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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

WOMEN AND THE AVANT-GARDE: SEXUAL DIFFERENCE IN DISCOURSE AND ART 1900-1950

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

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Doctor of Philosophy

By

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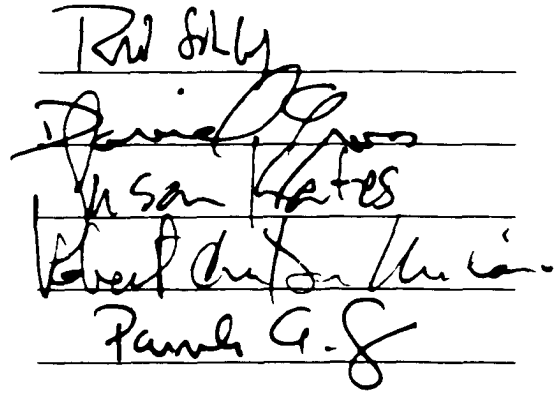
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A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

BY



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Chapter One: Modern Women and the Avant-Garde

This study examines various images of gender and sexual difference—in both visual and literary mediums—as they are constructed, re-constructed and, in most instances, challenged by a variety of women writers and artists involved in or influenced by Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism. My approach incorporates literature, art, and philosophy as I seek to understand the critical influences shaping the literary and artistic exchanges between women and the modernist avant-garde. Each chapter focuses on works produced by women who were influenced by one of these major movements, and each chapter situates a major avant-garde concept or artistic method within an unfolding analysis describing the ways that women writers and artists adapt, alter, or negotiate these concepts or methods. Essentially, I argue that the artistic products created by figures such as Mina Loy, Wanda Wulz, H.D., Hannah Höch, Djuna Barnes, Claude Cahun, Nancy Cunard, and Leonora Carrington show that a variety of expatriate women writers who spent time in Paris during the period 1900-1950 were impacted by the visual culture and experimentalism of the European avant-garde in ways that are not normally discussed in traditional studies of literary modernism.

That narratives of literary modernism and the avant-garde have generally been oriented toward male writers, artists, and audiences is not a new discovery at this point in time. The popular receptions of Shari Benstock's *Women of the Left Bank* and Susan Suleiman's *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* have affirmed a new direction in scholarship characterized by combining gender studies with the study of modernist and avant-garde texts. Although several of the

writers in *Women and the Avant-Garde* participated in the left bank literary community Benstock describes in *Women of the Left Bank*, in my study, I do not limit the scope only to writers. One of the greatest contributions of Benstock's research is the suggestion of diversity within the social activities and artistic communities between 1900 and 1940. However, this sense of diversity does not extend to an evaluation of inter-arts influences even though many individuals within the left bank social groups moved among and engaged in projects with many of the more famous avant-garde art practitioners of the day.[1] *Women and the Avant-Garde*, however, makes new connections among the visual arts, European avant-garde culture, and expatriate women writers, and, in doing so, strengthens the already rich tradition of scholarship that examines the literary contributions made by women in the expatriate communities of Paris. Other studies such as Suleiman's *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* have re-theorized women's role in surrealism through analyses about the way women resisted the sexist undertones that are generally seen to characterize this movement. My methodology is similar to Suleiman's in that I seek to analyze the ways in which women's writing can be read as texts that resist the sexism within avant-garde circles as well as within social discourse generally. And, although Suleiman's research includes the study of both writing and visual art, the

[1] Abigail Soloman-Godeau notes that Claude Cahun, the surrealist photographer, visited the salon of Adrianne Monnier. Phillip Herring explains, in his biography of Djuna Barnes, that Max Ernst befriended Barnes. Anne Chisholm, in her biography of Nancy Cunard, discusses the impact of Cunard had on the surrealist Louis Aragon. These more superficial connections are part of a larger social labyrinth. Margaret Cohen remarks in *Profane Illumination Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution* that Benjamin visited Adrienne Monnier's bookstore to view the work of Gisèle Freund. At this time, he apparently met Jacqueline Breton (215). Although many different writers and artists did meet during this time, not all of them can be directly linked through such meetings. On a more general level, though, both non-European and European writers and artists moving around Paris and Europe during this period visited the same or similar salons, exhibits, and bookstores where new experiments were observed and ideas exchanged.

focus remains limited in that it deals only with Surrealism and does not include any comparative study of the expatriate Anglo-American and British women who were also carrying out surrealist principles in their art. In contrast, *Women and the Avant-Garde* includes the analysis of works by American and British expatriate women in a fashion that demonstrates the impact and reach of a politics of social resistance coloring much of the modernist avant-garde. As I have now suggested, this study has two main purposes. The first is to describe the ways in which women writers and artists faced some of the gender and sexual politics indicative of this period, while the second is to complicate the categorical divisions between modern and avant-garde texts that have limited our readings of women during this period.

The gender and sexual politics of the period are easily called forward with images that emphasize the difference between the imagined woman of the avant-garde and the actual historical woman who participated in the modernist avant-garde as a genuine publisher, writer, or artist. Two portraits of Nancy Cunard represent a case in point. The first is a photograph produced by Cecile Beaton in the 1930s, and it stands as one of the most striking images of Cunard. In it, Cunard is posed at an angle to the camera so that she does not gaze directly at her audience. She stares intensely off to the left, her eyes made to seem all the more mesmerizing by the heavy eye-make up that frames them. The drama intensifies as the viewer's eye is drawn to the upper third of the photo where numerous ostrich feathers cover a hat that sits on her head. The feathers tumble in all directions, and one is immediately reminded of the wild snakes that have been imagined to complete Medusa's dangerous gaze. However, in a contrasting portrait (one not nearly as dramatic or frightening), Cunard

stands in front of a printing press at her famous Hours Press in Paris. In this photograph, Cunard wears a man's bowtie and suit-jacket. Posing more naturally for the camera, she appears to be engaged in working on the next publication. Together, these two images of Cunard—Medusa and New Woman—capture some of the sexual politics of the period.

Beaton displays Cunard as an image that evokes a sense of fear and fascination in the mind of the male artist. This gesture is quite indicative of the modern avant-garde where figures of women are often treated as powerful icons for changing social values, as vehicles for developing culturally critical subject matter, and as objects to be viewed with fear or pleasure by a male audience. In Beaton's photograph, Cunard's image impresses viewers with the power and drama of the new woman while also acknowledging and, perhaps even instilling, awe and fear toward that same figure. As a subject in the modernist avant-garde, images of women could be used as emblems to explore changing social values regarding art or sexuality while maintaining a sense of voyeurism as well. In surrealist photography, for example, images such as Man Ray's nude photographs of Kiki the model were used to present a more open, perhaps even pornographic, sexuality that would come to redefine the categories of "high" and "low" art—or, at least it would certainly continue to shock the viewing audiences. Yet, at the same time, Beaton's portrait of Cunard and Man Ray's photographs of Kiki define women, in different ways, as sexual objects for a male audience. Even as their sexuality is presented differently, open and inviting in Kiki's case or threatening and emasculating in the Cunard photograph, each of these portraits imagines women as highly sexualized objects framed by the male artist. For

example, in Beaton's photograph of Cunard, we see more than the mythical figure Medusa. We also see the social context of Cunard's reputation as it was imagined among her male contemporaries: a woman with dangerous sexual prowess. It is well known that Cunard's affairs with many famous writers and artists of the period elicited a variety of sexual portraits in the works of Aldous Huxley, Michael Arlen, and Richard Aldington.[2] In contrast, Kiki's nude image is more benign and her identity is more anonymous. This sense of anonymity, in Kiki's case, is advanced by the cultural context called forth by these photographs. Further, Whitney Chadwick links Kiki's image to the objectified (and unidentified) women of the erotic postcards of the 1920s.[3] The representations of both Cunard and Kiki capture the strange irony that women were both embraced and repudiated within the socially critical discourse that defined the avant-garde.

Any discussion centered on women and the avant-garde will elicit a number of contradictions and ironies. Major movements of the avant-garde such as Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism defined art by the anti-bourgeois and non- traditional perspectives they espoused. Yet these same aesthetic developments retained some very traditional attitudes toward women. As I have suggested, these attitudes are unveiled in numerous examples such as the sexually charged portraits of Cunard and

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[2] For further discussion of the backlash Cunard received for her promiscuity during this period, see Anne Chisholm's *Nancy Cunard: A Biography* and Holly Ann McSpadden's *Crossing Racial Borders: Nancy Cunard's Political Modernisms*. Female characters treated unfavorably for exhibiting aggressive sexual prowess in Michael Arlen's *The Green Hat* and Aldous Huxley's *Antic Hay* are modeled after Cunard.

[3] See Whitney Chadwick's analysis of these photographs in "Fetishizing Fashion Fetishizing Culture: Man Ray's *Noire et Blanche*" in *Women in Dada: Essays on Sex, Gender, and Identity*. Chadwick discusses the way Man Ray draws on the conventions both for posing anonymous nudes of erotic postcards during the twenties as well as the conventions for representing the female nude in the artwork of such artists as Manet, Gauguin, and Matisse.

Kiki. And, although we may never catch a glimpse of the actual historical woman that became identified as "Kiki" by Man Ray, we do have the opportunity to examine the historical works produced by women such as Cunard in order to understand the contributions women made to the modernist avant-garde. One way to begin this process is quite simply to re-imagine what constitutes an avant-garde text.

Comparing expatriate writers who have been traditionally figured as modernists with artists and ideas primarily labeled Futurist, Dadaist, and Surrealist necessarily entails a larger set of questions about categorical definitions describing what constitutes an avant-garde or a modernist text. Clearly one of the aims of my study is to foreground gender and sexual politics in literary and cultural history. An underlying and subsequent aim, then, is that the comparative methodology that fuels this project also complicates the categorical definitions for "modernism" and "avant-garde," given that they have excluded, in one form or another, many of the writers and artists in this study. Some of the poems of British expatriate Mina Loy, for example, make almost no sense without a broad understanding of futurist ideas. Because of futurist influences, many of these same poems, although labeled by numerous critics as modernist, seem radically different from the work of other poets (Wallace Stevens or Marianne Moore) with whom she is often linked.[4] In reading such poems against the ideas of futurist philosopher Marinetti and against the artistic strategies of futurist photographer Wanda Wulz, one can better understand the degree

[4] The very early critics, such as Yvor Winters, link Loy's experimental style with the American modern poets Williams, Stevens, and Moore – all of whom, along with Loy, published their works in American literary magazines such as *The Dial*. More recent critics such as Carolyn Burke, Marjorie Perloff, and Susan Dunn have produced persuasive analyses connecting Loy's poetry to avant-garde contexts. I believe that many of the features of Loy's poetry—especially the unusual emphasis on active verbs and dissonant sound –are far more indebted to futurist methods for creating literary dynamism.

to which Loy has been historically caught between the definitions of modernism and avant-garde. At this point, it becomes necessary to discuss definitions articulating differences between the avant-garde and modernism.

In *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Peter Bürger defines the avant-garde as separate from modernism. The avant-garde, Bürger explains, is characterized by a self-critical stance in which artists and the art they produce assault the very institution of art. In doing so, the avant-garde artist does not simply separate him or herself from the technical artistry of past traditions but attacks the ideological "aura" attached to art. In Walter Benjamin's essay "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," this aura is described as the ideological phenomenon created over time that continues to shape decisions about what constitutes "great" art. These ideas about defining art as a "cultural treasure" reinforce the separation of art and the public sphere in Bürger's view. Therefore, an important and defining characteristic for avant-garde art is "the destruction of art as an institution set off from the praxis of life" (83). In Bürger's argument, modernism, on the other hand, maintains a more "passive" social position. According to Bürger, modernism can be defined as a more aesthetic movement where form and style limit political potential. Bürger acknowledges that the fragmented forms and styles often defined as modernist present an aesthetic challenge to the traditional mentality of the bourgeoisie, but in contrast to those of the avant-garde, they do not go beyond this level of critique. That is, a modernist text does not attack the institution of art.

Bürger's definitions can be better understood by examining specific examples to which his theory applies. In surrealism, automatic writing is one form of art that

breaks down distinctions between art and everyday life. As a form of free association writing that anyone can access through dreams, meditation, hypnosis, drugs, or any method for tapping into the unconscious, a practitioner of automatic writing could, potentially, sit down and construct sentences, phrases, and words by free association and call this project a poem, a play, or a story. Using these techniques, anyone's thoughts can become art and anyone is entitled to become an artist. This method also undermines the myths about singular artistic genius that mark and define "true" art from kitsch. In contrast, modernist forms, such as the stream of consciousness that defines the narratives of Virginia Woolf, do not provide the public with an accessible art form that they, too, can practice.

As a general heuristic, Bürger's definitions appear to be quite cogent. However, one problem emerges: his categorical definitions separating the avant-garde from modernism are not as self-contained as one might assume, and widespread application of Bürger's definitional categories can create complications. For instance, a persuasive argument could be made for classifying William Carlos Williams's poem "This Is Just To Say" as avant-garde even though common logic posits Williams and his poetry as modernist. The literal situation in this particular poem can easily be interpreted as a refrigerator note telling Williams's wife that he has taken the fruit she was saving for herself. The poem begins as a brief announcement:

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox (372)

As twelve short lines in total, the poem ends with a closing remark, resembling the

way one might sign a letter, asking forgiveness. Read as a note, it is, in essence, an everyday object not unlike the ready-mades of dada. It brings art back into the practice of everyday life since most individuals could find this art hanging on their refrigerator or could create it themselves. Yet, not all of Williams's poems could be classified as avant-garde and Williams was not an active participant in the dadaist movement.[5] He did have contact with dadaist émigrés, Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia in New York, though. Because of the mobility of so many artists, the impact of the avant-garde is simply not as self-contained as one might think.

Another problem associated with Bürger's discussion of the avant-garde is that it does not examine the ways in which the ideas and methods of the movements became culturally dispersed. Even his term "historical avant-garde" implies that the avant-garde, as a series of very specific political movements with the agenda of changing society's relationship to art, did actually end completely. In fact, one of the basic premises of his theory, that the historical avant-garde was not successful in creating a counter-culture revolution reaching the masses in one historical moment, implies that the avant-garde failed to make a lasting, or transformative, impact on other generations of social thought. This tacit assumption is easily refuted.

Suleiman, for example, provides very suggestive links between the practices of the historical avant-garde and the *écriture féminine* movement of the 1970s (16-18). In fact, critics have a difficult time deciding exactly how and when a movement such as surrealism effectively "dies." Some cite the onset of World War II while some discuss a "second phase" in New York during the 1940's; still others consider

[5] It also bears mentioning that Williams translated Philippe Soupault's surrealist novel *Last Nights of Paris*. Although Williams was known primarily as an American imagist, his translation is yet another example of the connections between American poets and the European avant-garde.

surrealism an important influence during the climate of cultural change during the 1960's and 1970's (Conley 19-21, 25). In addition, when contemplating the so-called end to surrealism, one must also consider the degree to which surrealism impacted an international community of Carribean, Latin-American, and African writers and artists that included figures such as Aimé Césaire, Suzanne Césaire, Frida Kahlo, and Léopold Sédar Senghor.[5] Further, the ideas of the avant-garde also made a lasting impression on social theorists in the latter half of the twentieth century. Michel Foucault, who discusses René Magritte's influence at some length in his book, *This Is Not a Pipe*, and acknowledges a debt to Georges Bataille's formulations about transgressive sexuality in *The History of Sexuality*, also recognizes the lasting influence of surrealism on the critical social theory of the twentieth-century. Furthermore, André Breton and the marvelous, Foucault suggests, has influenced the manner in which we think about the relationships among culture, art, literature, philosophy, and individual experience.[6] Other social theorists are also indebted to the avant-garde: Lacan, de Certeau, Kristeva, Mulvey, and Cixous for example.[7]

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[5] Many of these writers and artists do not disguise their affiliation with surrealism, but they also stress their own unique differences from European surrealism. In "Speech and Image: An African Tradition of the Surreal" (1965) Senghor, for example, writes: "The African image is not then an image by equation but an image by *analogy*, a surrealist image." (495). See Suzanne Césaire's "The Domain of the Marvelous" (1941) or "Surrealism and Us" (1943).

[6] In an interview entitled "A Swimmer Between Two Words," Foucault states: "There is no doubt that the whole network connecting the works of Breton, Georges Bataille, Leiris, and Blanchot, and extending through the domains of ethnology, art history, the history of religions, linguistics, and psychoanalysis, are effacing the rubrics in which our culture classified itself, and revealing unforeseen kinships, proximities, and relations. It is very probable that we owe this new scattering and this new unity to the person and the work of André Breton" (174). Surrealist thinking such as the mode of the marvelous can be characterized as bringing together new and unlikely connections among categories, objects, and social relations. It also places primary emphasis on the individual's experience or apprehension of these connections. This mode of thought has impacted current social theory and cultural studies approaches that emphasize inter-discursive and inter-disciplinary study.

[7] See Margaret Cohen's brief discussions about de Certeau and Lacan in *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution* pp. 111-12 and 148-151. See Suleiman's discussion of Cixous in *Subversive Intent: Gender Politics and the Avant-Garde* pp. 166-168. Kristeva

Although the avant-garde did not overthrow a government or dismantle a social structure, an action most likely defined by a sudden, specific event or historical moment, the ideas of the avant-garde did permeate varying discourses and, infiltrating them, transformed the way in which the West has thought about the relationships among culture, social institutions, and individuals. In this sense, the avant-garde can be thought of as more or less a long revolution.

But perhaps what is more telling about Bürger's theory is that it excludes women from the discussion of the historical avant-garde.[8] His discussion of historical figures within the avant-garde includes Breton, Duchamp, Marinetti, Adorno, Benjamin, and other men, but it does not include women. However, if discussions concerning the avant-garde include historical women (those women who contributed to and or were influenced by the avant-garde), then these same discussions, on some level, acknowledge that the ideas of the avant-garde became culturally scattered into a variety of social groups and then used for liberating purposes. In fact, this dispersal began in the early years of movements such as Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism, and it was not necessarily limited to people spending time among these movements in Europe. (The American poet Williams is a case in point.) Scholarship that overlooks this fact is perhaps one reason why many of the women in this study have been somewhat misplaced and ignored in both modernist and avant-garde canons.

In the same manner that Williams seems caught between the definitions of

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acknowledges her own connection to surrealism in her study of the abject in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*.

