Shore,' and the prophecy in *The Aeneid* that it should become Roman territory (27-28); it also recalls the Treaty of Versailles and the 'Carthaginian Peace' that concluded the

First World War (Keynes 63; Cook 348), especially, in this context, the memory of the reneged-upon Treaty of London and the Adriatic territory that had been promised to Italy.

Pound is writing this in 1954 in St Elizabeth's hospital, ten years after the fall of the Salò Republic (Kindellan 54-55, 99). One cannot help but agree with David Barnes that 'there is none of the much-vaunted "humility" here which is sometimes a commonplace of critical approaches to the later *Cantos*' (115), and Canto XCIII certainly aligns with Peter Nicholls' assessment of the 'Pisan Cantos' as 'desiring through their own inscription to reactivate the traces of the Fascist past that Pound leaves scattered throughout the poetry' (172). Importantly, as demonstrated by Pound's references to d'Annunzio and to 'Quarta Sponda,' this Fascist past includes an Adriatic imperialism that construed the Mediterranean, and the Adriatic especially, as '*mare nostro*': a reprising of the ancient Roman name for the Mediterranean, *mare nostrum.*

Pound would have encountered the rhetoric of '*mare nostro*' as early as 1908, in *La Nave*, which is drenched in D'Annunzio's Adriatic irredentism. In that play, the navigator Marco Gratico (whose name recalls Venice's patron saint) promises '*tingemmo il mare nostro col sangue dai ladroni*': 'I will tinge our sea with the blood of the barbarians' (58). In the final act, as Marco Gratico prepares to set sail to retrieve the body of St Mark from Alexandria, the crowd urges him: '*Redimi l'Adriatico*! / *Liberi dai ladroni il mare nostro*! [Redeem the Adriatic! / Liberate our sea from the barbarians!] (225). In the closing lines, they pray to God:

Signor nostro, redimi l'Adriatico!

Libera alle tue genti l'Adriatico!

Patria ai Vèneti tutto l'Adriatico!

Alleluia!

[Our Lord, redeem the Adriatic!

Liberate the Adriatic for your people!

The whole Adriatic is the Patria of the Venetians!

Hallelujah!] (249)

The play itself opens with a supplication that falls outside of the dramatic action, and thus enshrines its ambitions within the contemporaneous politics and military enterprises soon to be undertaken by D'Annunzio: *Fa di tutti gli Ocèani il Mare Nostro!* (iv). Pound expressed clear admiration for D'Annunzio's military feats in the Adriatic, culminating in the poet's dramatic 1919 occupation of the city of Fiume, in what is now Croatia. In his 1928 'Cavalcanti,' he calls him 'Nostro Gabriele,' writing that he 'started something new in Italian,' and approvingly dubbing him 'the only living author who has ever taken a city' (*Literary Essays* 192). It is certainly disturbing that Pound is as pleased as he is here with D'Annunzio's holding-up of 'the diplomatic crapule at the point of machine-guns,' citing it as proof that the Italian author is 'in a position to speak with more authority than a batch of neurasthenic incompetents' (*LE* 192). Rebecca Beasley argues convincingly that Pound's growing interest during the 1920s in various poet-heroes like Sigismundo Malatesta and Niccolo D'Este originated with the contemporary 'spectacle' of D'Annunzio as statesman (197-198). D'Annunzio in fact proclaims himself a 'poet hero' in his 1921 *Il Notturno* (121), which records his 1916 recuperation from his wounds in a war-surrounded Venice. Pound

favourably reviewed *Il Notturno* in his 'Paris Letter' for *The Dial* in October 1922, and it is easy to see what he finds attractive about this richly allusive text. Pound relishes an author who is 'male, civilised, and writes of Dolmetsch' in the midst of 'the fury of Fiume, in the general bewilderment of manifestos, aeroplanes, bombs, fascisti' (*PPIV* 162, C647). He imagines D'Annunzio lying 'with a bandaged eye in a bombarded Venice, foaming with his own sensations,' and rounds off the matter by expressing his thorough distaste, by way of contrast, for the neurasthenic Proust (263). In *Il Notturno,* D'Annunzio styles himself as a fallen warrior, a Dantesque Ulysses-Icarus, in 'mad flight' beyond the Pillars of Hercules (or 'trying the unknown,' as *La Nave* might have it) (*Notturno* 138; *La Nave* 232). Yet the book is not simply a record of D'Annunzio's naval and maritime feats (though these are many), but also inscribes his memories of dead friends, his fever-dreams, terrifyingly visions of sprouting hyacinths that burst from the poet's wounded eye, Aeschylean swallows, Koré, and Eleusinian labyrinths that promise a reborn Venus at the end of their tortuous caverns. Venice is construed as a city of the dead, washed by the waters of the Lethe and the Styx, inhabited by ghosts and Koré/Persephone, goddess of the underworld (a nickname here for D'Annunzio's lover Luisa Casati, whom Pound knew in the early 1920s) (Rainey 138-139).[95] Yet, with D'Annunzio as a wounded Adonis or a Christ, it is a city of death that also promises renewal, and specifically, political renewal. Fiume becomes the incipience of that renewal. Lucy Hughes-Hallett records how D'Annunzio entered Fiume 'in a bright red Fiat,' which disappeared under a rain of flowers,' crowded by 'soldiers, citizens … yelling, weeping, crushing round the *condottiero'* (488). Hughes-Hallett records, too, D'Annunzio's

[95] Pound cites a passage from *Il Notturno* concerning this Koré in Canto III: 'And peacocks in Kore's house' (11).

annunciation on this triumphal entry: 'Here I am; Here is the man. *Ecce Homo*' (490-491). Or, in another account, 'I am the wounded, I am the mutilated' (Jullian 285).

D'Annunzio's influence on Anglo-American modernism has vastly been understudied. For example, Bacigalupo in his recent *Ezra Pound, Italy, and the Cantos* claims that Pound had little interest in contemporary Italian writers, dismissing D'Annunzio as being 'very much old hat, his best work long past' for 'post-World War I Italian writers' (69). This ignores the fact that *Il Notturno*—which is certainly the most modernist of D'Annunzio's writing, in form, temporality, and allusiveness—was published in 1921, making it contemporary with some of the greatest works by Pound, Joyce, and Eliot. Richard Wilson, in an essay exploring D'Annunzio's possible influence on Eliot's *The Waste Land*—especially *Il Notturno* and the poet's Fiume radio transmission from onboard Marconi's yacht, the *Elettra*—makes much grander claims of influence:

> So, it may be chance that each work is haunted by the same aria from *Tristan und Isolde, 'Mein Irisch Kind';* and that the 'record on the gramophone' in Eliot's 'Fire Sermon' is of the wail over lost inheritance from *Götterdämmerung,* 'Weialala,' which inspired the 'mysterious and meaningless cry' D'Annunzio trained his suicidal *arditi* to shriek during his 'fire sermons': 'Eia! Eia! Eia! Alalala" But the coincidence of Eliot's frenzy at 'Burning' with its *Duce's* designation of Fiume as a 'City of Holocaust' does frame the *Elettra* transmission as a flash-point for Europe's cult of sacrifice.[96] (104)

[96] Whether or not we concur, it is interesting to note that Eliot cites D'Annunzio's *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien* (with a score by Debussy) in his own violently erotic poem of that name (Wilson 111). It is worth adding the caution, however, that Wagner himself, as well as the various myths in Frazer's *The Golden Bough,* might be read as a proponent of the European 'cult of sacrifice' Wilson describes, and would thus be a logical point of mutual interest for these two poets.