[8] This is one of the reasons that I use the term "modernist avant-garde" to discuss works that bear the mark of futurism, dadaism, and surrealism. Bürger's key descriptive term, "historical," suggests that the influence of the avant-garde did not extend beyond a specific moment. The artists mentioned by his work also imply that the influence did not extend beyond the traditionally historically recognized male participants.

avant-garde practitioner and modern poet, many women writers in this study do not easily fall into one category either. However, one must also acknowledge that Williams is a common canonical figure of modernism and that many women were marginalized from the canon of modernist literature that was formalized after the introduction of seminal scholarly works like Hugh Kenner's *The Pound Era*. In addition, the works of Mina Loy, Djuna Barnes, Nancy Cunard and other left bank writers display characteristics which make them seem quite different from those of the traditional modernist canon. One tempting explanation for this difference is that their writing borrows more heavily from the techniques and ideas developed in the avant-garde movements to which they were exposed. By finding persuasive points of comparison between these expatriate women writers and the European artists of the avant-garde, I hope to further legitimate this premise. Such a premise may also suggest that the process of forming a modern literary canon in the 1950s was a conservative enterprise that stripped modernism of its more radical elements and that in fact modernism and avant-garde were not always mutually exclusive terms.

In no way do I wish for the contributions of Bürger's theory to be overlooked. Bürger's work stands as a very necessary response to Renato Poggioli's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. In this text, Poggioli makes virtually no distinction between modernism and the avant-garde. This is a particularly problematic move, considering that it means completely conflating all artistic projects produced during a fifty-year period as similar in nature. His is a potentially de-politicizing gesture, as it suggests grouping, without distinction, the more socially conservative artists like Eliot and Pound with the more socially radical ones such as Breton and Barnes. There are

chapter discussions in *Women and the Avant-Garde* that may include diverse and different figures such as Breton, Eliot, Cunard, and Benjamin. However, such discussions both foreground and trace the politics of difference among such figures. The purpose of structuring analyses this way is to avoid reinforcing overly unified definitions for the modern and avant-garde that either set up false distinctions or offer no distinctions at all.

There are important studies that acknowledge an on-going influence among avant-garde art and society in general. For instance, Andreas Huyssen argues that academic canons defining modernism, the avant-garde, and post-modernism have effectively categorized these terms as exclusively distinct, ignoring the dialectic between art and mass culture that characterizes both the avant-garde and postmodernism. His task, as he articulates it, is essentially to rescue the historical avant-garde from paradigms that equate the historical avant-garde and modernism with notions of "high culture" or "high art," in opposition to "mass culture" or "low art." The question of whether postmodernism exists as a separate phenomenon from modernism is a concern for this project. There are parallels drawn between avant-garde writers and artists and post-structuralist/post-modern theorists in my discussions. However, given the acknowledged influence of the avant-garde on many of these theorists, I do not feel that the application is anachronistic. The difference between some of the writers and thinkers of the avant-garde and some "post-modern" thinkers is perhaps more a difference in degree than in kind.

Frederic Jameson suggests that postmodernism is actually a later stage of

modernism, one which responds to a corresponding later stage of capitalism.[9] This becomes a persuasive suggestion when one considers that surrealist René Magritte addressed questions about the simulation of reality long before Jean Baudrillard. *Representation*, one of Magritte's later paintings, emphasizes the construction of reality and implicitly questions whether or not it is possible to see beyond the model of reality carved for the viewer. By creating a duplicate copy of the painting's represented reality within the frame, Magritte calls into question the distinction between "genuine" reality and the simulation of reality as well as "genuine" art and its replication.[10] It can be logically argued that the difference between Baudrillard's discussion of simulation and simulacrum and Magritte's visual articulation about the absence of any genuine reality is the stage of twentieth-century capitalism to which each of these thinkers responds. Baudrillard's theory responds to a later era of capitalism –one characterized by digital technology, media, and hyperreality. In this social world, Baudrillard suggests that reality cannot be located because the simulation of reality becomes a system in and of itself. A compelling artistic contrast to Magritte's use of simulation (Magritte's is an early form that responds to an earlier stage of twentieth-century capitalism) would be the science-fiction film *The Matrix*. One could easily argue that this film responds to the digital age paranoia of Baudrillard's description of late capitalism, or what Jameson refers to as "high-tech paranoia" (38). In *The Matrix*, all human experience is parceled out through a computer-generated matrix that simulates reality. This film blurs the distinction between the experience of physical reality and the experience of an imagined,

[9] See Jameson's *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*.
[10] For further discussion of this painting and Magritte's work as a whole, see Michel Foucault's *This Is Not A Pipe*. Foucault connects post-structuralism to Magritte's work.

systematically constructed virtual reality so that the audience wonders whether or not there is ultimately a difference. The contrast between Magritte's painting and this film foregrounds a difference between modern surrealists who call attention to the ways that mass production influenced the perception of modern life and the popular culture of a late twentieth-century where more advanced forms of technology and media proliferate at an even more exponential rate so that reality becomes myth. From this perspective, the difference between the "modern" Magritte and "post-modern" Baudrillard is really a matter of degree.

The Magritte-Baudrillard comparison is only one of many that underscore the persuasiveness of Jameson's link between the modern and post-modern or Huyssen's link between the historical avant-garde and post-modernism. We must consider also that the psychologist Joan Rivière, for example, postulated that gender was a socially performative action before Judith Butler discussed gender and sexuality as socially performed behaviors. The fact that such similar ideas can be located among early and late twentieth-century texts implies that there is not a fundamental break between the modern and postmodern (Jameson) or the historical avant-garde and the postmodern (Huyssen). In light of such ideas, the parallels I present between post-structuralist post-modern theory and modern works in various chapters should not seem like an anachronistic application. The intuitive urge to see these comparisons anachronistically is, in part, a result of academic periodization and canonization whereby a particular set of high modernist classics (classics which are traditionally the production of exclusively male writers and artists) become the defining model.

That conventional definitions for modernism and for the avant-garde have

been successfully challenged and re-defined by various critics indicates the degree of diversity existing within the artistic enterprises between 1900 and 1950. Raymond Williams, one of these critics, moves beyond labels for period, canons, and artistic categories to discuss the ways that individual artists, writers, and thinkers respond to similar series of challenges presented by the social circumstances of modern life. In *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*, Williams calls for scholarship to "move beyond such conventional definitions as 'avant-garde practice' or the 'modernist text'" so that "a range of distinct and...opposed formations" are brought to the forefront (79). Although I often foreground concepts specific to Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism in each chapter, I do not use these concepts as a tool for defining a "modern" woman writer against an "avant-garde" woman artist. In my mind, the term "modern" applies to all the women in this study because they respond, as Williams suggests, to a variety of modern social challenges and ideologies. The title of this project, "Modern Women and the Avant-Garde: Gender and Sexual Difference 1900-1950," reflects the negotiation of these ideologies by women working within the influence of the avant-garde. My hope is to create, in each chapter, a sense of the ideological formations that the women in this study encountered and the degree to which we might understand that they resisted or affirmed these same ideologies.

Describing the general social circumstances for futurism, dadaism, and surrealism represents another important step for contextualizing the works I analyze. Williams lists three basic characteristics that can describe modernism and the avant-garde: an emphasis on creativity, on "breaking with the past," and a general espousal

of anti-bourgeois perspectives (52). Although the first half of the twentieth century brims with various social changes, most accounts of modernism emphasize the volatile nature these changes created rather than the way that more conventional attitudes persisted. As Tyrus Miller observes, this stress on the changing social climate tends to mythologize modernism as a new beginning in history (5). The following section describes some social circumstances shaping the avant-garde and highlights both social changes impacting the production of art as well as the reproduction of traditional social attitudes within experimental art movements particularly as those traditional social attitudes relate to gender and sexual identity. However, the following description of social circumstances that influenced modern thinking and avant-garde movements is in no way intended to present a comprehensive list of experiences. Instead, it is a basic list of influences.

Some Thoughts on the Social Circumstances of the Avant-Garde

By 1902, mass production made the bicycle an affordable means of transportation--a mere three to fifteen dollars so that urban populations found themselves cycling in proximal closeness to one another and scattered among both carriages and automobiles (Kern 216). During the first five years of the new century, Freud published several essays "The Interpretation of Dreams" (1900), "Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious" (1905), and "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (1905) that would theorize about the human mind's ability to interiorize social ideologies and repress certain behaviors. At approximately the same time, Albert Einstein wrote "On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies" (1905), an essay

contending that the form of a body changes during movement (Kern 184). After the First World War began, Stephen Graham toured the Somme battlefield, finding, in light of this war's atrocities, that "sunlight and noonday do not always show us the truth" (Fussell 63). Eight years later, expatriate writer Nancy Cunard opened her own small printing press. A picture of this period in her life depicts Cunard standing over the press wearing her trademark thick, black eyeliner, wearing a man's boxy, stylish suit, and fashioning her hair in a modified, shorter version of the classic flapper "bob." Most social historians agree that innovations in technology and mass production, shifts in scientific and psychological theory, the experience of a massive war, and the emergence of changing gender roles all influenced the understanding of social life during this period. These same experiences also shaped the modernist avant-garde. Although each of the historical experiences mentioned here seem radically different, on some level, each one can be understood in terms of a general avant-garde principle: disruptive analogy.

Analogical thinking functions to reveal the possible corresponding resemblance between two things that are otherwise unlike one another. The point of disruptive analogy, then, is to take two items that would not conventionally resemble one another and disrupt conventional thought by developing any degree of illogical similarity. Disruptive analogy works to halt the development of thought or to cut through the familiarity of experience. It is a method used by the avant-garde to expand the way that individuals comprehend cultural meaning. As Ronald Schleifer has noted in *Modernism and Time: The Logic of Abundance in Literature, Science, and Culture*, the means of expression for thinking about and apprehending social life

in the early twentieth century shifted from a discourse of linear reasoning to one of analogy as a means of bridging both the familiar and the new experiences which accompanied rapid changes in social life during the time period 1880-1930. However, as Bürger theorizes, the main objective of the modern avant-garde was to oppose art as a cultural institution, and it did this by emphasizing its break from art forms of the past Rather than bridging the old and new to force some sense of continuity, some avant-garde methods worked to juxtapose seemingly unlike things, items of different origin, to reveal unconventional, illogical resemblances and new modes of understanding which would enable one to critique received notions of reality thrust onto them through what André Breton called "an artificial order of ideas"(18)--what futurists in "Manifesto of the Futurist Painters 1910" ridiculed as "the cult of the past" (Boccioni 26). This method of disruptive analogy, though, was grounded in a social climate of change, in odd juxtapositions which technology and consumer abundance brought into everyday life, in psychoanalytic ideas about the struggle between human instinct and social law, in the violent experiences of the war, and in the gender ambiguity foregrounded by the image of the new woman. Futurism, for example, uses images of motion brought to the forefront by the advent of the automobile and Einstein's theories about motion. Dadaism borrows print media and advertisements to create new art forms, and Surrealist methods borrow from Freud's theories to artistically showcase the constant instability of the human mind. However, as previously suggested, the context for this study draws on both the production of disruptive (emerging) art forms as well as the reproduction of conventional (residual) attitudes toward gender.[11]

[11] I am drawing from Raymond Williams's notions of residual and emergent cultures as well as

Futurism, New Art Forms, and Gender

In one of their first manifestoes, the futurists would claim that culture and art were constantly expanding: "all things move, all things run, all things are rapidly changing" (Boccioni 28) The futurists also made the distinction between the stale conventions imposed by social institutions and the dynamic nature of life hidden beneath such conventions: "All is conventional in art. Nothing is absolute in painting" (28). Methods for rendering expressions of expanding culture for the public became a crucial part of the futurist project and its call for the belief in social change. Similarly, it was through the experience of co-existing worlds and alternate ideas that the surrealists wished to unmask "reality" as something constructed. Their own cultural exposure to disruptive, non-analogous images helped establish a method for revealing this construction.

Futurism declared war on art as an institution and all those cultural conventions, social groups, or individuals supporting this institution, including academics, archeologists, art critics, those who supported museums, churches, and even fellow artists. Futurists looked to innovations in science and technology for inspiration in conceiving creative ways to present cultural expansion and motivate social change through individual perception. "Manifesto of Futurist Painters" (1910) articulates this sentiment enthusiastically as futurism claims to destroy "the obsession with ancients, pedantry and academic formalism," as well as to "elevate all attempts

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alternative and oppositional strains of culture in *Marxism and Literature*. Williams analyzes the complexity of cultural hegemony in this work, and the ways that residual elements of a past social formation as well as emergent elements of a current one can become co-opted into the dominant values within a presiding social structure. Residual and emergent elements may be of an oppositional nature, may be imbued with hegemonic values, or may be both.

at originality" (26). One of the primarily futurist methods for doing this was dynamism, a method for rendering, in both visual art and literature, the constant motion of the universe.

Einstein's theory of relativity aided futurists in that it altered ideas about the nature of matter in space. Einstein's ideas demonstrated that all "matter in the universe generates a gravitational force that accelerates all material bodies in its field and modifies their apparent size" (Kern 185). Henri Bergson, a philosopher influential to futurist thinking, espouses ideas of flux and non-determinism in *Creative Evolution* (1907), suggesting that the world is non-stagnant and in a state of constant "becoming" and that " 'any division of matter into independent bodies with determined outlines is artificial'" (Tisdall, Bozzolla 32). Both Einstein and Bergson advance the idea that all forms of matter -- including seemingly stagnant objects within the physical world -- are actually in motion. Naturally, this notion appealed to futurists who sought to change social perceptions about the value of tradition by representing the disruption of reality through presentations of a world in constant motion. In Italy the traditions of the past were always underfoot in public spaces where Roman or Renaissance sculpture and architecture seemed to uphold traditional ideas about culture and art. Simply put, if futurists could destroy ideas about the constancy of those same public spaces, they might also destroy the cultural values those public spaces upheld.

In "The Plastic Analogies of Dynamism" (1913), Gino Severini links analogical thinking with dynamism as he describes a method for disrupting perceptions of social space. Severini writes: "...matter, considered in its effects,

encloses the universe in an enormously vast circle of analogies, which start with affinities or resemblances and end with contrasts and specific differences" (121). Severini continues, "Today, in this epoch of dynamism and simultaneity, one cannot separate any event or object from the memories, the plastic references or aversions, which its *expansive action* calls up *simultaneously* in us..." (121). In this manifesto, what Severini conveys is the way that dynamism involves the interpenetration of physical planes and with it seemingly different objects, environments, and ideas. As Severini describes it, dynamism can be conceived of as a form of analogical expansion. In other words, dynamism calls attention to the expansion of thought produced by newly imagined relationships in a world composed of difference.

In writing, dynamism takes different forms of "words-in freedom" that portray the vitality of action through techniques such as "free-expressive orthography" and "anological onomatopoeia." In "Destruction of Syntax-Imagination without Strings-Words-in-Freedom," (1913) Marinetti defines free expressive orthography as a totally new method of writing that destroys syntax, deforms words, and surpasses the lyrical rebellion of free verse. He also discusses onomatopoeia as a significant technique for representing "deeper synthesis of life" through sound (104). A year later, Marinetti begins to build on the relationship between onomatopoeia, analogy, and dynamism in the manifesto "Geometric and Mechanical Splendor and the Numerical Sensibility" (1914). In this manifesto, Marinetti explains the forcefulness of analogic onomatopoeia in his own work: "...the onomatopoeia *stradionla stradionla stradionlaire* that repeats itself in the first canto of my epic poem *The Conquest of the Stars* forms an analogy between the clashing of great swords and the furious action of

the waves, just before the great battle of stormy waters" (109). Thus, in analogical onomatopoeia, one sound represents two dynamic environments simultaneously. For example, Marinetti's poem *The Conquest of the Stars* uses the sound "stradionla, stradionla" to simultaneously render and analogically compare the action of a battle and storm. The sound presents the force of movement in both a swordfight and a series of crashing waves as well as the expansive force of motion that connects these seemingly unrelated events. The violent nature characterizing this portrait of dynamism took a particularly masculine force in futurism as well.

Much of futurist rhetoric is characterized by a dual gesture toward women: liberatory gestures in the form of expressed desires to destroy social institutions (such as marriage and family, strictures that reinforce woman's domestic role) and gestures of repudiation in the form of expressed beliefs that women were incapable of being assimilated into the aggressive, dynamic roles futurism promoted. Many futurists believed that woman could not transcend the sentimentality and weakness of past traditions. In "Against Amore and Parliamentarianism" Marinetti writes: "...we think that if [women's] bodies and spirits had been subjected, over many questions, to the same education of spirit and body as have been men, it would perhaps be possible to speak of equality between the sexes" (81). In Futurism, the family/marriage institution was figured as a kind of prison, and women, placed in the center of domesticity, played the role of arbiter of past traditions.

Marinetti's ideas about women are full of anxiety and contradiction. While in some writings Marinetti suggests that social roles prescribed for women have prevented equality, he also suggests in other writings that women can never be equals

because they are inherently weaker. He argues that boys "develop far away from little girls so that their first games can be distinctly masculine" (86). This statement elicits the following question: how are women supposed to be exposed to "the same education of spirit and body" if they are kept segregated from boys? (81). Such contradictions continue in "Against Love and Parliamentarism." In this manifesto, Marinetti articulates support for suffragettes predicated upon the belief that giving women the right to vote would precipitate an infiltration of sentimentalism in government and inevitably cause the destruction of the political system. This is less a statement of support for women than it is a statement about the inherent strength of futurism to outlast and replace old social systems.

Dadaism, New Art Forms, and Gender

Dadaism deliberately fashioned its reputation as an anti-institutional, anti-capitalist, anti-bourgeois, and anti-traditional art movement. In spite of its reputation or self-proclaimed goals, dadaists managed to maintain very traditional ideas about women's role in society. Tristan Tzara describes dada as a new and all-encompassing force for critical thinking. Dada, he writes, is "a mixture of man, napthaline, sponge, animal made of ebonite and beefsteak, prepared with soap for the brain" (qtd. in Sawelson-Gorse xi). Tzara's description of nonsensically related items is another form of disruptive analogy, but one that "cleanses" the minds of unthinking masses. However, as feminist critics such as Naomi Gorse-Sawelson note, Tzara also characterizes his audience, the unthinking masses of consumer culture, as female: "Therefore, Madam, be on your guard and realize that a really dada product is a

different thing from a glossy label" (xi). In Tzara's rhetoric, the male gender takes the form of the politically active intellectual while the female is figured as a houghtless fashion queen. Using this line of logic, dada is the intellectual tool that artists (men) apply to mass culture (women).

Collage or montage is a distinctly dadaist method for combining the medium of commodity culture--print media--with the critique of capitalism. This method clearly acknowledges the artist's own saturation in commodity culture, and it expresses an easily discernible commitment to creating an art form oppositional to a pro-capitalist perspective. Yet, some dadaist collage fails to completely oppose the prevailing social order even as it critiques the way capitalism shapes perspectives of the social world. Kurt Schwitter's collage, *The Vomit Picture*, is a case in point. In this particular collage, Schwitters combines figures of fashion models cut from newspapers, paper money, and the phrase "kots" (vomit) – seemingly disparate items brought together analogously here to create an alternative perspective. This collage not only portrays dada disgust at bourgeois consumerism generally, but also represents that consumerism with female fashion models. As Dorothea Dietrich argues, Schwitters' presentation of the female body in this collage and in other works is part of a more general anxiety over women's growing independence during this period:

> As the female is seen as the quintessential embodiment of loss – according to Freud, the castrated male – she became a symbol for modernity and mass culture. In the discourse about mass culture, the female fulfilled two functions: in symbolizing castration anxiety, she represented the fear of

> fragmentation and of the loss of male authority; but in representing that fear through the female body, she, as a fetishisized object, also offered the possibility of the reassertion of male authority. (223)

In other words, the overwhelming sense of change brought about by the advent of modern capitalism also becomes conflated with the changing gender roles of the period. The re-establishment of conventional gender identities (woman=vanity queen) actually bridges the relationship of the past and present rather than disrupts it.

Surrealism, New Art Forms, and Gender

Technology and consumer abundance during the second industrial revolution also works in ways that posits social classes next to one another. At times, this created sharp contrasts of poverty and conspicuous consumption in urban life. It is a complicated example of what Stephen Kern calls "the crisis of abundance" and what Schleifer defines as the crisis of "Enlightenment humanism" both of which are crises of understanding forced to the forefront by the undeniable experience in this time period of seeing "too much" and "not enough" co-existing closely together (Kern, 8 and Schleifer, xi). In his "Second Manifesto of Surrealism," Breton expresses that it was "impossible" to "avoid most urgently posing the question of the social regime under which we live" and "the acceptance or non-acceptance of this regime" (139). In fact, the image of a person riding a bicycle next to someone in an automobile has a tinge of the surreal to it. The two images have one striking resemblance in that they are technologies of transportation, yet they also reveal a number of class differences. On another level, the juxtaposition of the carriages as

outmoded or obsolete forms of transportation against the newly commodified bicycles and automobiles creates another dissimilitude that highlights the strangeness of a mechanized society. In "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia," Benjamin credits surrealism with bringing together the outmoded and the new in ways that call attention to the sense of urgency at seeing icons of the past, of great wealth, of older values, alongside images of the present, of great poverty, of commodity values, in the everyday city life Breton presents in *Nadja*. To a greater degree, Surrealism used analogical thinking to present the repression of culture as well as the road to its expansion through individual imagination.

Some surrealist writing and artistic techniques like assemblage or collage grew out of dadaism and that movement's reactions toward consumer abundance. An assembled poem might be a series of variously juxtaposed phrases or thoughts. Assemblage can also be collaborative as in the case of the surrealist game, "exquisite corpse," which is played as a variety of people each add a phrase to a piece of writing or each draw part of a picture in a freely associative way. In any case, the surprising juxtaposition of unlike or heterogeneous items is a method that undermined the aesthetic value of art and placed value instead in imaginative thought. By emphasizing imagination and chance, these techniques were invented to resist the robotizing forces of mass production. Hal Foster argues that such games not only mock traditional aesthetics, but also mock and pervert the assembly line efficiency of Fordist and Taylorist mentalities (152). What separates surrealist uses of collage with those of the dadaist, though, is the extra emphasis on the randomness of unconscious thought. In this regard, the influence of psychology was perhaps the most defining

cultural influence in surrealist thought.

Although many of the theoretical essays published by Freud in the first part of the century were not available to Breton in formal translation until the early twenties, many of the ideas from those essays were in circulation in summary form (Foster, 2). General ideas about the psychology of the mind began to saturate European thought during this time period through several figures. Neuropsychology in France was influenced heavily by Jean-Marie Charcot, Freud's teacher, and Pierre Janet, who emphasized automatism (Foster, 3). In addition, Breton trained with Raoul Leroy and Joseph Babinski during the war – both associates of Charcot (Foster, 2). It is no wonder, then, that Breton's appropriation and adaptation of various forms of psychoanalytic theory found its way into the techniques and described aims of Surrealism.

Breton's first manifesto records the famous inspiration for automatic writing. As the often cited story goes, Breton falls asleep one evening in 1919 and an odd image enters his consciousness. The phrase that accompanied this image, "a man cut in two by a window," reverberated in his waking consciousness. The unusual nature of this phrase stuck with Breton, so much so that it became a point for psychic exploration and a new means of written expression known as "automatic writing." Breton recalls this strangely spontaneous incident as the inspiration to describe, in his first manifesto of Surrealism, a series of writing methods and techniques for resisting an artificially ordered universe. Automatic writing, he recalls, was produced by the brief expression, "a man cut in two by the window," and became a point for developing freely associative writing or spontaneous monologue. Because it was a

phrase created by an unconscious dream-like state and part of a socially uninhibited imagination, the form of writing that explored this vision, automatic writing, could be counted on as a form of resistance to the conformity that literary aesthetics were known to produce. In addition, as a form of writing, it could potentially express the kind of socially repressed desires Freud discussed. The exploration of these repressed desires was a key element of Surrealist expression, as it worked to reveal the way an ideologically constructed social reality limited human experience, individual exploration of human desire, and artistic expression.

The features of automatic writing, as described by Breton is his initial manifesto, were that it contain "an extraordinary verve," general emotion, absurd or unusual images, a free associative quality, and spontaneity. His experiments with automatic writing influenced his definition of surrealism, as follows:

> Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express verbally by means of the written word, or in any other manner – the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern. (26)

Unleashing the imagination from the control of social mores was a major concern for Surrealists who saw the successes of social ideologies all too clearly during their participation in the war. Imagination, revealed by dreams or unconscious thought, became the window of opportunity to examine what might be thinkable before thinking became conquered by social habit. The production of the absurd image, often referred to as the "marvelous," was a favorite form of disrupting logical views of the world.

Both André Breton and Louis Aragon, founding members of the surrealist movement, participated in the First World War, a war where an estimated two and one half million soldiers were killed in France. It is no wonder, then, that surrealists were preoccupied with death and violence, or that Breton would declare his maxim that "beauty will be convulsive or will not be at all." Convulsive beauty was a unique way of describing a general sort of aesthetics of the abject. Although it was transgressive in terms of challenging traditional ideas about beauty and aesthetics through depictions of transgressive sexuality, convulsive beauty was, initially, rooted in the war experiences. The war itself offered soldiers an absurd form of experience in which, as Graham observes, the light of day would obscure the landscape of bodies that lay between trenches, while night would create a clearer impression of this reality. Graham's analogical observation resembles the marvelous in that it assembles two seemingly unlikely comparisons. Convulsive beauty is rooted in the way that the mind can reside in two different worlds at the same time. The term "convulsive" is developed in part as a recognition of the shock, disorientation, and hysteria exhibited by many of the soldiers Breton treated. Foster documents the impact some of these patients made on Breton:

> In 1916 Andre Breton was an assistant in a neuropsychiatric clinic at Saint-Dizier. There he tended a soldier who believed the war was a fake, with the wounded made up cosmetically and the dead on loan from medical schools...here was a figure shocked into another reality that was also somehow a critique of this reality. (xi)

This patient was able to co-exist in two worlds simultaneously– the world of the war

and the world that critiqued the social forces that made it possible to experience the war in the first place. Beauty, for Breton, did not lie in traditional aesthetics. The point of art in surrealism was to reveal the convulsive truth about social existence just as night revealed the darkest truth about the deadly images of No Mans Land for Graham. The war created a real sense of discrepancy between purported reality and experienced reality in the larger European imagination as well.

Paul Fussell examines the way that the horrifying experiences of soldiers were couched in a rhetoric of progress as newspaper reports portrayed trench fighting as a pastoral event: "Now and then we heard the brisk note of a machine gun, which sounds like a boy rasping a stick along palings or the rattle which policeman carried in mid-Victorian days" (88). This particular newspaper report rhetorically constructs the image of this war in harmless, pastoral terms so that the sound of a machine gun does not remind one of death or the stench of corpses, but instead, a carefree mid-Victorian day. For some soldiers who experienced the war, such accounts functioned much like a disruptive analogy since there was no way that the pastoral resembled the barrenness of No Mans Land. The forced existence of these realities actually calls attention to the bizarre nature of technological warfare and the bankrupt notion of national progress. Naturally, the purpose of such accounts was to keep alive the public faith in the progress of the war. For the surrealist, though, such accounts became a major impetus for resisting any notion of progress and for critiquing all social institutions that were used to justify the war: nation, church, and family. For instance, what the surrealists saw in the early twentieth century was a destructive bourgeois society developing in ways so that even human experience--both bodily

and mentally--was reduced to the realm of disposable commodities during the war.

While convulsive beauty works to shock its viewers into another reality, the marvelous image functions to "spark" a moment of illumination due to its contradictory nature. In other words, the hidden nature of one of its terms, the difficulty of its analogical resemblance, opens up a space for unprecedented knowledge. The reader or viewer becomes an active participant in the creation of meaning since "the two terms of the image are not deduced one from the other by the mind or for the specific purpose of producing the spark" (Breton 37). Instead, "reason's role" becomes "limited to taking note of, and appreciating, the luminous phenomenon" (37). As Breton imagines, it is like a "lightening filled night: day compared to it is night" (38). In fact, the descriptive similarities of Breton's marvelous image and Walter Benjamin's description of the dialectal image are quite remarkable. For Benjamin, such an image is "dialectics at a standstill." Of course Benjamin is interested in the image in terms of historical materialism. He writes: "...it isn't that the past casts its light on the present or the present casts its light on the past: rather an image is that in which the Then and Now come into constellation like a flash of lightening" (49). For both Breton and Benjamin, the potential of an image carrying the seed of disruptive analogy is that it illuminates a place in the mind for understanding society in new ways. In spite of the socially radical methods for halting seemingly self-evident truths, many members of the avant-garde expressed a certain level of anxiety toward women and questions about gender and sexuality as well.

Given their critique of social institutions like marriage and family, it is not surprising that the surrealists embraced the gender ambiguity inherent in the image of

the new woman. A figure like Nancy Cunard certainly embodies the major characteristics of the new woman. She appears as both man and woman in her dress and in her role as publisher. The Surrealist movement was notorious for its challenges to the social conviction that consider gender to be a fixed category. Breton's audacious statement, "I wish that I could change my sex as often as I change my shirt," reflects the general desire of the surrealist to breakdown such fixed binaries. It also reflects a desire expressed by surrealist men to actually *be* women. Examples of such desires can also be found in the instances of Marcel Duchamp's cross-dressing transformation into Rrose Sélavy.[12] These attitudes toward women are different from those of futurism in that, instead of scorn, they reveal a certain level of admiration for women. However, some of this admiration was based on the belief that women were somehow inherently less likely to become socialized and therefore closer to the brink of a more "natural" world.

The figure of the new woman certainly drew formerly unthinkable analogical resemblances between "man" and "woman." Although Cunard, who was a participant in the Surrealist movement, often used her body to make political statements by drawing together the socially fixed categories of man/woman and England/Africa. While her "new woman" attire and behavior often worked to produce a kind of androgyny, many historical descriptions of her focus on the plethora of African bracelets that she often wore in abundance. The presentation of her body was meant to blur definitions of both man and woman, Europe and Africa. But what are we to make of Cunard's love of African masks and accumulation of bracelets? It is a

[12] The name Rrose Sélavy is a pun on the phrase "Eros, c'est la vie." ("Love is life." The indomitable power of desire, or passion, was, of course, one of the central themes in many surrealist works.

questionable appropriation of another culture. One must question the way that drawing such socially challenging visual analogies also affirms ideas about a "more natural" or "more primitive" art.

The same question applies to the appropriation of the feminine as a more natural gender. As many critics attest, even though Breton embraced radical cultural practices, his attitudes toward gender and sexual difference are somewhat anxious and contradictory. Breton's *Autoportrait*, a 1938 photomontage, plays with the possibility that his own mind contains both genders. The point of any surrealist activity that foregrounds and calls into question such seemingly contradictory concepts as "man" and "woman" was, of course, to liberate conscious thought and unconscious desire. This particular photomontage bears the inscription, "l'ecriture automatique," a reference to the surrealist activity of automatic writing, an activity introduced for the purpose of releasing repressed thoughts and desires. In this collage-like portrait, Breton's figure, dressed in a formal, respectable suit and tie, is foregrounded against the image of a woman who mimics the line of Breton's pose while residing behind jail bars. The figures double one another in a poised position and, given the context of automatic writing, we can deduce that the woman symbolizes the caged, unconscious "female" thoughts and desires of Breton.[13]

In front of Breton, a microscope sits on a table. Breton stares into the distance as a series of miniature wild horses run from the microscope slide as though to escape study. Breton's dream-like stupor, presumably achieved by the process of automatic

[13] Dickran Tashjian analyzes the double nature of these images in "'Vous pour Moi?': Marcel Duchamp and Transgender Coupling." In this essay, Tashjian suggests that the mimicry positioning of the female figure posed as Breton's "libido" or unconscious underscores a certain androgynous feature to this collage.

writing, enables him to begin to liberate his "feminine" mind. The free thoughts represented by the wild horses have been released from the tyranny of their domination by science and reason—both of which are represented in the microscope.[10] This was, after all, the basis of surrealism—to call attention to the ideologies that coat everyday realities and construct social categories like "man" and "woman." However, as Tashjian suggests, more subtle anxieties toward gender ambiguity can be seen in this particular photomontage. The girl is, afterall, "safely caged" and Breton presents his own body as unambiguously male and heterosexual (38).

The new and strange images brought forward by the technological changes that accompanied the second industrial revolution, brought forward by a massively violent first world war, and brought forward by curious possibilities presented by the new woman certainly influenced the techniques of the avant-garde as its practitioners attempted to unmask the ideologies that saturated everyday experience. It also challenged those women drawn to the avant-garde. Tashjian writes: "The inclination of Breton and others to claim the unconscious as feminine challenged the Surrealist women to defy the ideal Woman, the femme-enfant, by...insisting on their embodied subjectivity, imperfect and perhaps even monstrous..." (39). Although grounded in the oddly conceived analogy or disruptive image, the methods of surrealists began as writing techniques rather than presentations of visual art. Many of these techniques, such as automatic writing, the "marvelous image," assemblage or collage and parody,

[10] In *L'Amour Fou: Photography and Surrealism*, Rosalind Krauss interprets the microscope as symbolic of methods for rendering surrealist vision rather than a symbol of science. Krauss writes: "Breton portrays himself with a microscope, an optical instrument invented to expand normal eyesight, to extend its powers in ways not unlike those associated with the camera itself" (25).

are mentioned in Breton's groundbreaking initial Manifesto of Surrealism. What is not mentioned is the role the women would play in creating new dimensions of surrealist expression.

The avant-garde took advantage of the climate of social change and the way that it fostered analogical thinking to develop methods for attacking social institutions, re-defining the boundaries of culture, and expanding social thought. Rather than simply accentuating the manner by which the avant-garde succeeded to these ends, we should also evaluate how the avant-garde was less successful at "bridging" the old and the new in socially challenging ways. To that end, key questions underlying the examination of avant-garde production in the following chapters include: How did avant-garde literature and art reproduce gender and sexual difference? Did women involved in avant-garde movements express a sense of dissent over ideas that reinforced gender and sexual difference in the avant-garde? In what ways did women influenced by the avant-garde affirm forms of gender, sexual, or cultural difference?

Chapter two of this study addresses these issues with analyses comparing the photography of Wanda Wulz with Mina Loy's poetry. Much of this discussion centers on aspects of dynamism and the drama of objects, futurist methods for disrupting the organization of material space by depicting motion and the interpenetration of planes in art. The chapter focuses primarily on images conveying disproportional exaggerations between objects, juxtapositions of mobility and stasis, and the co-penetration of matter. The discussion of Wulz and Loy's experiments calls attention to the inability of futurist art to disrupt social ideas marginalizing women.

For example, many of Loy's poems question the social values forming the everyday realities of women, and many of these same poems foreground cultural definitions for women by relating them to images of stasis.

Chapter three compares the montage designs of H.D. and Hannah Höch as they complicate notions of gender identity and re-insert women into narratives of the past and/or present. In dada montage, figures of women often assume ineffectual roles in the critique of culture since they are representationally associated with bourgeois social attitudes and mass culture. Such portraits imply that women were mere puppets of much greater social forces. In contrast, the use of montage in the work of H.D. and Hannah Höch imagines women as more active forces in cultural designs.

Chapter four situates the images of hysteria and transgressive sexuality emerging in several of Cahun's manipulated self-portraits and Barnes' narrative *Nightwood* within the context of surrealist ideas about convulsive beauty. Convulsive beauty, deeply influenced by psychological models for understanding human sexuality, was the surrealist method for depicting the relationship between restrictive social mores and shocking psychological regressions that resulted in transgressive behaviors. The psychological models that portrayed women as hysterics more likely to exhibit failed sublimations influence many portraits of convulsive beauty in surrealism. This chapter identifies the way Cahun and Barnes respond to convulsive beauty with a dual gesture characterizing their work. Both of these women simulate images of hysteria and developing portraits of evolving forms of gender and sexual identity.

Finally, chapter five explores the possible uses of the marvelous in the work of Nancy Cunard and Leonora Carrington. Surrealism's marvelous image, a method for inventing an alternative perspective of reality by juxtaposing two unlike images, objects, or ideas, provides a basis for understanding the ways that Cunard and Carrington use themes of magic and alchemy as well as engage in forms of parody. In some early poems by Cunard and short stories by Carrington, the marvelous becomes a means of engaging the fantastical worlds of alchemy and magic within the confinements of mundane, bourgeois settings. In later works such as Cunard's *Parallax* and Carrington's *The Hearing Trumpet*, alternative perspectives rendered by the marvelous develop out of parodies about the roles of social authority and literary tradition.

Each of these chapters relates the challenges facing women writers and artists of the avant-garde. Each chapter also addresses key texts that treat gender and sexual identity in relationship to fixed binaries (past/future, mobility/stagnation, intellectual/consumer, and nature/culture). These discussions explore responses by women writers to the artistic and ideological challenges of the avant-garde. The characteristics of these challenges vary somewhat in each movement, but I find the common challenge to be one where these writers and artists attempt to use the tools of the avant-garde to articulate their own difference from the images of woman acting as, to borrow the language of Luce Irigaray, the "specular image" of man. This is a form of subversion that Judith Butler, when referring to Irigaray's writing, identifies as "critical mimesis." Irigaray alludes to this form of subversion when discussing mimesis and the symbolic order.