The D'Annunzian echoes in Pound's work do mean we should tread carefully when we come across his 'paradisal world': the 'the dimension of stillness' that supposedly lies beyond his politics. For example, Bacigalupo sees in *The Cantos* 'a tension between history and economics, which are chiefly urban phenomena, and the world of permanence which is beyond time,' contrasting 'the natural world and its rhythms' with 'the flood of historical notes which is always about to overwhelm the traveler' (*Ezra Pound, Italy, and the Cantos* 23). So too Jean-Michel Rabaté reads the 'mythical font' of Venice as a contrast to Pound's political cities, Rome and Ecbatan, thus salvaging the pretty lyrical passages that deal with this watery city from more unpleasant Poundian associations (63). It is tempting to see the beauty of Pound's lyrical verse and his ecstatic rites of nature as a means for the reader or critic to redeem at least some of his oeuvre of its uglier views. But I think it more likely, as Nicholls and Barnes suggest, that Pound is deploying them as an incantatory redemption of contemporary politics and economics into a 'better' system: one that is 'natural' and in accord with nature. For Pound, unfortunately, that system is Fascism. A reading of Pound's 1941 article for *Meridiana di Roma*, for example, makes it incredibly difficult to disentangle the mysteries of Eleusis and Dionysus in these later poems from Pound's fascist politics. While poems like Canto XLVII, and the rites in Pisan Canto LXXX are beautiful paeans to the glory and sanctity of the land, Pound weaponises this beauty as an apologia for his antisemitism. Thus, in 'Il Grano,' he writes,

> *Il grano è sacro. Il grano è corpo di Dio. Questa verità sacra è verità Europea. Su i misteri pagani esistono saggi e libri che non hanno bisogno d'un mio riassunto.*

> *Misteri bacchichi, cioè del vino. Misteri d'Eleusi (Eleusini). Are di Venere mai macchiate di sangue, si alzavano*.[97]
>
> [Grain is sacred. Grain is the body of God. This sacred truth is a European truth. There exist, on the pagan mysteries, sayings and books that don't have need of my summaries. The Mysteries of Bacchus, that is, of wine. The Mysteries of Eleusis (Eleusinian). There rose up altars to Venus, never stained with blood.] (*PPVIII* 138, C1610)

This view, he writes, is inherently Christian, and 'Roman,' and from this vortex all European religion and culture is created: '*Nel turbine della Roma antica si trovano tutti i culti*.' Against this Roman religion, combining Christianity and pagan rituals, Pound sets '*la mitologia ebraica*':

> *Un mitologia bassa, il concetto selvaggio d'un dio assassino; rifiuti del culto dei macellai ovini, hanno cercato di contaminare la concezione Europea della bontà divino.*
>
> [A base mythology, the savage concept of an assassin-god; the refuse of a religion of sheep-slaughters, seeking to contaminate the European concept of divine bounty.] (138)

Christian philosophy and theology, Pound opines, has always been '*chiare e luminoso*' [clear and luminous] when it drew its inspiration from the springs of Europe. In contrast, it becomes '*turbate e incoerenti*' [murky and incoherent] every time it allows itself to be contaminated by

[97] In Canto LXXX we read 'With a smoky torch thru the unending labyrinth of the souterrain / . . . let him celebrate Christ in the grain, which is shortly proceeded by the preparation for Roman Catholic mass: "Imaculata, Introibo"' (533).

Hebrew texts (139). Chillingly, Pound urges, '*L'Europa serà ben unità e Romana, del momento che si eliminerà l'usura internazionale ed ebraica*': 'Europe will only be truly united and Roman when it eliminates international Jewish usury' (140).[98]

The danger, I believe, is the temptation to separate figurative language from history, and an insufficient acknowledgement of how these inevitably intertwine. In doing so, critics erect a *cordon sanitaire* between Pound the brilliantly creative poet and Pound the deeply objectionable demagogue. Jennifer Scappettone succumbs to this temptation when, like Rabaté, she reads Venice as 'a counter to Pound's eventual fascist city of man' (106). What seems to occur in Scappettone's reading, is that the impulse to interpret the Venetian lagoons metaphorically as a space of flux and formlessness overrides the politics that actually surround *The Cantos'* Italian—and especially Venetian—seas. In Scappettone's Venice,

> 'The flash of wave under prows, / And the silver beaks rising and crossing' (Canto XVII 78) compose a utopia—ever suffused with the potential for its inversion—founded on a volatile reciprocity between water and stone. The archipelago's grounding forces departure from hieratic models of organic unity, to which Ruskin was still bound, while eluding the monumental calcification of the fascist city of man: 'And the palazzo, baseless, hangs there in the dawn / With low mist over the tidemark; / And floats there nel tramonto . . .' (Canto XXI 98; Scappettone 106)

[98] Pound also throws Scotus Erigena into the mix, citing here his 'Omnia quae sunt, lumina sunt,' and noting the crusade against the Albigensians (139). Is it possible, then, to separate the Pound's philosophy of light—present everywhere in the Pisan Cantos—from his Fascism and antisemitism?

Considering that Pound is writing these Cantos in the mid-1920s, following his 'hell Cantos' and his period of interest in D'Annunzio and Malatesta in the early 1920s, as well as his acquaintance with Luisa Casati, I find Scappettone's reading strangely ahistorical. This is not to say that Canto XVII constitutes a straightforward Poundian call for the rebirth of Venice and the redemption of the Adriatic. But given the political mythologising of Venice that Pound would have recently encountered in *Il Notturno,* along with some wondrously vibrant Dionysian vegetal 'bursting'—D'Annunzio imagines a hyacinth bursting from his wounded eye (126)—it seems strange to idealise this Venice out of its fraught contemporary history, simply homing in on its convenient juxtaposition of fluid water and solid stone. Rather, I concur with Barnes's cautious note that 'Venice was a city where local myths were very easily merged into a Fascist "Adriatic imperialism"' (103). While it is likely simply a visual description, the image of the palazzi floating just above the tide seems less suggestive of resistance to calcification, and hints, rather, at the watery foundations of Venetian power.