Irigaray argues that woman, when understood merely as a reflection of the masculine perspective, as the mirror or specular image of man, functions to reinforce the symbolic order (or, in Irigaray's mind, the logic of sameness). Subverting the specular image, Irigaray insists, involves the process of mimesis:

> To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself—inasmuch as she is on the side of the "perceptible," of "matter"--to "ideas," in particular to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make "visible," by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible...(*TIR* 124).

Such playful repetitions exaggerate the representations of woman within the symbolic order and highlight the socially constructed nature of ideas defining gender and sexual identity. So whether the woman writer or artist articulates these repetitions through recognizable images or through recognizable ideas related in images, the stamp of critical awareness remains.

In examining images of gender and sexuality within the modernist avant-garde, I wish to explore how women writers and artists subvert cultural logic by foregrounding how they are different from what their contemporaries think women are. In other words, I do not argue in this project that some fundamental sexual difference exists between "man" and "woman." Rather, it is my purpose to examine how discourse reinforces binaries implicating difference (man/woman, subject/object, culture/nature, active/passive, identity/other), and how these binaries become

culturally re-constituted in even the culturally radical discourses of the avant-garde. If anything, *Women and the Avant-Garde* suggests that even the most marginal or socially critical discourses never really reside outside culture. For even the modernist avant-garde, in trying to find an a-priori existence or "outside" to culture (a desire articulated in Breton's famous phrase "existence is elsewhere"), remained riddled by many less than radical social values or cultural ideas. And neither do the specific women named in this study belong outside the realm of culture since their resistance to the ideas about "woman" draw from methods of intertextual reference. Such intertextual methods, Ann Rosalind Jones remarks, always demonstrate that " a resistance to culture is always built, at first, of bits and pieces of that culture, however they are disassembled, criticized, and transcended" (380). Given the vast networks that make up a culture, there exists a reality where so many influences exist that not all of them could possibly be counted in a study, nor could all of the varying methods of resistance be counted. It is necessary to remember, then, that the chapter discussions, for the sake of focus, present a limited number of writers, influences, and resistances.

Chapter Two: A Futurist Drama of Objects: Staging Gender, and Sexual Identity in the Photography of Wanda Wulz and Poetry of Mina Loy

> "Sweep the whole field of art clean of all themes and subjects which have been used in the past." (26)
>
> *Manifesto of the Futurist Painters 1910*

> "Synthetic. That is, very brief. To compress into a few minutes, into a few words and gestures, innumerable situations, sensibilities, ideas, sensations, facts and symbols." (132)
>
> "EVERYTHING OF ANY VALUE IS THEATRICAL." (133)
>
> *The Futurist Synthetic Theater*

In spite of their professed disdain for all things passéist, the writings of most futurists tend to reify some of the more traditionally misogynstic figurations of women.[1] Indeed such representations take a variety of guises in futurist rhetoric. Women warrant contempt as a "magnet for sentimental passion" and as a vessel for romantic ideology in "Against Amore and Parliamentarianism."[2] Predisposed to pathological vanity in "Against Feminine Extravagance," women are to be mistrusted for their uncontrollable behavior. Portrayed erotically as a disembodied futurist meal, woman assumes the position of both sexual object and self-sacrificing heroine in *Frozen Flesh*.[3] Granted, many futurist portraits of women are based on objections to the idealization of women and love in romantic poetry – an idealization, I might add,

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[1] Passéism is a word frequently used in a derogatory fashion by futurists. Generally this phrase refers to a sort of guilty pleasure or love of all things having to do with the past. It is also used to describe a sort of traditional bourgeois attitude toward art and life that is grounded in either past social values or respect for social institutions (marriage, family, church, academic, artistic institutions). Many times, however, the word is used to label what was perceived by futurists to be the romantic or sentimental qualities of Victorian, Romantic, or even Symbolist literature and art.

[2] See Against Amore and Parliamentarianism reprinted in *Let's Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings* pp. 81.

[3] For a more full analysis of this phenomenon (the reduction of woman to a piece of flesh used at the disposal of futurist soldiers in their war), see Cinzia Sartini Blum's "Futurist Strategies in Love and War" in *The Other Modernism: F.T. Marinetti's Futurist Fiction of Power* pp. 94-97.

that often limits women's role to that of muse in service to the male poet's imagination. It is also accurate to note that some futurist manifestos reflect an opposition to the limitations placed on women's freedom by social institutions such as marriage.[4] However, in spite of these seemingly liberating gestures, futurist writing often substitutes the reductive representations of women manifest in romantic or domestic ideologies with other oversimplified and sexist renderings: an outlet for sexual energy to be used by the futurist soldier, and an individual that, because of her inferior gender, easily falls prey to the distractions of conspicuous consumption.[5]

Futurism's battle between past and future can be understood as a "battle waged over gendered aesthetics" (Dunn 49). As Cinzia Sartini-Blum argues, the representation of woman, her "metaphorical transfiguration" in futurist discourse becomes the strategy by which many male futurists configure the boundaries of their own war against the past, their struggle to define a utopian future during a time of technological change, and the need to identify a source by which they could sustain the virile and aggressive male identity they fashioned: "Woman, for the futurists, is a twofaced icon. One face is traditional, with static eternal features; it looks backward, toward nature and the past, and symbolizes their fetters. The other is artificial and modern; adulterated by contemporary materialism, it looks to the future, evoking undesirable change" (85). To these ends, Sartini-Blum reasons futurist rhetoric either projects women "as the quintessential, forever unattainable object of desire (to be rejected or assimilated) and as the archenemy of self-expansion (to be destroyed)"

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[4] See F.T. Marinetti's "Marriage and the Family" in *Let's Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings*. For example, Marinetti writes: "We want to destroy not only the ownership of land, but also the ownership of woman" (86). Although he opposes marriage on the basis that it is an enslaving institution, Marinetti advocates other suppressing roles for women within Futurism.

[5] Examples can be found in *Frozen Flesh* and "Against Feminine Extravagance."

(164). But whether figured as an idealization of transcendent beauty with "dreaming tresses" that "mingle with the foliage of forests" or as an erotic idealization of violence and nourishment in futurist war narratives, woman's characterization in romantic or futurist rhetoric serves as a means to establish or confirm a particular set of artistic values and political ideologies (80).

Given the similarly sexist gestures embodied within both rhetorics, a facet of passéism can be found in futurist discourse. Thus, it appears that Futurism's desire to "sweep the whole field of art clean of all themes and subjects which have been used in the past" falls slightly short of the mark (26). Although any passéism marks a conflict between ideology and practice in Futurism, there is a certain productivenerss that can be seen to emerge from the tension between a replication of sexist values and the development of innovative avant-garde techniques that engender critical modes for re-evaluating social reality. In assessing the works of futurist women, investigating this conflict proves to be a valuable basis for inquiring into the degree to which avant-garde methods provided the tools for its own interrogation. To summarize in question form: In the case of Futurism, could the same critically productive techniques used to distort social ideologies and create alternative perceptions of the world become a heuristic, a model that might be deployed in a number of different situations – including the critique of gender? Based on a series of comparisons between the Italian futurist Wanda Wulz and the British expatriate futurist Mina Loy, I contend that the critically productive premises and techniques of this avant-garde movement – the ideas that everything ordinary has tremendous dramatic value and the artistic innovations that compress "innumerable situations,

ideas, sensations" into otherwise depreciated subject matter—made it possible for Futurism's undervalued gender develop a contrapuntal voice (132).[6] Tracing three futurist techniques for dramatizing objects, the development of disproportional exaggerations, the juxtaposition of mobility and stasis, and the co-penetration of matter, I review several of Wulz's photographs and Loy's poems that allow for a number of possible subtle deviations, variations, and refractions from passéist images of women in futurist discourse.

Ultimately there are a variety of women that could complicate our understanding of Futurism through their differences in perspective. Several women come to mind: Valentine Saint-Point who subverts the maternal ideal in "Futurist Manifesto of Lust," Rosa Rosà who attacks representations of the "doll-woman" in futurist writing, and Bendetta Cappa Marinetti whose paintings constitute a small but substantial body of futurist work.[7] The choice of Wulz and Loy is particularly interesting though, for the combination of the two calls forward certain questions about potential limits for reading evidence of critical agency in their work. On the one hand, Loy's vitriolic criticism of sexism is clear and unmistakable. On the other hand, Wulz's use of a visual medium, photography, is less explicit even though it appears to be imbedded with feminist possibility. For these reasons, I use Wulz's photographs as a starting point in the comparative analyses. What is implicitly registered in her photography is explicitly developed in Loy's poetry. Of course the

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[6] In "The Futurist Synthetic Theater" manifesto by F.T. Marinetti, Emilo Settimelli, and Bruno Corra, they contend that the most ordinary of all things, no matter how dull or awkward, could be a great source of theatricality. This idea stems from the premise that all things are invested with some form of dynamism.

[7] See Sartini-Blum's discussion of these women in *The Other Modernism F T Marinetti's Futurist Fiction of Power* pp. 105-111.

question of what either woman absolutely intended cannot be definitively answered, but the subversiveness of the writer or artist under evaluation is only one part of the equation. As Irigaray suggests, "Once imagine that woman imagines and the object loses its fixed, obsessional character" (133). In Irigaray's perspective, to imagine that the woman imagines decenters the locus of power in a given discourse. Thus, the act of reading the work of Wulz and Loy through their engagement with futurist techniques today is just as significant a practice as whatever challenges each woman posed to the avant-garde by imagining their own place within its ideological framework.

The unique ways that Loy and Wulz enter Futurism says much about the reach of the modern avant-garde as well. The modern poet Mina Loy commanded much support for her futurist and avant-garde achievements. In fact, the list of her modern friends and colleagues reflects her wide-spread affiliations among many social and artistic groups: the Italian Futurists, F. T. Marinetti and Giovanni Papini, the expatriates in Paris, Djuna Barnes, Gertrude Stein, Sylvia Beach, Natalie Barney, James Joyce, Adrienne Monnier, Constantin Brancusi, the New York art circles, Marcel DuChamp, William Carlos Williams, Walter Arensberg, Wallace Stevens, and Carl Van Vechten. It is no wonder that in 1921 Ezra Pound hailed Loy, along with Marriane Moore and William Carlos Williams, as one of the great new innovators in modern poetry. Following suit in 1926, Yvor Winters reviewed Loy's work with equal enthusiasm, comparing her in stature to the then major female poet, Emily Dickinson.[8] However, in spite of the fact that Loy's poetic experiments were met with enthusiasm, her poetry is rarely if ever anthologized alongside the likes of Stevens,

[8] See Roger Conover's introduction to *The Lost Lunar Baedecker* pp. xv.

Williams, and Moore, and, until very recently, little scholarly work has been published about her.

In direct contrast to Loy's cosmopolitan ways and long list of famous friends, Wanda Wulz carried on the family business –a portrait studio—in Trieste, Italy. By 1933, approximately six years after Winters' review of Loy, Wulz was invited to participate in one of the few photographic exhibitions whole-heartedly embraced by Italian Futurism. The inventive photographic experiments produced by Wulz received high praise from the self-proclaimed leader of futurism, Marinetti.[9] Shortly after the exhibit, Wulz returned to her business never to foray into the avant-garde spotlight again. Subsequently, Wulz earned a place in modern history as one of the only female futurist photographers. Regardless of this honor, very little has ever been written about her unique adaptations of futurist principles. At first glance, one would be hard pressed to find similarities between the English-born Loy and the Italian-born Wulz. However, this chapter studies the applications of futurist ideas that, once embodied in their work, aid in projecting fresh perspectives for understanding female identity.

Dynamism and the 'Drama of Objects'

In rendering the world as a whirl of energy and infinite complication, futurist art represents the continual flow of absolute motion through cerebral or sensorial stimulation. Whether in the form of "condensed metaphors," "nodes of thought," "compressed analogies," or any other technique that sustains "the analytic, exploratory poles" exercised in the human imagination, futurist art subverts the

[9] For a brief discussion of Wulz's participation in this exhibit, see *Women Artists of Italian Futurism Almost Lost to History* pp. 148.

perspective that reality is a stable and clearly understood whole (Marinetti 99-100). Likewise, any visual depictions that make use of kinetic, tactile, auditory, or emotive energies enable audiences, through the investigation of sensory knowledge, to see the world as part of a dynamic system of life forces. Thus, the main objective of futurist art is to create an experience of "pure sensation" for the audience that contradicts pictorial realism and undermines confidence in bourgeois, conformist social values. Subsequently, any object, image, or perspective symbolizing bourgeois lifestyle becomes immediately labeled "passéist" and is seen in opposition to the active flow of absolute motion defining the futurist aesthetic.

In "Absolute Motion+Relative Motion=Dynamism" (1914), Umberto Boccioni distinguishes absolute motion from relative motion by defining absolute motion as the constant flux and continual expenditure of energy that may not always be visible to the human eye. Absolute motion, as Boccioni describes it, is "the motion which an object has written itself, whether it be at rest or in movement" (150). Relative motion, on the other hand, is merely "a matter of appearance" (150). Using Boccioni's definitions, relative motion stands for energy released through kinetic motions immediately available to humans through visual perception. Representations of absolute motion, however, are what enable people to see the universe as complex and ever-changing. Written before Boccioni's now famous tract, Anton Giulio Bragaglia's early essay on photodynamism ("Futurist Photodynamism" 1911) also establishes that absolute motion is the end achievement for futurist photography. The role of futurist photography, he claims, is to become "the lively invoker of the magnificent dynamic feeling with which the universe incessantly vibrates" (45).

Futurists, he says, "will endeavor to extract not only the aesthetic expression of the motives, but also the inner, sensorial, cerebral and psychic emotions that we feel when an action leaves its superb, unbroken trace" (45).

Although initially images of dynamism were primarily rendered through the visual presentation of what Bragaglia refers to as a "superb, unbroken trace," or the depiction of normally still objects in constant flux, expressions of dynamism expand, in later works, to include other sensorial or intellectual indications of energy. For example, by the early thirties, Marinetti more fully developed principles for portraying what came to be identified as a "drama of objects." Underlying most futurist philosophy is the notion that all objects have an energy or life of their own, and dramatizing objects in one fashion or another is another way to show this. In several of Marinetti's plays, for example, stage props, objects, and sets assume significant roles, sometimes speaking roles, or become major characters. Subsequently, in later manifestos defining futurist photography, Marinetti expounds on ways to dramatize objects in photographic language. Some of these techniques include: "the dramatic disproportions of objects," "the drama of mobile and immobile objects," "amorous or cruel co-penetrations," "transparent or semi-transparent superimposition of people and objects," and "the drama of shadow objects" (Bentivoglio and Zoccoli 148). The co-penetration of objects or images is, of course, one of the more common methods for representing what Boccioni calls "absolute motion." However, the use of large overwhelming shadows cast by still objects in a photograph allude to absolute motion in that the shadows make visual what seems to be a greater, more mysterious energetic force emanating from the object under

scrutiny. In addition, the contrast of mobile and immobile objects can potentially call attention to the contrast of relative and absolute motion. Or, it can contrast the absolute motion of the universe with representations of objects symbolizing the passéist, bourgeois perspective of reality. Put another way, the drama of mobile and immobile objects juxtaposes images of the world as it is falsely apprehended with images of the world as it really is: dynamic flux.

Naturally, Bergson's idea about the universe existing in a state of constant creation is a great influence on futurist notions about dynamism and, subsequently, affects ideas for dramatizing objects as well. Bergson tempers his account of universal flux by explaining why the continual change occurring in the world goes unnoticed in the present: "And it is evident that even the sudden 'mutations' which we now hear of are possible only if a process of incubation, or rather of maturing, is going on throughout a series of generations that do not seem to change" (29). If the evolution of the earth is full of constant mutations and transformations imperceptible to the human eye, then one goal of futurist art is to distort objects to reveal the truth of this dynamism to audiences. In early instances, Futurism exposes the constant "coming-into-being of things" with presentations of objects in motion (90).[11] Specific techniques for demonstrating dynamism through relative motion are later

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[11] This is a phrase made famous by F. T. Marinetti. See "The Birth of a Futurist Aesthetic" in *Let's Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings* pp. 90. The "coming-into-being-of-things" reflects Bergson's idea of a world in constant change. In this manifesto, the phrase is also used to describe the one foundational principle (or really the only "law") in a futurist aesthetic. Using the metaphor of a house that is continually being built, Marinetti portrays the futurist aesthetic as a model for continual regeneration that adapts to difference and change. He writes: "We love only the immense, mobile, and impassioned framework that we can consolidate, always differently, at every moment, according to the ever-changing moods of the winds..." (90). In other words, if an avant-garde movement embraces change as its primary principle then the idea of flexibility is already in place. As I suggest in this chapter, the idea that the futurist aesthetic can incorporate the alternative or marginal futurist voices that interrogate it is a significant aspect in understanding the conditions that made it possible for women's voices to pose a challenge to its sexist rhetoric.

parceled into a myriad of methods for disrupting one's confidence in the integrity of material objects and coherence of perceived reality.

No longer limited to the visual depiction of kinetic motion, futurists experimented with other methods for illustrating mutation. By dramatizing a disproportional presence between two objects, whether in terms of size, focus, or exaggerated features, a futurist artist could reverse the worth of a depreciated object, demonstrate the absolute motion of the universe, or magnify the unnoticed. In the case of Wulz's photography and Loy's poetry, the feminine characteristics of women and dolls are overemphasized in a manner that intensifies the artificiality of bourgeois domesticity. Treating femininity and domesticity as masks reinforcing a sense of stagnancy in an otherwise dynamic world, the images emerging out of Wulz's and Loy's art can be seen as evoking a separation between the mask itself and the women wearing it — and by mask I mean the surface images associated with femininity as seen in mannequins, dolls, wedding rings, female accoutrements, domestic décor, and so forth. The play between mobile and stangnant objects is another method for demonstrating the presence of dynamism. However, the emphasis of difference between mobile and static images implicitly registered in Wulz's *Futurist Breakfast* and explicitly registered in Loy's "Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots" reverses the futurist point of focus by foregrounding stagnant objects (such as virgins and curtains) against dynamism so that the oppressive features of sexual difference are brought to light in a way that does not treat women contemptuously. Finally, the idea that object copenetrations serve as a means to produce theatricality becomes an interesting lens through which to examine how futurist techniques might be combined

with presentations of female sexuality. In the case of copenetrations, the boundaries defining an object are interrupted, thereby undermining one's confidence that images, objects, or bodies can be differentiated from one another in a universally concrete manner. In Wulz's *Cat and I* and Loy's "Human Cylinders," for example, the technique transforms the female body into part animal or machine part in order to create a critical distance from which to view female sexuality. In what follows, I will discuss the methods by which Mina Loy and Wanda Wulz cast a certain drama upon images or objects most often associated with female identity. The drama of objects that unfold in the photographs and poems, the play between disproportional images, objects in a state of mobility or stasis, and copenetrations can be read to represent two views of female identity-- as it is falsely understood and as it could be understood.

Mannequin Images: A Disproportion of Women-Objects to Women

One of Wulz's experimental photographs, a portrait of a young girl, stages the features of feminine identity reinforced through the conventions of photographic portraiture. Playing with these conventions, Wulz produces physical disproportion in the girl's image by exaggerating the girl's position, size and the mannequin likenesses. It appears as though the young girl of the photograph sits for her lady-like portrait, but Wulz dramatizes her facial features by making the girl's face disproportionately larger than the backdrop so that the head seems to lean into the spectator's gaze. Wulz also amplifies the girl's expressions with the addition of color. This particular photo graces the cover of Giovanni Lista's breakthrough study of futurist photography, and it has subsequently elicited comment by recent critics: "The face is cut and pasted on a black support, hair and lips are painted a bronze

yellow, and two pieces of blue-green glass are glued on the irises. With the simplified planimetry of the blown-up features encompassed by the arches of the eyebrows and the chin, the face comes forward with such overbearing assurance it breaks through the frame, as if to challenge the beholder. Lista considers it an early anticipation of Pop spirit; we may also read it as a statement of the self-confidence and daring of the modern woman" (Bentivoglio an Zoccoli 149). This account of Wulz's technique is accurate in as far as it depicts some of the challenges presented to the viewer. Yet, I believe the photograph suggests more.

Qualities of over-exaggeration emphasize the elements of composition in such a leading way that the viewer cannot help but focus on the process of construction developed by the artist. In pasting glass over the girl's eyes, the conventional portrait situation has been transformed by a subtle adaptation of futurist principle: a super-imposition of person and object. The eyes now seem even wider and stare with a perpetually alert gaze. It is as if Wulz had a doll in mind when she created this photomontage, for a doll's eyes are glassy, too brightly colored, and always open. Simply put, a doll's features are always an overstated image of feminine beauty. If this is the image of beauty manufactured by the cultural imagination, then Wulz has interpreted it as a smiling and grotesque façade. This mannequin imagery is repeated in Loy's poetry.

Loy's poem "Three Moments in Paris" (1914) first appears as a study in futurist simultaneity. Taking the reader through one woman's fluid series of conscious experiences bound to three moments in Paris, the poem presents, in poetic form, what Henri Bergson refers to as duration. Duration is Bergson's term that

describes the subjective experience of time through a successive flow of conscious thought. To experience duration is to experience time, not as parceled out and measured in scientific fashion, but as the interpenetration of experience, memory, and knowledge that brings about an intuitive form of intelligence, what Marinetti calls "lightninglike intuition," or a revelation that cuts through the logic of normalcy. Bergson states, "No image can replace the intuition of duration, but many diverse images, borrowed from very different orders of things, may, by the convergence of their action, direct consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to be seized" (27). According to Bergson, the merging of different images and the respective memories associated with those images can render a continuous flow of thought, producing the appropriate conditions for sensing this revelatory intuition. However, in Loy's poem, varied but inter-related images of women as well as related conscious thoughts about female identity emerge in each of the moments. Loy dramatizes certain objects--in particular, a wedding ring and series of dolls-- by giving them an exaggerated focus. As a result, the object, the woman observing it, and the setting appear to be assembled asymmetrically to their surroundings. Object dramatization and simultaneity converge as all the futurist images culminate in the poem's final moment to reveal the speaker's identification in a pattern of mannequin and doll imagery observed in subsequent moments.

The title of the first moment is titled "One O'Clock at Night," and in it the female speaker has fallen asleep during a late night gathering of futurist men discussing "theories of plastic velocity" and "dynamic decomposition" (Lines 9, 32 *LLB* 15-16). She leans drowsily against the shoulder of her futurist lover only to

periodically awaken and eventually contribute to the heated debates. Loy records the stream of conscious thought that captures this woman's self-awareness of the fact that the men in this group fail to take her ideas seriously:

> Beautiful half-hour of being a mere woman
>
> The animal woman
>
> Understanding nothing of man
>
> But mastery and the security of imparted physical heat
>
> Indifferent to cerebral gymnastics
>
> (Lines 23-27 *LLB* 15)

Disgusted by the lack of respect she receives in this social circle, she remarks, sarcastically, "who am I that should criticize your theories of/ plastic velocity" (Lines 31-32 *CP* 15). In this half-hour where she voices her ideas about futurist philosophy, the woman of the poem, presumably Loy herself, comments that she feels the gaze of the futurist men silencing her as they reduce her image to a "mere woman," an "animal," and an idiot. This moment also captures the irony inherent in futurist social rhetoric that espouses women's freedom from social institutions such as marriage and the family, but also relegates women to roles servicing the male futurist or represents women only in terms of their sexuality. This particular experience ends when the woman's lover, speaking for her, announces to everyone that "she is tired" and that they are going home.

In the second moment, "Café du Néant," the speaker sits at a Parisian café observing the social interactions between young couples. Focusing on one particular couple, the speaker watches as a young woman's engagement ring is held up to the candlelight:

Holding your mistress's pricked finger

In the indifferent flame of the taper

Synthetic symbol of LIFE

In this factitious chamber of DEATH
(Lines 51-54 *LLB* 16)

Here she notes the ironic juxtaposition of two incredibly different images for the futurist: the vitality, energy, and movement of the flame against the imprisonment of marriage represented by the ring. Marinetti and other futurists label both marriage and family as prisons, as "hypocritical masquerades," and as institutions that have "masked prostitution at any cost" (85). The speaker seems to be working from the futurist perspective as well in this case, as she notes not only the prison like quality of marriage, but also notes the "synthetic" symbolism in the image of the ring, the flame, and the gesture. In Marinetti's treatise on futurist theatre, he refers to the significance of synthetic symbols: "*Synthetic*. That is, very brief. To compress into a few minutes, into a few words and gestures, innumberable situations, sensibilities, ideas, sensations, facts, and symbols" (132). What Loy creates in this scene is a drama of objects that contrasts the absolute motion of the fire with the domestic stasis presented by the ring. Both symbols, the ring and the flame, call forward a number of associations. The ring, for example, would represent domestic labor, legal prostitution, and servitude for a futurist, while the flame could trigger a number of imagined associations—heat, light, life force, movement. In her observation of the betrothed, Loy notes that this young engaged woman "As usual/Is smiling as bravely/As it is given to her to be brave" (Lines 56-59 *LLB* 16). The key language in this case is the word "usual" which denotes that this particular woman is (as

perhaps more women are) locked in a perpetual smile. In this regard, the fire or life force in the newly engaged woman appears to have gone out since she resembles the stiff and non-changing facial expression of a mannequin. This moment ends with puzzlement in the speaker's mind as she notices the young girl frozen in the "lighting focused precisely upon her" while the means of escape, "cabs outside the door," recede into the background, remaining untouched (Lines 67, 69 *LLB* 17).

In the third moment, "Magasins du Louvre," the speaker observes several women engaged in their daily activities around some shops perhaps located near the Louvre museum. Perhaps remarking about the various images of women that pervade Western culture – the madonnas and nudes projected into artistic masterpieces – or perhaps referring to the dolls hanging in the nearby shop, the speaker states: "All the virgin eyes in the world are made of glass" (Line 70 *LLB* 17). In other words, the images of women that prevail, those same images of women that inform and restrict lived behavior, are as artificial as a doll with glass eyes. This identification is made easier by the fact that Loy immediately lists and describes row after row of dolls hanging in the shop on shelves and in the window "smiling – In a profound silence" (Lines 79-80 *LLB* 17) Directly outside the shop, prostitutes stroll the sidewalk looking for customers. They, too, are described as having mannequin-like characteristics: "And the solicitous mouth of one is straight/The other curved to a static smile" (Lines 93-94 *LLB* 18). The speaker watches as the prostitutes look at the dolls in the window and then back at one another, sharing a sudden glance that the speaker identifies as a flash of recognition.

Playing again on the irony produced from the contrast in the disproportionate

number of dolls to women, Loy questions social definitions for what constitutes appropriate female behavior. For Futurism, participating in the production of energy, kinetic, or sexual, is far more desirable than abiding by the rules of appropriate conduct for girls--the same conduct that would leave them sitting in bourgeois homes like dolls. Thus, a bit of a reversal takes place so that the prostitute's lifestyle, because of their mobility, seems more desirable than the type of woman represented by the dolls. The virgins in this situation, the dolls, are stagnant after all. Yet the juxtposition of these different images, doll and prostitute, also spark something of a Bersonian intuitive revelation in the speaker. The women in this last poetic moment (shop-keeper, doll, prostitute, speaker/futurist-identified woman) all retain traces of the mannequin or doll-like image. In the first moment presented by Loy's poem, the futurist men treat the speaker as though she were a little girl doll, and this is reflected in the way that she is seen: sleeping in her father's lap, as a child whose ideas must be condescended to, someone who must be taken to bed by her parent. The soon to be married woman of the second moment sits frozen and smiling like a mannequin under store lights. Finally, the actual dolls and the prostitutes also smile in an artificial and disturbing manner. In each moment, a woman finds herself, willing or not, as an object existing for the viewing pleasure of men. In this respect, the discovery of the speaker rushes through the various moments developed out of duration or simultaneity. Loy adapts this futurist technique along with others such as synthetic symbolism and dramatizing objects to project a critical view of patriarchal culture in both the avant-garde as well as the mainstream.

Staging Gender Inequities: Domesticity, Still Life Images, and Mobile Bodies

Using a method of printing called solarization, Wulz's *Futurist Breakfast* (1932) dramatizes a series of everyday objects and develops new perspectives for viewing them. The grouping of images in futurist art, Marinetti announces, has no restriction: "There are no categories of images, noble or gross or vulgar, eccentric or natural. The intuition that grasps them has no preferences or *partis pris*. Therefore analogical style is absolute master of all matter and its intense life" (94).[10] Thus, the selection of objects in futurist photography and their subsequent analogical value is significant simply because such selections by the artist unleash the imagination of the viewer. In Wulz's photograph the selection of items are made all the more enigmatic and curious by the process of solarization that illuminates them. In fact, the solarization recasts shadow, color, and light so that shapes and forms appear dramatically intensified, and not all of them are clearly recognized by the viewer. In this photograph, from left to right, sits a brush, a crystal dish with a long slender object propped next to it, a bottle with a lid, a container with a lid propped next to it, and a glass of water.

Critics often relate *Futurist Breakfast* to tactilism, the futurist employment of an over-riding tactile element in a work that creates a sensory experience for "seeing" objects. Bentivoglio and Zoccoli characterize *Futurist Breakfast* as a still-life composition that integrates some tactilist elements: "In her only still life, colazione futurista (Futurist Breakfast), she conveys the tactile evidence of the objects; the glass, the bottle with cap, the crystal dish, the unrelated hairbrush, almost raised in air and slightly underlined by soft shadows..." (148). Lista also explains the dramatic

[10] See "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature" in *Let's Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings*

imagery in Wulz's photograph as an interpretation of Marinetti's futurist principles for producing tactilism in visual medium. According to Marinetti, tactilism transports "thought in fingertips" (120). About its translation into photographic art Lista writes, "the language of photography, angled shots, close-ups, transparencies, and juxtapositions of the objects in space reconstruct the aesthetic sensation of the tactile elements of the image" (84). However, the purpose of tactilism, as Marinetti stipulates, is "to achieve tactile harmonies and to contribute indirectly toward the perfection of spiritual communication between human beings through the epidermis" (119). In other words, tactilism is another alternative for apprehending meaning that differs from a process in which one sees an image, connects a word to an image, and then arrives at the meaning of the thing in question. By futurist standards, the image-word-meaning trajectory borrows too heavily on traditional methods for thinking about the external world (thinking through only one sense), and would, therefore, be more likely to reproduce a passéist vision of reality.

Discovering tactile harmonies between objects is another way to develop what Severini identifies as the "expansive action" that wells up when the mind simultaneously comprehends similarity and difference. It is a way to establish what Marinetti describes in "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature" (1912) as a dynamism of thought available through a provocative chain of analogies: "To render successive motions of an object, one must render the chain of analogies that it evokes, each condensed and concentrated into one essential word" (94). For the case of tactilism, it seems, we need only to substitute sensory experience for language so that the tactile qualities of each object produce new associations and relationships.

Essentially futurist tactilism provides a fresh way for categorizing objects according to sensory experience. Marinetti's manifesto about tactilism even outlines ways for categorizing things by touch. His second category classifying touch, for example, groups "slippery, metallic, cool, elastic" as related "marine tactile values" (119). Each quality listed also calls forward a variety of impressions related to swimming in the sea; certain aspects of this experience (swimming) could also, theoretically, be brought about in feeling a sheet of metal.

In *Futurist Breakfast* the solarization process produces new crisp shadows and reflections of light that imply a series of tactile impressions: cold, smooth, glass-like features. However, one must raise the following question: If this photograph is a manifestation of futurist tactilism how does the title reinforce these sensory impressions? Could the label refer to the way that futurist tactilism operates as a sort of nourishment for the brain? Yet the characteristics of solarization also make allusions to all the qualities that define a mirror. How are we to understand the selection of items and their relationship to a mirror? I believe the photograph's title indicates a more unexpected level of irony.

The images in the photo – the brush, bottle, glass, an unidentified container with lid, a crystal dish holding small round objects – resemble items that one might expect to find at a woman's dressing table or in a bathroom. Consequently, there is, at least, a metonymic relationship between the items and the body of a woman. In this respect, it can be read as re-labeling women's toiletries as a futurist meal. Ironically, the association between female accoutrements and (presumably) male nourishment points to a contradiction in futurist rhetoric. In "Against Feminine

Extravagance" (1920), Marinetti portrays women as uncritical passive consumers incapable of controlling their vain urges to showcase fashionable clothing ensembles by changing "toilettes" several times a day. In Marinetti's mind, female vanity, when coupled with commodity markets, distances men and women from experiencing one another on a tactile/other sensory level: "It is even harder and harder to find males capable of taking and *tasting* a beautiful woman without worrying about the *side dish* and the touch of fabrics, shimmerings and colors" (qtd. in Sartini-Blum 87). It is difficult not to notice the sexism of his statement as he reduces woman to a meal. Curiously, her fashion accessories become the side dish that distracts the eater. Could Wulz be responding to such bizarre analogies in *Futurist Breakfast*? Certainly no one can say for certain. However, it is clear that the hypocritical aspect to Marinetti's critique of female fashion lies in the fact that he sees commodity fetishism as oppressive – not because it reinforces the objectification of women, but because such fetishism interferes with man's ability to more readily take her for his viewing or physical pleasure. To put it another way: Marinetti does not protest that women are objectified, but rather how they are objectified. (Who's passéist now?)

If this photo can be interpreted as illuminating sexual difference in futurist rhetoric, then it is not a stretch to generate another reading based on a gendered division of labor at the domestic level. In this case, we should look again at the way the objects are laid out spatially. A glass of water, a crystal dish, and a shadowy utensil propped against it. On a basic level of spatial forms, the composition resembles, to some degree, items found at the kitchen table during breakfast. Thus, another metonymic connection exists between the dishes and women. Again, this

points to a contradiction in futurist rhetoric. Futurists ridiculed family life and marriage as "prehistoric," but also never advocated shared domestic labor. Rather, Futurism (at least theoretically anyway) set out to dismantle the culture of domesticity altogether. The problem with this rhetoric, as Loy would articulate in "The Ineffectual Marriage, or The Insipid Narrative of Gina and Miovanni" (1915), is that someone still has to do the household chores since people, avant-garde or not, continue to live in homes.

Loy's poem is a poetic satire of her affair with futurist, Giovanni Papini. In the poem, Miovanni gazes "out of his library window Gina from the kitchen window From among his pots and pans" (Lines 12-13 *LLB* 36). Loy, playing with the division of labor as it is represented in the division of household space, satirizes the male futurist's hypocrisy when later, Gina calls "Would it be fitting for you to tell the time for supper Pooh said Miovanni I am outside time and space" (Lines 42-45 *CP* 37). Obviously, Loy demonstrates an awareness of the irony in the fact that much of the avant-garde was made up with members of the middle-class. Her presentation of domestic life in a futurist household certainly reveals many bourgeois trappings. The fact that Miovanni has his own library seems particularly ironic since most futurist rhetoric potrays both domestic space and libraries as passéist. And if Miovanni indulges in his own sense of intellectual vanity, then the futurist male has little room to criticize female vanity. At any rate, Mina is reduced to performing household chores, while Miovanni contemplates time and space. As well, Wulz's images may seem to suggest that women's presence is felt only at a distance, their labor devoured by others.

Perhaps one more reading for *Futurist Breakfast* should be entertained here. If indeed the photograph draws on the notion of a futurist web of analogies, then a starting analogy might be as follows: Futurism is to women as breakfast is to toiletries. Both Futurism and breakfast create mobile bodies by producing energy and sustaining life, while women and domesticity remain immobile. Ironically, Futurism and breakast depend upon women and domestic life. In the end, it does seems to be an anology about nourishment. In the latter part of the analogy, both are items consumed (one literally, the other figuratively) and both items can be used for some form of sustenance. It is, however, difficult to find a manageable relationship in this futurist contradiction--although Loy and Wulz seem to manage it as they adapt futurist principles to articulate their visions. Within a futurist sensibility, though, the best nourishment is that which feeds the imagination. As commentary on the different gender experiences, the images evoke a series of stark disparities between the number of desirable, energetic, and active roles available to men versus those available to women. Packed with "analogical, narrative, or anthropomorphic allusions," *Futurist Breakfast* embodies expansive action in a cerebral way (Lista 83). However, it can also be understood for its use of tactilism. In every case, it meets the basic function and criteria for defining dynamism in the futurist aesthetic: "By translating the infrasensorial and metaperceptive dimensions for the first time, by transfixing the transience or invisibility of interaction between matter and energy, thereby revealing the unconscious dimension of the gaze, photography seemed to penetrate the very mystery of life. In effect, it created a new visual code, a system of signs for which futurism intended to provide an aesthetic interpretation in line with the rhythms of the

modern world and the cadences of endless cycles that cause the continual mutation of everything" (Lista 10). Because of the enigmatic features in *Futurist Breakfast*, the interpretive mutation continually turns.