As Barnes has convincingly demonstrated, the Venice we encounter in the 'Pisan Cantos' is certainly not a humbled Venice, nor an antidote to Pound's 'Fascist city of man' (129). Instead, Canto LXXVI approvingly cites Fascist building projects that were to renew Venice, specifically 'the new bridge of the Era where was the old eyesore' (481). We also have 'Unkle George observing Ct/Volpe's neck at the Lido / and deducing his energy' (481). Count Giuseppe Volpi di Misurata was a great Venetian industrialist who would become Minister of Finance under Mussolini. He had been involved in the Italian colonisation of Libya, hence his title, Count of Misurata. He was responsible for the construction of the Port of Marghera: a

new industrial port in Venice that was to usher in Fascist Italy as a renewed Adriatic power. In 1932, *Le Tre Venezia* reported on its construction as follows:

> We will see her [Venice] rise to a prosperity that has perhaps never been seen, and we will see her perform the function which she needs to fulfil in the life of the nation. That function is: a) a maritime bridge between the East and Central Europe; b) the capital of Art; c) the focal point for all activities of the people of the Veneto region. (641; cited in Barnes 100)

Volpi himself, like D'Annunzio, harnessed Venetian history into an Adriatic imperialism. In a 1926 speech, he describes his exploits in Libya in distinctly maritime terms. He describes how he was able to embark, a civilian,

> *con piccolo naviglio e il 26 gennaio del 1922 riprendere Misurata e schiacciare l'idra araba, e in tre anni, coi soldati di Vittoria Veneto, piantare i confini meridionali d'Italia in faccia al deserto, verso l'Africa, dove noi abbiamo diritti da rivendicare.*
>
> [in a little boat and on the 26th of January 1922, to retake Misrata and to crush the Arab Hydra, and within three years, with soldiers from Victorious Venice, to plant the southern border of Italy in the desert, facing Africa, which we have the right to reclaim.] (90)

He justifies these actions by reflecting how

> *Nella mia prima gioventù ho lasciato queste lagune e ho scolcato il breve golfo, che non è mare, è acqua nostra, e ho ritrovalto sull'altra sponda ad ogni palmo il leone della Republica e questo leone è in gran parte, ora, su terra nostra. Ho trovato più*

lontanto ancora, sempre nel mare nostro, il leone scaplellato e sovrapposto da un'aquila grifagna . . . [H]o trovato, in tutti gli scali d'oriente, il franco parlare di Venezia e la sua memoria.

[In my early youth I left this lagoon and sailed across the small gulf which is not a sea, but is our water, and I found on the other shore at every post the lion of the Republic. This lion is now, in large part, on our reclaimed land. Even further afield, but always on our sea, I found the lion obliterated and superimposed with a [Hapsburg] eagle. . . . I found, in all the ports of the Orient, free discussion of Venice and her memory.] (90)

Volpi makes these statements on the occasion of being presented with the 'Offerta Navale,' or the Naval Award of Venice and in his acceptance speech, he both glorifies the Venetian maritime past, notes the continuation of its legacy into the present, and finally deploys this legacy as a justification for a renewed Italian Empire.

With regard to Volpi, Pound cites his acquaintance, the American congressman George Holden Tinkham ('Unkle George') to show that even someone completely foreign and unfamiliar with Fascist Italy could tell, just based on the cast of a statue's neck, that this was a powerful and admirable man. Also in Canto LXXVI, we find a memory of D'Annunzio's 'La Figlia di Jorio,' followed by 'l'ara sul rostro / 20 years of the dream' (476). 20 years of the dream is likely that same dream whose 'enormous tragedy' weighs on 'the peasant's bent shoulder'—Mussolini's dream, that is, or rather Pound's idiosyncratic interpretation of the Fascist experiment (445). Preceded by D'Annunzio, '*l'ara sul rostro*' ('the altar on the rostrum') is probably a misremembering of the opening ode of *La Nave,* 'Al' Adriatico,' which

culminates in the prayer to make all the oceans 'il Mare Nostro,' but also promises sacrifices of thanks on all '*altare che porta rostro'* ('altars that bear the rostrum') (*Cantos* 476, *Nave* iv*)*. The rostrum itself, and its inscription on Roman coins, commemorates the maritime history of Rome: the 'rostra' are literally the prows of warships, which were placed upon these places of public oratory as trophies of war after the Battle of Antium (*OED* 'rostrum').

CONCLUSION

There is a section midway through Canto LXXX that alludes to the apocalyptic fires in the 'Second Offering' of *Il Notturno*. In the passage Pound draws on, D'Annunzio sees a raging fire burn up a forest, spurred on by the sea winds, which carry live coals further and further afield. When the fire finally dies down, D'Annunzio writes

> The pain dulls, the terror falls silent.
>
> But again a whirlwind takes the still-sparking ash and lifts it up
>
> to the grim, now dispersing cloud.
>
> I see the long, slender funnel rise, undulate, recede.
>
> It is the holocaust's ghost. (187)

In the verses that follow, we find phoenixes, votive words, and divine seed. One stanza reads:

> All ash is seed,
>
> all stumps are saplings,
>
> the whole desert is springtime.

I feel my god in me. (190)

This rebirth from death is of course already a very Poundian theme, with the rites of Eleusis and Koré. In Canto XXXIX, in the rites of spring, we find: 'I have eaten the flame,' and 'His rod hath made god in my belly' (196). In Canto LXXX however, the D'Annunzian echoes are clear:

Death's seeds move in the year

semina motuum

falling back into the trough of the sea

. . .

semina motuum

. . .

had I the clouds of heaven

as the nautile borne ashore

in their holocaust

as wistaria floating shoreward (520)

Pound employs the same themes as D'Annunzio of seeds of rebirth that rise from a holocaust. (That is, a burnt offering: destruction by fire. This is inevitably a chilling turn of phrase in retrospect, especially at the postwar time of Pound's writing.) The 'phoenix' Pound would have reborn from these ashes, however, is Aphrodite, born from the sea and the '*semina motuum*'—the moving seeds, or the ejaculated sperm of Uranus. Even 'wistaria' echoes the function of this flower in *Il Notturno,* where it is a force of fecundity and rebirth that lures the wounded poet from his death-like bed rest (110, 262-263, 279). Given these D'Annunzian

echoes, it is possible to read the rebirth of Aphrodite as a hoped-for renewal of Italy (this is certainly the rebirth D'Annunzio desires in *Il Notturno*). At the same time, Pound's images of the godly sea and divine renewal are complex and multifaceted, and while they are certainly inflected by Pound's politics, they also predate them and form an irreducible part of the poet's eclectic personal religion. Insofar as we do accept the political inflections of an Aphrodite reborn from the sea, we should also be mindful of Pound's wish, throughout the 'Pisan Cantos,' for the reinstating of this goddess at the shrine at Terracina:

> as by Terracina rose from the sea Zephyr behind her
>
> and from her manner of walking
>
> as had Anchises
>
> till the shrine be again white with marble
>
> till the stone eyes look again seaward. (Canto LXXXIV 455)

I have previously discussed the shortcomings of approaches that succumb to the temptation of separating Pound's metaphorics from history. Nonetheless, I must in closing offer a cautionary note about the opposite danger: that of reducing metaphorics to history, or of assuming certain images to have stable historical 'meanings' that we can decipher and then immediately translate back into concepts. This is especially dangerous in Pound, of course, because he is often wildly inconsistent in the uses to which he puts certain images or figures. For example, as Bacigalupo notes in *Ezra Pound, Italy, and the Cantos,* the Scottish financier John Law, who died in poverty in Venice, is sometimes a medium for Pound's antisemitism. (In posthumously published drafts dating from the 1930s 'Law' becomes 'the great financier

Lawvi or Levi' and he is 'buried under the floor of St Moses') (*Posthumous Cantos* 48; Bacigalupo 27-28). This same Law is sometimes a cipher for Pound himself, abandoned by friends and fortune (Bacigalupo 29). As I have demonstrated above, Pound's celebration of wild gods of the Eleusinian mysteries, the 'dimension of stillness' of the natural world (Canto XLIX 245), or the birth of Venus from the waves, are often inextricable from his economic and political views. This is not to say that we can *always* read these metaphors as fascist allegory, or even that we can ever read them as *merely* fascist allegory. However, we cannot separate them from history and from the context within which Pound deploys them.

Specifically, I have argued that we cannot remove Pound's godly sea from his economic sea, and I have traced how maritime trade initially operates as a medium for peace and culture within his work, before morphing into the nostalgic mythologising of Italian Fascist maritime ideology. From an early awareness of the expansiveness and civilising powers of maritime trade, Pound adopts an idiosyncratic view of an economic world governed by natural law, and he celebrates the divine presences that inhabit the free seas and sacred earth of this *oecumene*. Ultimately, Pound's seas become the mythologised seas of Italian Fascism, a natural order to be reclaimed from the oppressiveness and the corrupting influence of usurious economic forces that are *contra natura*. Frighteningly, these counter-natural economic forces were, for Pound, specific individuals and races.

EPILOGUE: JAMES HANLEY'S OCEANIC CITIES

In this thesis, I set out to show that, while maritime metaphors have often been dismissed as ahistorical, aesthetic flights of fancy, this is not the case. In fact, they give us fascinating insight into aspects of the real, specific history of the entanglement of the sea and British modernity. Over the course of this thesis, I have shown the extent to which the maritime world shaped, underpinned, and flooded the world inhabited by Anglo-American modernists in the first half of the twentieth century. In my opening chapter, I demonstrated how Conrad's urban landscapes become unstable, watery, oceanic spaces, arguing that these representations register the historical centrality of maritime networks in the emergence and development of the imperial metropolis of London. I then showed how writers like Woolf and H.D. conceive of an immersed modern sensibility within such cities by construing subjectivity through metaphors of marine creatures like oysters, octopuses and jellyfish—grotesque and spectacular creatures that modern city-dwellers viewed with fascination in public aquariums across Europe. I showed that for these women authors, such immersion becomes simultaneously a creative opportunity and the threat of disintegration and breakdown, figured through the image of drowning. In my third chapter, I argued that Eliot uses similar images of drowning, disintegration, and the submarine to figure the lure and the dread of breakdown. However, unlike Woolf and H.D., whose later writing becomes increasingly liquid and whose cities become increasingly flooded, Eliot's writing in the forties becomes a consolidatory project, where the sea-crossing and the risk of the destructive element lie at the heart of his culturally redemptive, Anglo-American nationalism. Finally, I showed how Pound also deploys maritime rhetoric toward what he believed to be culturally redemptive ends, adopting

the expansionist ideologies of Italian Fascism to make the sea and maritime trade images of renewal and economic justice.

All these authors spent decisively formative years in London, the imperial metropolis at the centre of the maritime world up until the end of the Second World War. Over the next half a century, much about this maritime world would change. Decolonisation would gradually strip Britain and other European maritime powers of their captive markets and stable trade networks. Containerisation in the fifties revolutionised the shipping industry, requiring larger ships (too large for the Port of London) and different inland networks that favoured certain ports, like those of Rotterdam, where a combination of railways and roads facilitated transit to and from the ports. Significantly, the destruction of two World Wars also left their mark on the maritime world. The Port of London never fully recovered from the devastation of the Second World War. Due to its strategic importance, it was a major target for German bombing, to the extent that civilian deaths on the Isle of Dogs were triple the London average. Nor was London the only British port to suffer such devastation: Southampton, Hull, Plymouth, Cardiff, and Liverpool were all heavily bombed. Finally, advances in air travel brought significant competition to shipping networks, and with the routinisation of commercial air travel, the waves of emigration that had previously swept across the Atlantic became largely airborne.

For all this, the maritime world remains a significant, if occluded part of our lives, as we have been reminded in 2021 when the Ever Given blocked the Suez Canal: a wonderfully bizarre image of this crucial shipping route dwarfed and obstructed by a gigantic ship, holding up $60 billion in trade, and obliging hundreds of ships to wait out the queues in the Suez, or to take the alternative route around the Cape of Good Hope. While such strange

shipping delays are the most notice the majority of us ever take of the maritime world, beyond aesthetic appreciation and leisure trips to the seaside, there are, of course, also more extreme engagements with the sea, and more radical changes to its waters. 'Mare Nostrum,' in the twenty-first century, is no longer a Fascist dream, but was the name of a year-long operation by the Italian Navy and Air Force that helped transport migrants across the Mediterranean (Sperry). The suspension of this operation in October 2014 has been blamed for the horrific increase in deaths as migrants seek to make the dangerous sea-crossing in flimsy dinghies and makeshift vessels. Meanwhile, the jellyfish H.D. chose as her image of visionary, tentacular eyes are now the only animals that are proliferating amidst the increasing decimation of marine life in acidified seas.

The modernists I have studied, however, write in an imperial Europe in crisis, and the maritime world that made such empires possible would soon change irrecoverably. The effects of these changes, and the ways in which they are registered or occluded in literature, are a topic for another thesis. In closing, I turn to James Hanley, who writes at the farther shore of this particular maritime world: a working-class sailor of Irish heritage, born and raised in Liverpool, who explored in the forties and fifties many of the themes and concerns I have studied in his literary predecessors.

One need not look far for parallels between Hanley and Conrad. Like Conrad, Hanley spent many years working at sea, wrote extensively about the sea, and certainly writes with Conrad as an important influence. His 1937 *Broken Water: An Autobiographical Excursion* strikes one as a conscious play on Conrad's own autobiographical work, *The Mirror of the Sea*: in Hanley the clarity and limpidity promised by Conrad's sea becomes troubled and

refracted.[99] Just as Conrad's London is a watery city, Hanley's Liverpool is saturated by the sea. In every one of his five novels published between 1935 and 1958 that constitute the chronicles of the Fury family, Hanley's fictionalised Liverpool, Gelton, is repeatedly described as a 'sea of roofs' (*The Secret Journey* 364; *Winter Song* 217), 'that sea of slate and brick' (*Journey* 148; *Our Time is Gone* 588) or 'that ocean of bricks and mortar' (*The Furys* 121). In the final novel of the series, *An End and a Beginning* (1958), when Peter Fury is released from prison, he stands looking at 'Gelton stretched out before him as wide as the ocean … noisy, tumultuous, lost in the tumbling rounds of its own energy' (45).