Loy's poem "Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots" adds theatricality to a still life scene using futurist techniques for representing mobile and immobile images. According to Carolyn Burke, the poem probes "the emotions not of prostitutes but their near relations, the marriageable young women of the Italian middle classes" (191). The prevailing image of the poem is that of women locked inside houses staring through the curtains of their window. In Loy's presentation, these women are literally and figuratively "virgins for sale" (Line 33 *LLB* 22). The girls, curtains, and probably the rest of the furnishings in the room are depicted with about the same amount of energy, conveying their role together in a type of still life scene. Staring motionlessly, they remind one of mannequins displaying their wares to the external world. Obviously a poem such as this one points to the hypocrisy inherent in attaching value to the virginal status of middle class girls without dowries since, like the prostitutes that are often admonished, they are purchasable commodities. Perhaps one of the more striking features of this poem is the way in which Loy inspects this aspect of patriarchal culture. Juxtaposing images of the enclosed domestic space with the continual flow of the street traffic outside.

Virgins without dots

Stare beyond probability

See the men pass

Their hats are not ours

We take a walk

They are going somewhere

And they may look everywhere

Men's eyes look into things

Our eyes look out

(Lines 5-13 *LLB* 21)

Implicit in the contrast between mobile and immobile images, between the men of privilege and the women without hope is a critique of the futurist hypocrisy that enables a "scorn for women" based on their association with bourgeois domesticity. In "Marriage and Family," for example, Marinetti criticizes the bourgeois social values that oppress women while also rebuking the passive and ineffectual characteristics of women generally. This is, of course, quite ironic since men do not have to face the same consequences should they decide to venture into the more mobile modern lifestyle.

Futurism's key image for identifying passéist and bourgeois lifestyles is that of death, stagnation, and decay.[12] In this respect, Loy's critique of marriage is consistent with other futurists. She portrays the interior space of the house in which these women live as a sort of vacuous mausoleum-like chamber that has somehow stopped the flow of time altogether.

A great deal of ourselves

We offer to the mirror

Something less to the confessional

[12] The image of corpse-like decay often identifies bourgeois social values in futurist rhetoric. "Manifesto of Futurist Painters 1910" contains phrases such as "antiquated incrustations" and "archeologists with their chronic necrophilia" to devalue the love of all things past. See P. 26 in *The Documents of 20th-Century Art*, edited by Umbro Apollonio.

The rest To Time

There is so much Time

Everything is full of it

Such a long time
(Lines 14-20 *LLB* 21)

Their experience is that of anti-duration in Bergsonian terms because the virgins simply have no contact with the outside world. They do not have enough in memories, experiences, or knowledge to develop a sense of simultaneity. As a result, they have nothing to offer the priest in confession and even less to offer time (duration). In a sense, then, the juxtaposition of dynamism and stasis operates to ironically underline the extent to which gender differences widen in the context of the avant-garde since women continue to feel relegated to a limited domestic lifestyle while urban expansion and artistic experimentalism happens around them.

Morphing Bodies: Futurist Copenetrations and Female Sexuality

One of Wulz's more famous photographs, a self-portrait entitled *Cat and I* (1932), incorporates the principle of copenetration in a way that dispels passéist notions that female bodies are a weaker version of the more aggressive male form. In this photograph, Wulz superimposes her own image with that of a cat. In the lower quadrant of the photograph, the actual furry body of the cat, although somewhat blurred, remains intact and gives the illusion that a disproportionately larger human-cat head rests on top of the cat's form. The fuzzy lightly colored fur covering its chest can be clearly seen along with a white paw stretched forward in the lower right portion of the frame. An outline of the cat's slightly arched back, although faded, can

be seen behind the cat-woman's head. Based on the outline of the body, it appears as though the cat could be stalking prey, crouched down and ready to pounce. In the face, however, we see many elements of the Wulz's head and face that can easily be identified: hair, lips, eyes, and forehead. The cat's nose, long whiskers, eyebrows, and one eye are superimposed onto the face, and the animal's eye glowers in dramatic fashion.

In keeping with the tenets of futurist photography, Wulz takes advantage of superimposing images to display the copenetration of matter, identity, and behavioral personality. The personal characteristics Wulz seems to declare for herself in this portrait parallel that of the cat: independent, self-confident, stealthy, sensual, playful, agile, powerful, aggressive, and, above all, soon to be on the move. Even though these are the personality traits most often reserved to portray the futurist man, Wulz manages to claim them for herself in a subtle and unassuming way. Perhaps more significant is the fact that the sensual aspects of the photograph, when combined with the intense focus and flirtatious expression of the woman, make this figure into an image of female sexuality. One, I might add, that occupies a very different place in the futurist imagination. The cat-woman of this portrait does not appear as a sexual object since she is not an example of the futurist "dish," a woman that sacrifices her sexuality for the advancement of futurist men. Nor is she a domestic mannequin. Instead, she appears to be the active agent of her own desires as her sexuality materializes through a feline form recognized for its independence. In a sense, then, the fusion of these two personalities produces the critical distance necessary for re-evaluating what constitutes female sexuality. Loy performs a similar move in her

poem, "Human Cylinders."

Loy's poem "Human Cylinders" operates on a body as machine metaphor that fuses human traits and machine parts. To summarize the figurative comparison: just as a cylinder produces and disseminates energy within a machine engine, so is the human body an instrument of sexual libido that makes the human race "go." This metaphor drives the literal situation of the poem: two people having sex and creating a child. Loy depicts the encounter as a sex for sex's sake, and she uses language such as "enervating," "automaton," and "indistinctness" in a way that empties the experience of any sacred, religious, sentimental, or romantic purpose (*LLB* 40). In this regard, she follows Valentine Saint Point's dictum: "WE MUST STRIP LUST OF ALL THE SENTIMENTAL VEILS THAT DISFIGURE IT" (73). Saint Point argues that sexuality, in particular desire, must be understood "without moral preconceptions and as an essential part of life's dynamism" (70). Loy's presentation of sex falls in line with this argument. Stripping the emotion and sentimentality from her subjects, Loy foregrounds machine bodies against a background of ineffective religious beliefs.

During the course of this poem, what Loy seems to suggest is that human bodies are simply the force of their collective sexual drives and are not driven by the presence of a religious soul. As human cylinders, the couple in the poem strips any sense of religious sacredness from the act of conception. Her human cylinders talk "without communion" and produce a "little whining beast" instead of a bouncing baby (Lines 7, 31 *LLB* 40-41). In fact, her representation of sex flies in the face of any logic, religious or romantic, that assumes sex fulfills some higher purpose.

Rather, Loy suggests that human sexuality has no unique role to fill; her couple, likened to machine parts, is not naturally capable of having any real emotion toward one another either. The implied statement of the poem is that what we know about human bodies and sexuality has been tainted by ideological constructions; for when seen as copenetrated by a machine part, the body can be understood as a force of energy, motion, and lust that challenges the maternal ideal. Thus, in order to divorce "moral preconceptions" about sex from gendered bodies, drastic reformulations must occur. For futurists Wulz and Loy, disengaging the female body from ideas about appropriate feminine sexual behavior means transforming the female body through the copenetration of matter.

The futurist drama of objects made apparent through this brief sampling of works by Wulz and Loy expands our understanding of modernist avant-garde practices. Bürger's main criterion for defining the avant-garde, for example, rests on whether or not a particular movement defines artistic practices that criticize art as a social institution. This, he contends, is part of a process by which the avant-garde questions not only the past, those art "schools that preceded it," but also the self and the present--the role of avant-garde art to resist affirming institutional practices in its time (22). With this in mind, it is significant to note that Bürger does not laud the politics of Futurism or even consider it to be very self-critical. Yet the application of Bürger's main criterion works more effectively when one begins to weigh the role women futurists play in Futurism's own self-critique. As with other avant-garde movements, Futurism opens up radical possibilities in proclaiming that everything has artistic drama, no matter how ordinary or devalued it might appear by social

definition. To these ends, the experiments of Wulz and Loy can be seen to expand the imagined topos of futurist rhetoric, an expansion that includes a self-critical stance about gender and sexual difference made possible through alterations to futurist representations of domesticity and the assumed ordinariness of the feminine imagination.

Chapter Three: Montage Principle and Feminist Possibility in H.D.'s Flower Poems and Hannah Höch's Photomontage

"The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are seen, not as they are perceived and they are known. The technique of art is to make things 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and duration of perception."[1]

Victor Shklovsky, *Art as Technique*

To increase the amount of time it takes for an audience to perceive an object, image, or idea, the artist must strive to confound. Shklovsky's remark about the technical practice of art, that it should join social purpose in fostering new perspectives of reality, represents a fundamental premise underlying almost every adaptation of montage method. This premise is that design should expand what is thinkable, and bewilderment is the catalyst for new syntheses of meaning. The desired outcome for audience confusion, then, is an interruption in traditional modes for apprehending the external world, a process also known, through the work of Russian formalists such as Shklovsky, as defamiliarization. This chapter explores some possibilities for applying the defamiliarization principle to montage designs formulated by women experimenting in avant-garde art. More specifically said, this chapter's analyses of several literary and visual compositions by the American poet H.D. and German visual artist Hannah Höch illustrate different adaptations of montage techniques resulting in artistic designs that estrange audiences from conventional representations of femininity.

The two figures for discussion in this chapter, the American ex-patriot H.D. and the German dadaist Höch, are separated by differences in nationality, language,

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[1] See Victor Shklovsky's essay, "Art as Technique," reprinted in *Modern Literary Theory* P.50

and artistic medium. These two women never shared the same salon society, never participated in the same avant-garde circle, and likely knew little, if anything at all, about one another's work. Yet some striking similarities in both artistic strategy and purpose exist between them. It stands to reason, then, that a chapter like this one should trace the dispersion and variation of montage methods among the modernist avant-garde. This approach seems particularly appropriate if one remembers a few key historical facts about montage. Montage method and theory, although often attributed to the dadaist movement, is not exclusive to Dadaism. Its roots can be seen in a variety of earlier movements including the visual designs of Cubism and Futurism, the theories of Russian structuralists, and also in the later "intellectual montage" of film directors such as Sergei Eisenstein.[2] Another point to consider is that dada circles were, in fact, loose conglomerations of artists spread over various European countries. Tristan Tzara, for example, spent time in France, while Raoul Housman worked out of the famous Berlin group. (In addition, there simply wasn't the same kind of authoritative leadership one usually finds in figures such as Marinetti or Breton.) Finally, most women never really gained access to dada circles. (Höch is an exception in this matter.)

Montage: Principle and Method

Generally speaking, montage refers to a method in which one juxtaposes and contrasts various fragments - media advertisements, photographs, images, words,

[2] The ideas of the Russian structuralists influenced film as well. Laura Marcus characterizes Eisenstein's theory of montage as "intellectual montage," or "thought made visible" (102). This idea can be connected to Shklovsky's notion that art is to "impart the sensation of things as they are seen, not as they are perceived and they are known" (50).

objects, etc.-- in order to force new modes for apprehending relationships among the assembled items. The goal of avant-garde montage design is the transformation of perceptual sense in the audience through the process of defamilarization, or what Bertolt Brecht refers to as the "V-Effect" (Verfremdungs-effekt). Often translated as the "Alienation-effect," the V-effect operates by a process of estrangement from and re-orientation toward an idea or meaning that would normally be taken for granted in the minds of the audience. Brecht explains, "To see one's mother as a man's wife needs a V-effect; this is provided, for example, when one acquires a stepfather" (Willet 179). The step-father example Brecht uses is particularly appropriate for discussing montage because transforming the perception of one's mother requires emotional detachment and critical observation from a distance. Using the basic principle of montage, the juxtaposition of two contradictory elements, the disjuncture that occurs in Brecht's example derives from a montage-like substitution for one element (the original father) within a familiar scene of reality (home) by another element (step-father). In representationally providing audiences with unexpected juxtapositions, variations, or disjunctures between images and their corresponding meanings, montage designs forge new syntheses that give audiences a simultaneous sense of density and depth within a singular vision. (After all, if "mother" can mean "wife," it can also conjure up many other associations such as sexual being etc.) Montage, then, is a composition of newly recognized relationships that motivate, in Benjamin's words, "intervals of reflection" produced through "distances between the most intensively exoteric, essential parts of the work" (43). In other words, montage and its defamilarizing effects sustain deep critical reflection upon the seemingly

obvious. It highlights what Edmund Husserl describes as "the perceived as perceived" and, in doing so, lays forth that perception, definition, and meaning are contingent upon social circumstances (216). Although most commonly understood as an artistic method developed in dadaist circles, montage, in principle and form, can be seen emerging out of earlier literary and visual art movements.

Disruptive juxtapositions, defamliarizing effects, and the engagement of audience imagination variations of these elements abound in movements ranging from Cubism, Futurism, Imagism, film theory, and German philosophy. Even the poetry of Charles Baudelaire, particularly *Flowers of Evil* (*Fleurs du Mal*), subverts conventional notions of beauty by manipulating the series of associations most closely tied to images of beauty. Flowers, for example, are traditionally perceived as a symbol of Spring in which one might find a variety of connotations for innocence, hopefulness, bright colors, and sensual fragrances. In Baudelaire's work, they are re-imagined as evil and become re-conceived, by association, as depressing, dark and putrid. In emphasizing the contrapuntal, a leveling effect takes place so that the privilege of or preference for the one over the other becomes more difficult.

Cubism works along similar lines in that cubist techniques for altering visual perspective so that what was formerly considered background space is brought into the foreground. This technique implies a sense of density compressed in what appears to be a single flat plane. Guillaume Apollinaire praises Picasso's vision for portraying the multiple facets of what appears to be simple objects in his essay "Picasso" (1905). Apollinaire comments: "Representing planes to denote volumes, Picasso gives an enumeration so complete and so decisive of the various elements

which make up the object, that these do not take the shape of the object, thanks to the effort of the spectator, who is forced to se all the elements simultaneously just because of the way they are arranged" (118). As in the case of montage design, cubism, as Apollonaire defines it, creates a new perceptual sense because it demands an audience work through varied perspectives of the object in question.

In "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature" (1912), Marinetti declares "analogy is nothing more than the deep love that assembles distant, seemingly diverse and hostile things" (93). He goes on to proclaim that poetics ought to operate in the mode of extended analogy, as "an uninterrupted sequence of new images" (93). This, he implies, sustains the momentum of the reader's imagination because the expanded associational field made available from the new poetry. His reasoning is that "the broader their affinities, the longer will images keep their power to amaze" (93). Much of what Marinetti sets forth in this manifesto resembles elements of montage. When Marinetti advocates the destruction of a hierarchy among the parts of speech, he mirrors the impulse in cubism for leveling things to one plane and in the avant-garde generally for eliminating a model in which conventional order is deemed logical or preferable. The poetics Marinetti discusses, however, anticipates montage in that the associational structure of images – their juxtaposition and multiple affinities – suggests a type of defamiliarization concocted through what seems to be an arbitrary relationship between fragments. The perceived disjunctures within the extended chain of images would, like Breton's marvelous image, create a new method for viewing reality. Marinetti explains: "To catch and gather whatever is most fugitive and ungraspable in matter, one must shape *strict nets of images or analogies*.

to be cast into the mysterious sea of phenomenon" (93). Futurism integrates proto-montage principles within ideas about unexpected analogies and associational possibilities. This is, after all, the basic drive behind techniques for arranging and layering images or objects next to one another in a visual field: to divorce the assumed meaning from the image by altering the way the image and its relationship to other images is perceived. In effect, the technique urges the spectator to see, in a single image or object, the dense layers of affinities captured by a futurist net full of analogies.

Ezra Pound's definition of imagism as the presentation of "an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" also conveys the notion that an image or object, when studied under the right light, reveals multiple layers of meaning. In his manifesto, "A Few Don'ts By An Imagiste" (1913), Pound advances imagism as a writing style that compels readers to connect with layers of connotative meaning: "It is the presentation of such a 'complex' instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sudden sense of growth" (356). A comparable term for Pound's imagism is Freud's condensation where a complex set of images or associations are compressed into a single image.[2] The freedom Pound relates to imagism works by same premise that Futurism's expanded vision of affinities does. It is an imaginative exercise that stems from unpacking and deciphering the meaning of the image by contrasting it to the associated parts that comprise its complexity. No longer is the image simply an image to be understood at face value in poetry; it is now a cluster of meanings, proof that perceptual ability necessitates meaning so that material objects, images, and

[2] See Freud's *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*.

poetry can be understood as a projection of memory, desire, symbolic knowledge, and new possibility. Echoing Pound's account of imagist poetry as the embodiment of simultaneous experience, Blaise Cendrars states, "poetry is mind into matter" (156). That is, poetry is a way of imagining the world in depth so that a single image conveys more than what exists in surface appearance; perhaps it conveys even more than the conglomeration of the writer's experiences shaping the poem since an interpretation also draws from the experiences that shape the perceptual sense of the reader. Pierre Reverdy's essay, "The Image" (1918), emphasizes the creative capacity inherent in imagist thinking. Reverdy speaks of the image as it generates imaginative capability through the "bringing together" of "two distant realities" (351). Reverdy says, "The more the relations of the two realities brought together are distant and fitting, the stronger the image — the more emotive power and poetic reality it will have" (351). Eisenstein repeats such imagist ideas in his theories about montage when he informs readers that montage technique results in an "emotionally charged narrative" born from the contrast in at least two unrelated elements (296).

In "Montage 1938," Eisenstein formulates an explanation of the principles, methods, techniques, and purposes of montage in film and art. Central to his theory is the distinction between two key terms: Image (*obraz*) and depiction (*izobrazhenie*). Image, according to Eisenstein, stands for the abstract concept that comes to define a material object, whereas depiction is the technique in film direction that brackets the concept and demonstrates that it is as a collection of things, becoming, only through the process of apprehending a series of relationships, the concept. Depiction is a visualizing technique for imagining the object as it exists prior to its attachment to the

concept that defines it. In this particular essay, Eisenstein uses the following example to show the distinction between the two terms:

> Let us take an obvious example: a white circular disc of moderate dimensions with a smooth surface divided around its circumference into sixty equal segments. At every fifth segment a figure is placed in numerical sequence from one to twelve inclusive. At the center of the circle is a spindle to which are attached two freely turning, narrow strips of metal which taper to a point at their unattached ends [...] If, however, this disc is provided with a mechanism which causes the Metal strips to move around the circle at an even rate, then the geometric pattern on its surface acquires a special significance: it is not simply a *depiction* but is now an *image* of time [...] This being so, the depiction and the image that it evokes in our perception are so thoroughly merged that quite special circumstances are needed in order to separate the geometric pattern of the hands on the clock face from the concept of time. (299-300)

What Eisenstein reveals in this example is the way in which associational thinking becomes compressed so that an object seems to stand for a concept in a most self-evident manner. In exposing a series of associated objects constituting the clock -- a disc, sixty marked segments, a spindle, two narrow strips - he illustrates that the object is not one item, but many items. In this respect, Eisenstein draws out each relationship, each link in the chain of associations, that must be made before the clock can be recognized as a clock. The focus of montage design centers on foregrounding

the parts over the whole to interrupt the spectator's desire for correlating the concept (image/*obraz*) with the object in question.

Lazlo Moholy-Nagy presents his own take on the matter in his critiques of pictorialism, a form of photography that, like traditional painting, affirms a comfortable version of reality. Moholy-Nagy asserts that pictorialism only emulates painting that, in turn, reifies the "conceptual image." The conceptual image reproduces the preconceptions that inform one's perspective because it is so easily integrated within an established framework. It is a coherent vision of the world formed out of a reconciliation between the image and an already familiar understanding of things. Moholy-Nagy states: "...the eye together with our intellectual experience, supplements perceived optical phenomena by means of association and formally and spatially creates a conceptual image" (28). On a trajectory similar to montage, Moholy-Nagy's New Vision photography disrupts one's ability to interpret the optical phenomenon in a familiar way.

Within Eisenstein's ideas, montage design develops in three phases: the juxtaposition of varying parts within a depiction or the juxtaposition of different depictions, a recognized separation of the image/concept (*obraz*) from the object or objects, and the creation of a new image/concept. In effect, what happens when an observer encounters montage design is an interruption of compression so that the observer engages in the process of producing meaning rather than simply accepting it. Eisenstein characterizes the process as a perceptual negotiation between artist and audience: "...we shall see that the process occurs in the following manner: a certain image hovers in front of the author's inward eye, an image which for him is an

emotional embodiment of the theme of his work. He is then faced with the task of turning that image into two or three *partial depictions*, which in combination and juxtaposition will evoke in the mind and emotions of the perceiver precisely that initial generalized image which the author saw with his mind's eye" (309). The series of these partial depictions compel the audience to call forward past associations that will make sense of a string of objects. However, the unconventional relationships posited by the juxtaposition of partial depictions oblige the formation of a new idea. Thus, the emphasis in montage process is on fragmentation, defamilarization, imagination, resemblance, and difference.

Husserl's terms, noema and noesis, offer another way to understand the critical apparatus Eisenstein provides. Husserl's phenomenological theory hypothesizes that reality is constructed through the consciousness. Or, more specifically, it is constructed through perceptual sense and therefore derived from acts in which one attributes meaning to objects of the consciousness (the things perceived). Although a gross simplification of Husserl's terms, noema generally refers to the meaning attributed to the object of consciousness (similar to Eisenstein's concept) and noesis is, then, the process by which the consciousness looks for, perceives, and bestows meaning on the object of consciousness. Consciousness, in Husserl's line of thought, assimilates the sensory input it encounters into structures of meaning already available to the consciousness so that order is comprehended. Eisenstein interprets depiction as both technique and theoretical term. As a theoretical term, it is comparable to Husserl's noesis. As technique, it arrests the parts of the chain that leads from the object of consciousness to the meaning

bestowed upon it. That is, it announces the process of perception itself and underscores the "giveness" of meaning.

Husserl names three elements that give rise to a particular meaning: the object, the act of perceiving, and the subject. Because the act of perceiving mediates between the object and the subject, an object of consciousness such as a tree, for example, is inseparable from the perception of what constitutes a tree. Husserl comments, "...we find, as indefeasibly belonging to its essence, the perceived as perceived, to be expressed as 'material thing,' 'plant,' "tree,' 'blossoming;' and so forth" (216). The object of consciousness, then, is "expressed as a material thing," but, in fact, is a concept ("tree") with a variety of concomitant associations that help us define it as that concept. So Husserl makes a distinction between what he deems an "actual object" and the "intentional object." The intentional object is otherwise referred to as the object of the consciousness. This distinction is significant because if the noematic sense of the tree is not based on some true essence imbedded in the actual object, then it can be said that the essence is ascribed to the actual object through noesis. Husserl asks the reader to consider the following scenario in which the concept "tree" outlives the actual object "tree": "The tree simpliciter can burn up, be resolved into its chemical elements, etc. But the sense – the sense *of this* perception, something belonging necessarily to its essence – cannot burn up; it has no chemical elements, no forces, no real properties" (216). There are two significant implications stemming from Husserl's example that should be noted. The first is that essence is constructed through perceptual sense. The second is that once a concept is formed it may last an indefinite amount of time since the concept continues to work

as a sort of framework for defining more objects.

This is particularly significant for avant-garde practitioners who felt, as Shklovsky did, that the human mind comprehends reality through structures of meaning that are continually applied to the world on the basis of habit. So if the concept "tree" is something lasting, then the perceptual sense, the process of perceiving the thing called "tree," can be altered if and when the perceptual process itself becomes interrupted. In other words, if the concept is not based entirely on the essence of the actual object, then it can be changed. One of the key avant-garde methods for interrupting the perceptual process is achieved through montage, the mixing and overlaying of different images or concepts and their related associations. Another way to think about montage technique is to see it as a sort of interfacing between two or more paradigms that would otherwise be understood as mutually exclusive. In turn, the confusion or shock in the observer's inability to make meaning by assimilating information into a readily available, unified, and recognizable paradigm heightens one's sense of the perceptual process itself (Eisenstein's depiction, Husserl's noesis). And, in doing so, underscores a separation between the concept and the actual object it names.

For women practicing in avant-garde experimentalism, montage, as a method, supplies them with a set of critical tools for separating gender-defining concepts such as femininity (and associations relating to femininity such as beauty, passivity, sexual inferiority, hysteria, etc.) from actual objects they are assumed to define (i.e.--material bodies). It is in this fashion that montage techniques aid modern women such as H.D. and Höch, although the combination of montage method and feminist

perspective can be seen in works of the late twentieth-century as well. When considering the feminist theory of Luce Irigaray, for example, it is difficult not to think about the role montage plays in her critique that Western culture posits the masculine subject as the universal subject. *Speculum of the Other Woman*, one of Irigaray's most influential texts, can be understood to advance a critique of the universal subject through montage design: assembling and scrutinizing a variety of fragments and images from well-known texts written by men. The repetition of all the these fragments illuminates a pattern for seeing how the concept "woman," in texts ranging from Plato to Freud, operates as a specular image of man, a reflective image that reifies masculine identity at the expense of effacing images, voices, or figures different from the masculine example. An example of the specular image, for instance, is Freud's assertions that female sex organs are really another version of man's. ("The little girl is therefore a little man...")[3] Thus, any deviations from the image known as male (ie--the male sex organs) would then be perceived in terms of inferiority. This is what Irigaray means when she says that Western discourse is monosexual, which is to say that discourse identifies and affirms only one sexed subject.

What also seems especially consistent with montage design (in addition to emphasizing disjuncture by alienating the concept woman from an object of the consciousness/material bodies working as the specular image), is the way that Irigaray's key metaphor, the speculum, indicates possibilities for imaginative and creative processes to expand perceptual frameworks. Contrasting the specular with the speculum, Irigaray juxtaposes two types of perceptual sense for the same

[3] See Irigaray's discussion of Freud's statement in *Speculum of the Other Woman* P 25-34.

phenomenon. For example, woman as the specular image of man refers to the unified perception of woman as it has been reproduced in Western discourse, whereas the speculum of the other woman refers to the perception of woman as separate from and other than the specular image of man. To unpack the metaphor: in optics, the specular reflection occurs on a flat smooth mirror when light becomes reflected in a predicted pattern. The reflection of light on a curved surface, however, presents several possible patterns or possibilities. Light reflected on a curved surface (as one might find on the surface of a speculum) can bundle to form intense heat and light--or if the surface is imperfectly curved, the reflective light can be dispersed in reflections of varied shape and volume. Playing on a double meaning for speculum, a tool used for female self-examination and a curved mirror, Irigaray suggests new possibilities for female identity through altering the perceptual sense. Just as the reflective surface of a curved mirror can create varying dimensions of light, Irigaray interfaces concepts such as "woman" or "femininity" with new clusters of associations and meanings. In a very basic way, montage achieves the same goal. It disrupts one's expectations, one's ability to predict what they see. In montage, just as in Irigaray's text, what was once self-evident becomes full of unforeseen relationships. As a method, montage alters the perceptual sense of an image object idea by promoting a vision of disjuncture and multiplicity, by adding depth and dimension through relating unrelated affinities and associations. In combining avant-garde method with feminist critique, Irigaray manages to articulate a way for her audience to imagine what could lie beyond the common definitions for women that pervade the symbolic order. H.D. and Höch perform a similar task.

Montage Principle and Flower Imagery in Poems from H.D.'s Sea Garden

Initially heralded simply as a series of imagist poems, *Sea Garden* (1916) has elicited a number of assessments from recent critics. These critics diverge in their interpretations of the poems as well as in what they identify as the fundamental influence molding H.D.'s style. However, most all of them comment, at some point, on a fundamental pattern that runs through this collection: the uses of paradox, dualism, or contradiction in both image and theme. As Rachel Blau Duplessis states: "*Sea Garden* as a title is already oxymoronic for vast/containment or uncontained cultivation, one suggestive of the 'scrutiny of dualisms' which Homans postulates as necessary to establish the poetic voice. In the flower poems repeated throughout the manuscript, H.D. implies an argument with the conventions of depiction. These flowers of the sea gardens are of a harsh surprising beauty, slashed, torn, dashed, yet still triumphant and powerful despite being wounded, hardened, tested by exposure" (12). Thus, Duplessis characterizes H.D.'s incorporation of contradictory elements as part of a rhetorical design that communicates the struggle between desire and independence.

Another critic, Cassandra Laity comments on "the mangled, brittle, yet triumphant sea flowers" as well (48). Laity, however, argues that the contrasting qualities of these flowers derive, not from an inherent tension between desire and independence, but instead from stylistic influences originating in "the 'rare rank flowers' of the Decadents' *fleurs du mal* and from Swinburne's stoic passionately celibate sea gardens" (49). Laity places H.D.'s work within a nexus of poetic and

political strains: Victorian Hellenism, French Decadence, and Modernism. Among these strains, Laity finds transgressive sexual undertones she traces to poets such as Baudelaire and concludes that these poems, because they ironically debase beauty, stand as a rejection of Victorian ideals.

Diana Collecott poses another possibility for interpreting the contradictory features of H.D.'s early poems. Reading the poems for images of androgynous bodies, hermaphroditism, and ambisexuality, Collecott suggests that the "body that emerges from the pages of H.D.'s *Sea Garden* is also upstanding and ungendered" (33). The ambiguous play on gender and sexuality, she claims, can be attributed to the influence of both the Victorian Hellenists and the emerging popularity of Greek culture generally and Sappho more specifically. Further, the images for and allusions to a dually gendered body in this work, Collecott maintains, are an expression of H.D.'s own ambisexuality expressed through references to the Greeks.

Along a similar line of thought, Eileen Gregory also focuses on references to Sappho surfacing in *Sea Garden*. In Gregory's mind, the oxymoronic nature of the flower images – the soft and vulnerable petals metonymically associated with the powerful rocks and sea – are an invocation of Sappho's themes of pain and euphoria that define, for the ancient poet, the bittersweet experiences of eros. This is part of a larger project for to "recover the imagination of goddess-centered Lesbos" (528). The purpose for Sappho's latent presence in the work, Gregory claims, is that it offers H.D. an opportunity to imagine, through Sappho, a female deity or muse to which her own writing responds.

Aside from these perspectives, Susan Stanford Friedman provides three

possible interpretations that account for the enigmatic dualisms present in *Sea Garden*. The first draws on the contrasting features of captivity and flight, themes that Friedman explains demonstrate desires for freeing oneself from the constraint of family and social roles. The next perspective, that the poems are a repudiation of Victorian gender roles, develops through a contrast in images representing "two kinds of womanhood" (57). Finally, Friedman calls these poems "modern pastorals," an ironic combination of pastoral tones and destructive violence that captures, implicitly, the presence of World War I. Friedman writes: "The modern pastorals of *Sea Garden* are poems of flight. The represent her exile from the web of social obligation embedded in conventional feminine norms; from the fatherland and motherland of the social order; and from the traditional division of labor that her parents represented her father, the austere professor and astonomer; her mother, artistically gifted, but 'morbidly self-effacing' and dedicated to the career of her brilliant husband" (56). As with other scholars, Friedman responds to the contradictory elements in H.D.'s poetry with a series of dualisms: father/mother, mathematical/artistic, order/freedom, masculinity/femininity.

In each of the critical accounts I have mentioned, the common point of reference is H.D.'s juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated images: sea/flower, destruction/beauty, mobility/captivity, past/present. Given the fact that such juxtapositions are fundamental in montage method, I find it quite surprising that so many analyses of the *Sea Garden* poems fall short of discussing possible relationships between montage principles and the flower poems. In addition, three of the movements frequently cited as influences on this collection—Decadence, Imagism,

and Modernism —have strong ties to montage principles as well. The purpose of the following discussions about the flower poems is not to label the poems or the poet as imagist, modernist, Victorian, or dadaist, but rather to reveal that H.D.'s poetry— even her earliest poetry —reflects combined strains of montage principles and feminist pre-occupations that, together, suggest a method for establishing new perspectives about what constitutes femininity and sexual identity.

Although most critics do not analyze these early poems in terms of montage principles, I should mention that I am not the first to apply Eisenstein's montage film theory to H.D.'s writing. Charlotte Mandel comments at some length about general corresponding similarities between cinematic technique and the long poems H.D. wrote during the thirties and forties. In later poems such as *Helen of Egypt*, Mandel finds poetic uses for a variety of techniques, including "close intense view of visual detail," "word dissolve," "montage," "the moving camera eye," and "treatment of time and space as segments to be altered at will" (39). Susan Edmunds, on the other hand, specifically connects several aspects of Eisenstein's theory to *Helen in Egypt*. The link between H.D.'s poetry and cinema seems like a natural one since H.D. wrote for the film magazine *Close-Up* and participated in making several experimental films, most notably Kenneth MacPherson's *Borderline*. The reticence to search for facets of montage method in H.D.'s earlier poems can perhaps be explained by the issue of dates. *Sea Garden* was written the year prior to its publication date, 1916, and although dada movements began coalescing in 1916, many of Eisenstein's essays were written and published in the twenties and thirties. In addition, H.D. did not begin her foray into experimental film until the late twenties. However, there are

striking resemblances between descriptions of montage and other modernist movements that pre-date it. We should remember, as well, that many of Eisenstein's ideas about montage draw from an atmosphere conducive to precipitating such ideas. In other words, as the earlier part of this chapter has already established, montage method can be thought of as a parallel formation to or an extension of other ideas and artistic innovations. In light of these points, an analysis of montage principle in the early poems seems appropriate.

Even just a general description of *Sea Garden* clarifies some of its montage qualities. Interspersed in this collection of twenty-seven poems are the five sea flower poems. Each of these poems, "Sea Rose," "Sea Violet," "Sea Lily," Sea Poppies," and "Sea Iris," supplies multiple variations on a similar set of images and themes, adding to *Sea Garden* several cinematic-like montage sequences. Each poem repeats the same basic set of images: rocks, sand, sea, wind, and flower. Although the setting in each poem is nearly identical, individual poems also contain, a different type of flower, varying wind motion and movements of the flower, and shifting perspectives of image size and form that often includes a unique close-up of the flower image that exposes multiple forms and intimate details within its image. Visually speaking, such repetitions and variations emulate those particular montage designs where an artist selects, contrasts, and overlays a divergent series of sizes, shapes, and forms of the same basic image. Basically, within each poem, H.D. uses the same items, but provides a whole new set of connotative meanings comprised from a few repeating changes. At the same time, however, there is a sense of layering from one poem to the next as if each scene, frame, or image dissolves into the

previous one. As a montage technique, the overlaps result in arresting the spectator's process of perception through an exposure to repeated departures in perceptions of the same phenomenon. In addition, each poem conjoins and juxtaposes nodes or clusters of meaning associated with images so that clashing conceptual frameworks, a flower image (feminine, soft, beautiful, smooth, innocent, ephemeral) and a rock image (masculine, hard, scarred, rough, experienced, eternal), call forward and dissolve seemingly oppositional ideas and themes. This approach, under montage principle, disrupts the spectator's impulse to reproduce meanings conventionally ascribed to the image by interrupting its integration into a familiar conceptual framework.

Utilizing the flower image, a traditional symbol for the feminine, H.D. emphasizes multiple perspectives for viewing its form, opening that image (flower) and its related concept (femininity) up to new connotative meanings beyond traditional definitions for femininity and sexuality. In blurring visual and conceptual characteristics associated with femininity and masculinity, H.D. creates, in her flower images, an androgynous context complicating how one perceives female sexuality. Many of the sexual subtexts in the *Sea Garden* poems allude to Sappho's Greece, referring back to a time when erotic experiences with both male and female partners were common.[4] In montaging conceptual paradigms for comprehending femininity, masculinity, as well as past and present sexual practices, H.D. brackets, for audience scrutiny, the passive heterosexual role that became the defining parameters for women's behavior at the turn of the century. Each of the following analyses features a discussion of the stylistic and theoretical montage principles used in the flower poems as well as how those principles complicate traditional frameworks for understanding

[4] See Margaret Williamson's *Sappho's Immortal Daughters* P. 96.

the feminine.

In the literal situation of "Sea Rose," the first of the five flower poems, a wild rose has been caught in the wind and subsequently flung against the beach. H.D. describes this rose as "harsh," "marred," "thin," "meager," "stunted," and "acrid." Yet the poet also bestows a sensual grace upon the movements of the rose in flight, no matter how violent or harsh the force of the wind becomes.

> Rose, harsh rose,
> marred and with stint of petals
> meager flower, thin,
> sparse of leaf,
>
> more precious
> than a wet rose
> on a stem
> you are caught in the drift.
>
> Stunted, with small leaf,
> you are flung on the sand,
> you are lifted
> in the crisp sand
> that drives in the wind.
>
> Can the spice-rose
> Drip such acrid fragrance
> Hardened in a leaf?
>
> (*CP* 5)

In stanza four, for example, the image of the rose mimics the motion of the wind that is both destructive and uplifting. The rose is thrown onto the beach, lifted up, and

then bears the sting of the sand as it is catapulted through the air.