Like Conrad's London, this city founded upon maritime trade and emigration itself becomes a sea, blurring distinctions between the metropolis and the maritime world that shapes it. When in *An End and a Beginning*, Sheila remembers the journey from Ireland to Liverpool and her first glimpses of the city, we are told how 'the coastline grows, seems to flow towards the ship' (250). When in *Our Time is Gone* (1940), Joe Kilkey returns to the city by ship, the description might as well be one of Conrad's landfalls:

> Darkness rolled up over the river like a film and certain landmarks stood out clear under the light. The Battery, the Clock Tower, the Customs Houses, the lines of offices. Beneath it all the river was turbulent, swift running, carrying patches of light and darkness with it as it swept towards the sea. Mr. Kilkey saw it, the others saw it. The whole of Gelton looking out from their windows would see it. The broad river

[99] It is worth reiterating that Conrad's sea is of course far less of a limpid mirror than the title might suggest, and to note that both men have a somewhat liberal approach to factual accuracy when it comes to writing their life histories. There are also significant differences between Conrad and Hanley. While both had or claimed émigré backgrounds, it is important to remember, firstly, that Conrad's family and upbringing were aristocratic, and, secondly, the relative isolation of Conrad from his Polish connections when he finally moved to England. In contrast, Hanley was born into a working-class Irish community in Liverpool (though he claimed to have been born in Dublin).

> with the first of its burdens. A line of barges, bows awash, passing beneath the stern of a great liner.
>
> …
>
> The light grew stronger, and then there drifted slowly riverwards the first warning hum, rising from the streets and roads and lanes of Gelton. It climbed air, sounding like the wing-beats of some ghostly bird, and so reached the river itself and the ears of men. Gelton was waking up.… Another ship to unload, another ship to load for to morrow. The river was lined with them. He counted them. He had never seen so many ships in the river before. And he never would again, he thought. It was as though all the ships of the world had raised anchor and set their course for Gelton. (95-96)

As in Conrad, the city and the sea bleed into one another in the humming sounds of the city that 'drift' into the river and the maritime world beyond from the working metropolis. As Woolf's London calls all ships to rest in its dockyards like birds trapped amidst warehouses and cranes, 'all the ships of the world' come to rest in Hanley's Liverpool (96). Here, however, it is not the ships that are imprisoned birds, but we are told that the murmur of the working city is 'like the wing-beats of some ghostly bird' (96).

Here, Hanley's metaphors hint at a different kind of interpenetration to the one we find in Conrad and Woolf, where we see the sea lapping into the city. In contrast, the Fury novels register, in addition, the waves of labour that wash from the city to the sea. In *An End and a Beginning*, lying in bed after an amorous tryst with her brother-in-law Peter, just released from prison, Sheila Fury listens to men on their way to work, to 'the banging of

doors, the strident, compelling ringing of clocks … the feet past the window, the hurrying men, and the noise heard like the breaking of waves' (257). She remembers her husband Desmond telling her about the city, about 'the life in it. What it was all about, what it meant to him. Those running men, that incessant roar, the continuous hammering and blasting, the ocean of energy, the mountain of labour' (254). She recalls her own first impressions of Gelton after moving there from Ireland, when she sees 'the men and women, and children … the sailors and the ships, and the sea. The factories like forests, roads and streets like tunnels to this drawing down, sucking in, unsatisfied sea' (254). She describes streets 'alive with people … great hordes of them moving down like waves' to their places of work (254). On quite a literal level, the working-classes of Gelton flood into the sea for work, and as such Hanley's metaphors that describe the hordes of labour as an ocean or as breaking or down-rushing waves are very much rooted in historical context.

Of course, the Irish communities Hanley describes in these novels not only work at sea or in industries dependent on the maritime, but have come to Liverpool across the Irish Sea, making these metaphorics doubly apt. There is an interesting analogy and contrast between the way in which Eliot construes his national identity out of dangerous sea crossing and how Hanley's Irish identities are construed across his many novels as a story of 'drift.' There is much crossing of seas and oceans, but with none of the culturally redemptive bent we find in Eliot. The Furys move from Ireland to Liverpool, back to Ireland, and cross the Atlantic to New York, but their story is one of drift and exile, of a people made homeless in their own land. Hanley introduces this theme in the opening pages of *The Furys* (1935): 'Gelton was full of Irish people. The Irish tale of drift in his case meant the sea, as in Fanny Mangan's case it meant domestic service. For months Dennis Fury hung around the docks

looking for a ship' (26). While he waits to put to sea, 'Dennis Fury meanwhile floated about the city like a cork upon water' (26)—as much adrift in this watery city as he will later, literally, be at sea.

As in Woolf and H.D., Hanley's watery city also has its dirty backwaters and currents of madness and breakdown. One such current is represented in the rioting crowds that gather in Gelton during the course of the General Strike that forms the central event of *The Furys*. The union orators Mr Power and Mr Williams look out from their platform onto a 'sea of faces' (197). When violence breaks out and he sees a policeman striking a woman, Andrew Postlethwaite flings himself into the crowd, 'almost as though diving into water,' and is himself brutally struck down by the policeman he confronts (201). Later, the strange Professor Titmouse sits astride a stone lion with the young Peter Fury, surveying the city and the chaos of the crowds—in which he claims to take a psychological interest—and pontificating on how 'this mass of brick and mortar seems to suffer change under the almost miraculous white light that floods it' (249). We are reminded of Woolf's trade goods that suffer a 'city change' as they are made ready for sale on Oxford Street (*Essays V* 283), and of Eliot's early symbolist reveries on psychological sea-change brought about by moonlit streets. Professor Titmouse himself seems to take on the role of Lucretius' voyeuristic spectator watching a shipwreck from the shore (a role also enacted by Clem in *No Directions*), enjoying the drama of the scene while revelling in his own position of security. When Peter flees Professor Titmouse's sexual advances and descends into the crowd, he becomes immersed in their waves and currents, tossed about by the masses of people as 'faces about him bobbed up and down, in and out, like a sea of splashing light' (251). At times he is nearly

crushed—the danger here is not only psychologically losing one's identity in a mob, but also potential physical harm or death.

The sordid backwaters of the city, however, first come into full view in *The Secret Journey* (1936), when we discover that the family are heavily indebted to an extortionist money-lender, Anna Ragner, who lives in Banfield Road, and whom Peter ultimately murders. When he remembers the act in *An End and A Beginning*, he describes Anna Ragner's house, surrounded by other people's dumped and discarded possessions, as 'islanded in waste, its hills of rubbish rubbed against edges of pools of stagnant water' (166). He walks amongst the rubbish heaps, reading 'a whole history fastened to a smashed bedstead, an unbelievable mystery in the very shape, and position, and look of a gigantic ship's boiler' (167). This is a sordid version of Conrad's blurring of windows and mast-arms, and an echo of Dickens' 'vessels that seemed to have got ashore, and houses that seemed to have got afloat' (*Mirror of the Sea* 170; *Our Mutual Friend* 21)

The murder itself and its aftermath is described in a wash of crowds and streets and houses that blend maddeningly in Peter's brain. As he walks towards Banfield Road his vision becomes 'searing,' and he 'could see through the brick walls all the people living behind them' (*Journey* 561). These brick walls become fever-dreams, as 'brick festered all over the place' and 'the sea of brick deluged space, poisoned air, filled the still night with the grotesque shadows of itself' (561). When he flees the scene, pursued by a crowd, his vision becomes a feverish flood of impressions:

> St. Sebastian Place. The chapel. Price Street. Hatfields. Doors opened, the streets became flooded with light. Life poured out into them, fragments became massed.

> The mass moved on, a living flood. It shouted, laughed, cursed. The cries of children merged in this solid phalanx. Hatfields seemed to tremble before the oncoming waves of people. The arms beckoned, ‘Come! Come!’ The bricks became great mirrors through which he could glimpse the sea of faces, thrust forward, upturned, meshed together as one face—a hideous face with a bejewelled hand in its mouth. He began to laugh. Hands reached out, he eluded them and dived into the entry. (568)

This virtuosic description reminds us of Woolf and H.D.'s disintegrating, maddening seas: in Hanley's passage the individual psyche and its sense impressions are broken down and scattered across the wash of city streets and crowds of people, and the face of the murdered woman. Nor is this the only instance of psychological breakdown or ego-death that we are given in maritime terms. In a much less extreme instance, the drunken Dennis Fury stands 'washed up on the kerb by the rushing tide of Gelton,' while the city 'sprawled, … rose and fell and swam around him,' and 'life rushed past him, whirled round him, Gelton roared and swept, and he was in the middle of it' (*Our Time is Gone* 127). In a darker vein, in *Winter Song* (1950), when Dennis returns to Gelton during wartime after having twice been torpedoed at sea, and having witnessed the death at sea of a young boy he was trying to protect, he describes his trauma as 'the sea washing about in my head' (*Winter Song* 301). His wife Fanny asks him to see a doctor about his hearing, and he responds:

> ‘I’m not deaf, really—it’s only the sea washing about in my head.
>
> ‘Soon that sea will dry up.’
>
> ‘I was thinking this morning as I sat in the church, watching the little boy on

the altar, I was thinking of a lovely little boy I once knew.'

'Let him lie in peace,' she said—she knew then who this boy was. Lenahan by name, he lived inside the man's brain—would always be there—she knew—he had told her. So she saw in this moment the bright eyes smothering under water, and the sun high, shining on that summer's day. 'Poor child,' she said.

'He's there, amongst the seaweed.'

'Stop talking of that.' (*Winter Song* 301)

While we have seen, in the modernists I have studied, metaphorical drowning and death by water, this description is different in that there is a very literal drowning at stake. At the same time, this literal death at sea has now also been metamorphosed into a psychical reality, as the seas wash about in Dennis' flooded and overwhelmed brain. Fanny looks at him in pity, seeing 'this sea-soaked creature sitting here, yapping out of an old head, yapping, yapping, bright eyes and tons of water, and great masts, and towering ships, washing about in his addled brain' (301).

We have seen how Hanley, through his maritime metaphorics, plays with madness and sense perception in similar ways to Woolf and H.D., how he construes national and racial identity through the image of drift in an analogous but contrasting way to Eliot's sea-crossing, and how his Liverpool is sea-flooded in the same way as Conrad's London. Throughout his work, in the figures of his seamen and their contrast with the city-based 'masters who own the ships and the seas and the ocean' (*Winter Song* 211), he engages with questions of labour and economic justice; unlike Pound, however, these concerns remain, in Hanley, a sensitive exploration of the individual and the specific, and he provides no political programme as a solution.

Hanley's Fury chronicles provide a fascinating case-study of the historical entanglement of urban modernity with the maritime world, and the expression of this entanglement in maritime metaphorics. They are also interesting in their engagement with the changes wrought upon the maritime by two World Wars. The novels were written between 1935 and 1958, but the action within them unfolds between 1911 and 1927 (Stokes 43). This means that, like H.D.'s *HERmione*, set in 1907-1908, written in 1927, but only published in 1981, Hanley's descriptions of bombs, submarines, and destruction at sea contain the echoes of two World Wars. Dennis Fury's disappearance at sea, for example, is set during the First World War. In *Our Time is Gone* (1940) his ship, the H.M.T. *Ronsa*, is torpedoed, and he is the only survivor, despite his efforts to save the young boy Lenahan. At the same time, when Hanley describes how, 'at six in the evening the news burst over Gelton like a bomb' (490), it is impossible not to think of the aerial warfare that had characterised the invasion of Poland in 1939, the Battle of Britain that commenced in July 1940, and the Blitzes that racked London, Liverpool, Southampton, Cardiff, and other British cities between 1940 and 1941.

Hanley's principal Blitz novel is, however, his 1943 *No Directions,* which is set across the course of a night of bombing in London. Throughout the novel, the city is described in maritime terms, particularly when seen through the eyes of the drunken sailor Johns, who has a horror of ice. The opening sentences of the book, on first reading, strike us as a description of a storm at sea:

> After the deluge of sound ceased, after the wind passed, the sailor fell, was sick.
>
> They were in a desert of air.
>
> "Goddam! Get me out of this," the sailor shouted.

> "Stand up," the little man said. "Get me out of this." Falling again, hands became feelers, pawed about. "I know," he said, "always something moving under ice, I know."
>
> "Glass, you crazy bastard," the little man said, the cheap raincoat dripped water, his tin helmet kept falling over his forehead. (9)

It is only when the ice resolves itself into shattered glass, and we realise that the little man is an air raid warden that the urban landscape obtrudes and replaces the expected seascape. In a somewhat Conradian instance of delayed decoding, a welter of sense impressions that seem to belong to the sea turn out to be part of an urban scene. As Dennis Fury's drunkenness sets the city awash and swimming, so here, too, the seascape we first imagine is in part due to Johns' inebriation, and a degree of ego-disintegration not unlike other states of breakdown explored by Woolf and H.D..

The oceanic, dissolving city culminates, however, in a scene of incredible violence and crisis when the painter Clem rushes out into the air raid to watch it.

> Every level of air hurling as he ran, and wherever he ran he saw that great shuddering sailor, dark against the river of light, against a reeling wall, looming up as from some great hole in the earth, the great shuddering sailor. He stopped dead, looked up, light was scattering light, a steeple careered crazily through space, under his feet a river in tumult, flowing wild. Great engines roaring past, and faces, faces, faces. He ran up some steps, he reached a roof, he leaned against the iron railings and he watched, he felt tremble under him, the city rocked with outrageous power. A life lived to see this. A great wall collapsing, a door hurling

in the air like a demented sail, caught in a wind deluge, a falling girder.… And always the light sweeping past, as though blown by the great wind, a life lived to see this, a grey city rocking. Not what you felt, you couldn't even think, mind's doors closed up. It was what you saw. He stared entranced at the blazing sky. All that light, a sea, an ocean of light, from what vast reservoir had it flooded up, this drenching light, blazing red, and suddenly to his left a falling green, cataracts of light, red, and yellow and green, this riot of colour shouted at you.

…

He came to a great building, he watched it sway. Higher than any building he had ever seen. He went through a gate, he groped his way until he found what he wanted, the iron staircase that spiralled to the roof-top. He began to ascend. Every few steps he stopped to look down, a blackness below. He felt the mass of iron throb as he climbed. Life had come to iron, steel, to stone. He went on, and now he did not look back any more. He kept a firm grip on the rail, he looked skywards at the light. Far below in the street a grinding of brakes, hissing noises, but always the light overhead, reeling, bright colours, like an overflow from revelries. He reached the top, breathing heavily, he was on the roof. Wood and stone and steel alive with wrecking power. Roads opened, streets collapsed, hollow sounds where once old giants had stood, great gaps, fissures, rivers in tumult, showering glass, old giants flat. He look down from the heights. An orgy of movement, in one direction, moving under the light. An ocean of floating trash. (135-136)

The bombed city itself becomes a shipwreck which Clem stands watching from on high. The whole city rocks and comes 'alive with wrecking power,' while a door turns into a 'demented sail' and everything is washed over by an 'ocean of floating trash,' 'a sea, an ocean of light' flooded from some 'vast reservoir.' As in H.D., the overstimulation of the senses is represented simultaneously with scientific accuracy (a blaze of red is followed by after-effects of green) and in maritime metaphors: the riot of light is 'a sea,' 'an ocean,' it 'drenches,' it is a cataract flooding from some vast reservoir. Like Professor Titmouse watching and enjoying the strike from the safety of the stone lions, Clem's behaviour raises that ethical dilemma posed by Lucretius, which Hans Blumenberg traces throughout *Shipwreck with Spectator*: what is the morality of taking pleasure in the spectacle of destruction? It is an uncomfortable question.

In closing, I would like to comment on Hanley's decision to represent this scene of havoc wreaked by aerial warfare in decidedly maritime imagery. Is this one of Casarino's instances where old metaphors and familiar forms are used to give expression to something new and unfamiliar (Casarino 6, see Introduction)? How does one represent the frightening newness of destruction from the skies, of a 'grey city rocking' and 'alive with wrecking power' when one does not yet have the experiences and the vocabulary to describe it? Perhaps, as Hanley does, one uses a familiar image, and casts this aerial destruction through the metaphorics of shipwreck. At the same time, it is worth remembering that the Blitz, in many ways, sounded the death knell for London's maritime ascendency. The landscape of the city changed irrecoverably, and the destruction of much of the port would be followed, in the next few decades, by the loss of Britain's colonial empire, forever changing the power of London to call all the ships of the world to rest in its docks. As such, it is perhaps especially fitting

that the Blitz, as a symbolic herald of maritime London's decline, should be represented in maritime metaphorics, flooding and wrecking the city as it founders in an ocean of light and rubble.

Throughout this thesis, I have catalogued and interrogated such various differing, conflicting, and complementary deployments of metaphors of the sea. I have thereby demonstrated the extraordinary salience of a historically grounded maritime metaphorics for tracing the historical emergence and the specific preoccupations of modernist literature. This thesis therefore provides a corrective to the neglect of the modernist maritime, and makes a case for a historicist critique of the metaphors of the sea that persistently animate the texts of modernist writers.

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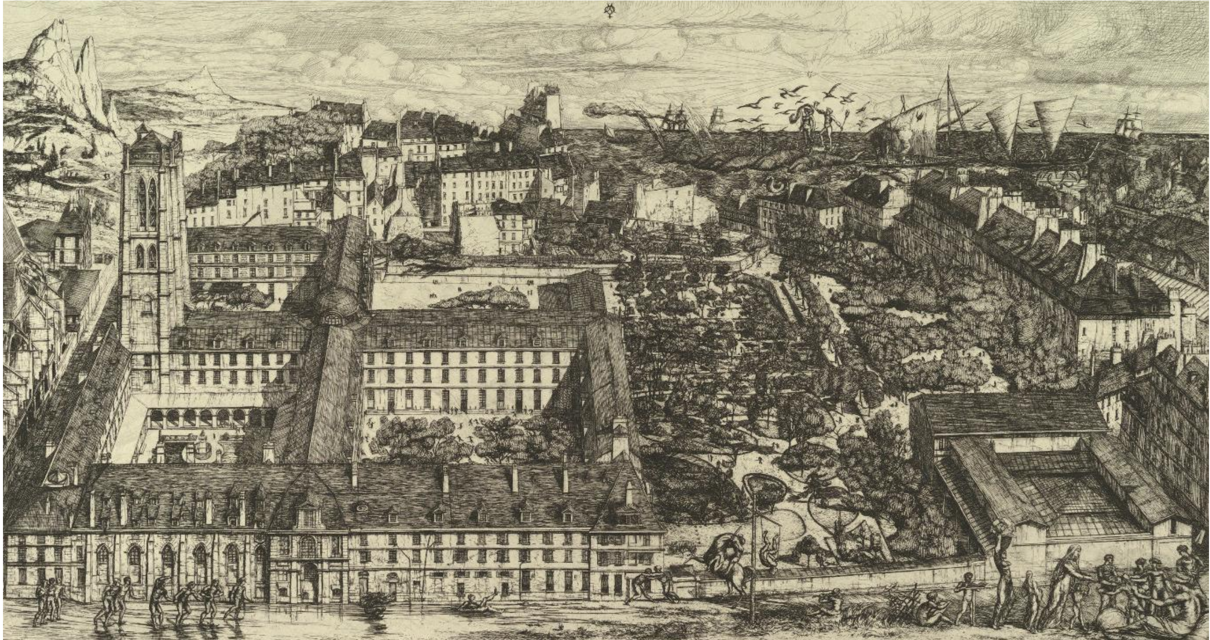
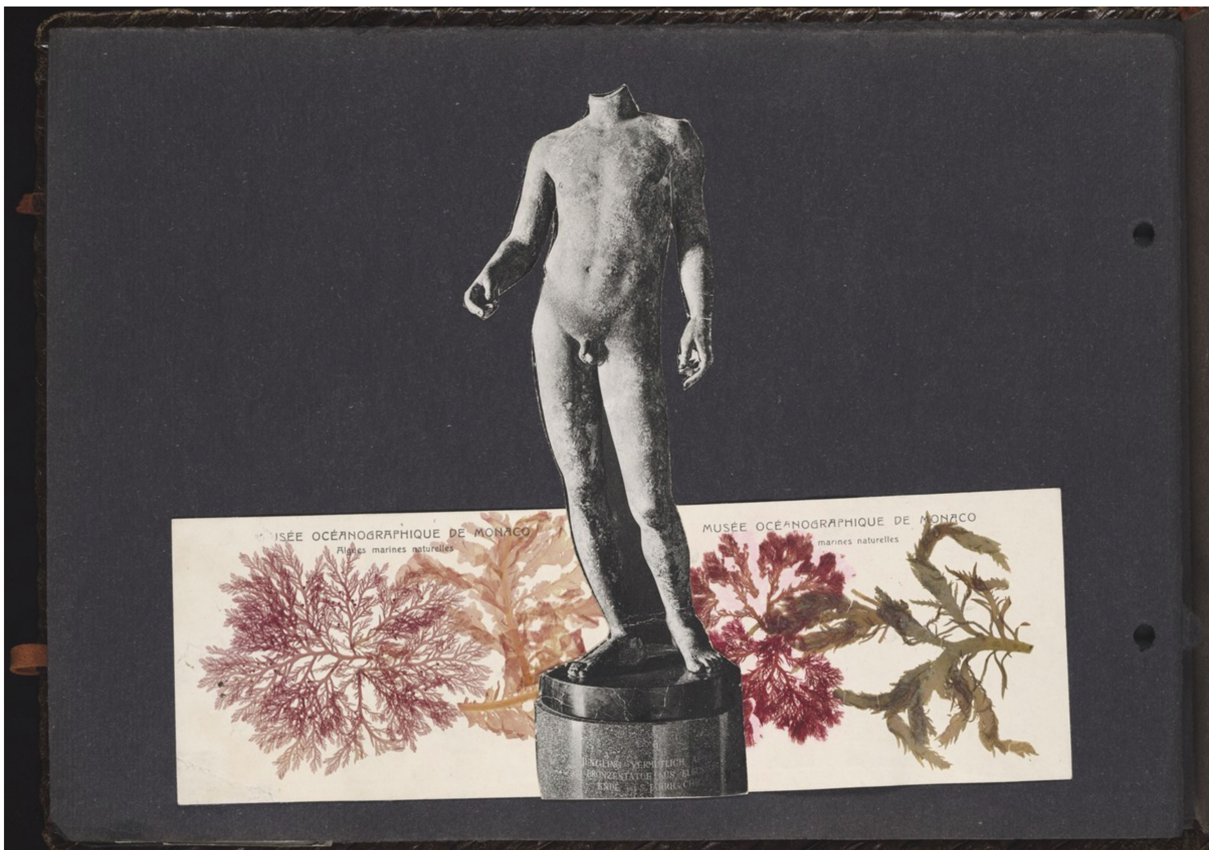
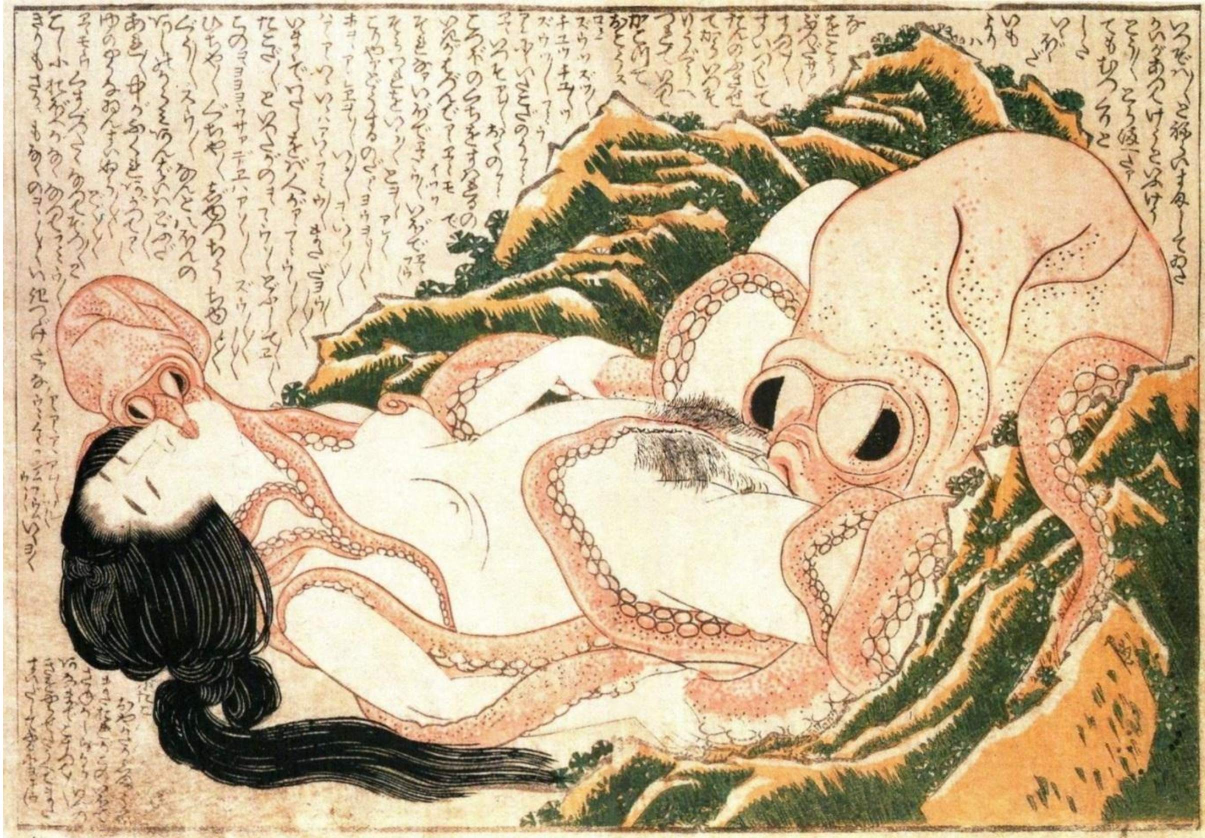
APPENDIX



1. *Collège Henri IV, ou Lycée Napoléon, avec ses dépendances et constructions voisines* by Charles Meryon, 1863/4, Metropolitan Museum of Art, commons.wikimedia.org.wiki/File:Charles_Meryon_College_Henri_IV_1863%E2%80%9364_II.jpg



2. Page from H.D.'s scrapbook featuring a statue juxtaposed with marine plants labelled 'Musée Océanographique de Monaco,' n.d., collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2008034



3. *The Dream of the Fisherman's Wife* by Katsushika Hokusai, originally published in *Kinoe no Komatsu*, 1814, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tako_to_ama_retouched.jpg