Visually, we are presented with two different forms of the rose image: the harsh rose and the soft rose. Reversing conventional definitions of beauty often associated with the rose, H.D. declares that the harsh rose, "stunted" and "acrid," is "more precious" than "a wet rose/on a stem." The poem bears out this declaration as well. The primary image is that of the experienced weather-worn rose, and its description takes up nearly sixteen lines of the poem. The receding image, on the other hand, is that of the domestic garden-variety rose also referred to as the "spice-rose." In fact, the fragmentary quality of the poem, the way each rose image seems to be taken as a fragment of one context and placed into another one (in this case, the sparsely detailed beach), resembles the selection, cutting, and pasting techniques used in montage. Seeing an item divorced from its normal context and then contrasted to other similarly decontextualized items is part of montage method. In the case of the flower poems, it results in a defamiliarizing effect. This emphasis on disjuncture achieves two things. As stated earlier, montage re-defines the context for understanding an object. Stylistically, it re-defines aesthetic values – what is beautiful in art. A discussion of the former function is the main focus for the following analyses of the flower poems. However briefly, though, it should be mentioned that the flower poems also perform the second function just described. Beauty in "Sea Rose," as symbolized by the rose, is not symmetrical, soft, or pleasurable. Instead, it is irregularly shaped, harsh, and acrid. Also similar to other montage designs, the audience for *Sea Garden* becomes part of the meaning making process. Contrasting these two different roses, H.D. invites the reader to produce,

with only the mention of a few specific features for each image, a number of possible interpretations based on the oppositional nature of their juxtaposition.

Friedman's assessment that the poem presents two different forms of womanhood is a case in point. Although Friedman does not go into great detail on this point, except to say that the sea rose symbolizes H.D.'s "flight from Victorian femininity," one could arrive at the conclusion that the cultivated garden rose stands as a representation of Victorian womanhood and the sea rose as a representation of the modern woman (57). After all, ideals about Victorian womanhood are rendered out of ideologies espousing the importance of appearing visually appealing, chastity, domesticity, the cultivation of manners, and passive behavior. The cultivated rose mirrors these aspects of Victorian womanhood since it brings viewing pleasure, is artificially cultivated, never leaves its domestic space, and must depend upon others to live. The sea rose, much like images of the modern woman, assumes a more active role, merges both masculine and feminine characteristics, and embraces female desire. We know, for example, that the sea rose is worldly and experienced, that it combines characteristics of the feminine (soft, fleshy petals and vulnerability) with the masculine (dry, harsh, brittle leaves and scarred flesh). However, the subtext of the poem also imbues the poem with a sense of the erotic.

Stanza three heightens the visceral dimension of the poem as it embodies a range of sensual experiences: the euphoria of spontaneous flight, the unexpected pressure of being flung onto the sand, the prickly sting of "crisp" sand blown into the soft petals, the whirring of the wind. The motion of the wind and the various synaesthetic qualities combine in this stanza to mirror the throes of passion. The rose,

then, becomes an active participant moving and working with, literally, the wind and, more figuratively, the forces of passion. This characterization makes sense when one considers the value H.D. attributes to the experiences of the sea rose. It is "more precious" for not having been limited in how it experiences sexual pleasure and/or pain. However, of particular interest, are the implied details connoting sexual intimacy. By implied details, I mean the suggestiveness of the intimate, hidden, and unforeseen indentations made by one body, a grain of sand, pressing into another, such as the flower petal. These implied impressions denoted by the "crisp" characteristic of the sand, expose another possible way to see the rose—close-up and in full view of irregularities or, to put it another way, all the smaller visual details that constitute the image as a whole. If, in the case of this poem, the body of the rose is a substitution for the female body, then one may also envision another way to perceive female sexuality as well. In accord with the close-up details of the rose, femininity and female sexuality is not one coherent whole, but a mix of many different impressions, experiences, and possibilities. The argumentative design of this poem, then, appears to say that worldly experiences – social or sexual – produce intense and interesting dimensions in art or in the artist. To summarize then: the contrasting rose images and the superimposition of masculine and feminine characteristics can be read as montage style juxtapositions that emphasize disjuncture and estrange audiences from definitions of beauty associated with Victorian womanhood. The erotic subtext, however, refers to yet another facet of meaning condensed in the rose image.

On some level, each of the flower poems refers to Sappho. The flower image in both Sappho's poetry and Greek culture is a powerful emblem of sensuality. Many

of Sappho's fragments contain recurring references to flowers or garlands of flowers worn as adornments in women's festivals or in preparation for erotic experiences. Also both Sappho's fragments and H.D.'s poems contain undergirding references to the female deity for eros, Aphrodite. In some of Sappho's and H.D.'s poems, these references occur through representations of Aphrodite's flowers such as the rose or violet.

When looking at "Sea Rose," however, it would be difficult to ignore the more obvious references connecting Sappho and H.D. Sappho refers to her poems as roses, a description which would be picked up later by the poet Meleager (100 B.C.). H.D. repeats this characterization of Sappho's poems in *The Wise Sappho*. H.D. writes: "So Sappho must live, roses, but many roses, for tradition has set flower upon flower about her name and would continue to do so though her last line were lost" (68). If the references to roses seem to multiply in this statement it is because H.D. views Sappho's poetic influence to be immortal. In spite of her work being lost, H.D. hints, Sappho's poetic designs (roses) influence subsequent poets and become reproduced in their works. Certainly they impact H.D. since she designs a series of poems named after flowers. However, acknowledging a foremother for women poets is not the only possible reason that H.D. continually alludes to Sappho in *Sea Garden*.

Obviously, another possibility explaining the appeal of Sappho for H.D. is the presentation of female desire in Sappho's poetry. Sappho, like H.D., engaged in sexual relationships with both women and men. While such ambisexuality was not uncommon in ancient Greece, the presentation of a desiring female subject was. As Margaret Williamson has noted, in ancient Greek culture "to desire is masculine, to

be desired is feminine" (29). What is radical about Sappho's work lay in her bold assertions where she expresses intense desire for her beloved. In depicting herself as a desiring subject, Sappho threatens to erode distinctions shoring up social hierarchies that depend upon categories defining masculine and feminine identities. In a similar respect, H.D.'s flower poems depict an active female sexuality that counters a similar Victorian cultural logic that would posit women as the naturally weaker, passive sexual being. Yet, allusions to Sappho and eroticism in Greek culture show that perceptions of sexual behaviors are contingent upon tradition, time period, and social location since ambisexuality was widely accepted in ancient Greece, but considered deviant during H.D.'s time. With this in mind, it is important to remember that such allusions may be operating in the mode of Brecht's V-effect since they foreground the artificial nature of definitions governing gender and sexual identity. The continual repetition of similar features--flower images, mixed gender characteristics, sexual connotations, and various Sapphic allusions-- intensify this sense of defamiliarization in the flower poems.

"Sea Violet" contains the same basic images found in "Sea Rose": two forms of the same flower, a somewhat nondescript seaside setting, and a blowing wind. In the literal situation of this poem, a series of blue violets are blown around by the wind, but remain rooted on a hill of sand. These sea-violets survive exposure to the wind and crop up in the most unlikely of places, in the harsh environment along the seashore's broken shells.

The white violet
is scented on its stalk,
the sea-violet

fragile as agate,
lies fronting all the wind
among the torn shells
on the sand bank.

The greater blue violets
flutter on the hill,
but who would change for these
who would change for these
one root of the white sort?

Violet
your grasp is frail
on the edge of the sand-hill,
but you catch the light
frost, a star edges with its fire.

(*CP* 25-26)

What is remarkable is that each of these three stanzas presents a slightly different perspective from which to view the sea violet. The first stanza, in foregrounding cut and torn elements (shells, rock, flower), retains the violent and disjunctive visual effects found in a montage composition. Just as one might arrange a montage design, the initial stanza juxtaposes a string of images cut or torn from different visual media – a white violet, blue violet, agate rock, several broken shells, and a sand hill. The second and third stanzas, though, place the sea violet within a slightly different arrangement of the setting's items so that each recombination acts much like a turn of the kaleidoscope. In other words, rearranging different pieces re-contextualizes the image of the sea violet and allows the viewer to perceive it from a new perspective. Together, the seemingly disruptive images contained in the first stanza are replicated

in other images throughout all three stanzas, thereby operating as a sort of cinematic montage series that compels the audience to see relationships between a violet, rock, and star that would otherwise seem counterintuitive.

As in the poem about the sea rose, a primary image, the sea violet, remains the focus of the poem while its counterpart, the white violet, recedes from vision. Another duplication exists in the fact that the two violets, like the two roses, can be understood to represent two separate types of women. The unscarred, virginal, and sweet-smelling qualities of the white violet indicate that it reflects the chaste and inexperienced Victorian image of womanhood, while the colorful, wind-whipped, and hardy sea violet mirrors the more experienced modern woman. H.D.'s rhetorical question, "who would change for these/ [sea violets] one root of the white sort," confirms a reverence for the blue violet and a devaluation of the white one. In this respect, H.D. continues her effort at privileging the more adventurous form of female identity over the more passive one.

In the first stanza, the comparison of a blue violet and agate (perhaps also blue) forces new analogies between the two different objects as well. It motivates a closer inspection of each image to locate similarities so that the striations of the hard and smooth agate resemble the subtle lines in the textured pattern of the petal's waxy surface. In this moment where the audience finds related qualities in the rock and flower, one image seems to dissolve into another. Subsequently, the sea violet assumes, in the viewer's imagination, the hard and indestructible characteristics of the rock as well as the complex nuances suggested by the layers of color inside its shell. Thus, the seemingly frail and thin sea violet is rendered, through closer observation,

as a complicated and strong feature in the composition. Furthermore, in relating the two images, the perceptual frameworks for understanding what constitutes a masculine or feminine form have become blurred. That is, in substituting the rock and flower for the masculine and feminine, those characteristics conventionally assumed to define masculine (hard, rich, robust, complex) and feminine (soft, simple, frail, superficial) identities are compromised.

If the first stanza provides a closer look at the violet's form, the second stanza relocates the point of view at a backward distance, thereby broadening the range of vision to include the multitude of violets moving and fluttering together on the hill. In this context, the violet is not seen as an individual form full of various lines, shapes, and designs, but, instead, is seen among an array of violets -- all of which repeat the same or similar patterns. As previously noted, a close up perspective of the violet reveals that each individual flower contains striations and rippling lines that parallel the color and lines seen inside the agate rock. As the violets are seen in a group and from the bird's eye view, this close-up image is again duplicated when the movement of the wind causes ripples in the group of flowers and creates subtle streaks or variations in color.

The third stanza, on the other hand, narrows the field of vision again as it shows how tenuous the life of the violet really is. The blue violet is portrayed as clinging to the sand hill. However, in spite of the violet's circumstances, it manages to grow toward the sun's light and heat without loosening its grip of the beach. Bringing the viewer in closer, a final image emerges in this stanza. A burst of light behind the violet's blossom transforms the flower's shape into an icy star when it

highlights the petal's rougher edges, reflects prismatic cuts of light, and adds sheen to the petal's surface. Making use of the similarities in their visual outlines, H.D. superimposes the shape of the blossom with the shape of a star. Again, the effect of their montage is that the violet acquires the characteristics of the star. That is, it acquires the qualities thought to define a masculine form—sharp or rough edges, a hard impenetrable surface, a fiery, dazzling constitution, and an enduring presence.

Through various transformations, the sea violet's image is seen, not as a flower or a conventional feminine form, but as a succession of shapes, lines, forms, textures, and colors. In this regard, H.D.'s montage technique functions in much the same way that Eisenstein's depiction does. Eisenstein's idea is to separate the image as a whole from the related parts that constitute its form. In his example, the image of the clock is broken into a cluster of shapes and forms to disrupt one's recognition of the clock as a coherent image. Once the image is made unfamiliar, the audience can see the clock's image unpacked. Not only is the clock no longer just a clock, but it also becomes divorced from the concept of time to which its image is so closely bound. Utilizing a similar technique, H.D.'s violet is unpacked so that it is no longer recognized as a flower or a conventional symbol of femininity. By dissolving one image, the violet, into others such as the agate and star, H.D. foregrounds the process of perception. Simply put, what is shown is that perception manipulates the comprehension of an object or idea. Or, if one draws from the conclusions previously made about Husserl's phenomenological perspective, it can be said that both flower images and related concepts about feminine forms are not constructed out of some true essence emanating from the image or form itself, but rather developed from

perceptual frameworks applied to fit varied, different, and even unrelated images and forms.

Although initially puzzling, the literal situation of "Sea Lily" eventually materializes from the string of references, allusions, and partial images that cue the reader. The focus of the poem is a lily that, shattered by the wind, lies with its scattered petals along a rocky shore. Each of the three stanzas in this poem employs montage method by overlaying various images that contextualize the lily's surroundings.

Reed,
slashed and torn
but doubly rich
such great heads as yours
drift upon temple-steps,
but you are shattered
in the wind.

Myrtle-bark
is flecked from you,
scales are dashed
from your stem,
sand cuts your petal
furrows it with hard edge,
like flint
on a bright stone.

Yet though the whole wind
slash at your bark,
you are lifted up,

aye—though it hiss
to cover you with froth.
(*CP* 14)

In the first stanza, the reader is first introduced to the stem of the lily, the "reed," rather than the bloom. The stem, "slashed and torn," clues the reader that the petals have already been stripped away, leaving only the stalk. Knowing that the setting for this stem is a sea-side landscape proves to be key since, based on this information, one can glimpse an analogous setting in the temple steps H.D. references. The image of the stem and petals strewn across rocks of varied heights dissolves into a portrait of a lily stem and petals spread across Aphrodite's temple steps.

The second stanza directs audience attention again to the flower stem and the uneven tones of its mottled, rough, dry surface. This visual pattern is repeated in comparable surfaces such as the myrtle bark and fish scales. The final analogy made in this second stanza asks the reader to consider remarkable similarities between a grain of sand beating into a petal and a piece of flint striking a stone. This second stanza reads like a montage of different surfaces that repeat similar designs: the mottled stem, fish scales, "flecked" myrtle bark, a petal full of indentations and grooves, and a roughly marked, pocked stone. Acting like a chain of transformations, each image becomes something slightly different until the softer, organic surfaces of the stem and fleshy skin of the petals are turned into hard and combustible stone. As is the case with the other poems, H.D. confounds the viewer's ability to comprehend the flower's image in traditional terms when each image seems to dissolve into the last.

The final example of image dissolve occurs in the last stanza. The wind that

lifts the lily stem simultaneously mimics the motion and sound of sea waves rushing over its body. The wave patterns parallel and replace those of the wind and, in doing so, highlight the sexual undertones of the poem. As with the other flower poems, the lily's exposure to the world leaves it "doubly rich." Such a phrase recalls the rich layers and varied surfaces observed in stanza two, and it also simultaneously suggests that worldly experience leaves complex impressions on one's being. However, the undulating motion of the wind that lifts the stem upward in stanza three also peaks and spills over as a wave might. The sexual connotations in this stanza deepen this sense of richness to include sexual knowledge. The sexual subtext develops in a couple of ways. Obviously, the motion of the wind/wave mirrors the stages of sexual ecstasy. Aside from this, though, the choice of transforming wind into sea is significant. In particular, the explicit reference to sea foam ("froth") takes on a level of importance since mythology suggests that Aphrodite was born from it. Aphrodite's presence becomes more interesting if one considers that, as a female figure, she assumes masculine behaviors in ancient Greek culture. After all, she is one of the only Greek female deities that openly desires others and acts upon her urges. To some degree, then, this allusion to Aphrodite further complicates ideas about gender as well as what constitutes appropriate behavior for women.[5] The allusion enhances the sense that masculine and feminine traits are easily blended.

In "Sea Poppies," the setting is, again, a sandy beach, rocks, the sea, and flowers. Perhaps more comparable to "Sea Violet" than any of the other flower

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[5] In *Sappho's Immortal Daughters*, Margaret Williamson writes: "Aphrodite was a figure who offered unusual opportunities to the poet. Her significance goes well beyond the fact that she embodies sexuality: she is also one of the few positive archetypes in Greek culture of a female sexuality that is not confined to the functions of fertility and reproduction, and the only Olympian goddess to step out of the polar roles of active male and passive female" (126-127).

poems, "Sea Poppies" also engages the audience in actively observing a flower's form from several points of view. This four stanza poem initially places the reader at a bird's eye vantage point from which to study, in a panoramic manner, the landscape below. In contrast to "Sea Violet" where the viewing perspective shifts in a kaleidoscopic fashion, each stanza in "Sea Poppies" brings the reader in a little closer to examine the poppy's form. The last two stanzas allow the reader to explore the more intimate details of the poppies, however. Every stanza is a small montage design that juxtaposes different images, and the poem as a whole follows the same principle.

Amber husk
fluted with gold,
fruit on the sand
marked with a rich grain,

treasure
spilled near the shrub pines
to bleach on the boulders:

your stalk has caught root
among wet pebbles
and drift flung by the sea
and grated shells
and split conch shells.

Beautiful, wide-spread,
fire upon leaf,
what meadow yields
so fragrant a leaf

as your bright leaf?

(*CP* 21)

The first stanza contrasts a husk, an assemblage of fruit on sand, and wood grain imagery. The yellow husk, marked by the deeper golden hues that emanate from patterned grooves, implies a multiplicity of details and lines. This general series of shapes, textures, lines, and colors are then reproduced in an aerial view of the beach. From this perspective, the poppies, compared to the shape and lustrous color of small berries, emulate, against the golden beach, the pattern of wood grain. This image is, of course, only sustained from a distance. It is an abstract assemblage of sorts. But the alienating effect is tremendous. The poppies are no longer a field of flowers. They are no longer even flowers, but, instead, are part of wood grain design.

Straight lines juxtaposed against round shapes are replicated in the third stanza as well. This stanza gathers together the stem of a single poppy, an accumulation of pebbles, driftwood, and several torn shells. The round petals parallel the circular shapes of the pebbles, while the grooves and lines on the shells mirror the lines on the husk as well as the straight lines of the stem and driftwood. At this moment in the poem, the reader has been brought in so close to the poppies and their surroundings that any sense of background or foreground space has been lost. What prevails is multiplicity. The effect is much like a pointillist painting where, should someone lean into the canvas, all that can be seen is a mass chaos of small shapes.

Other than the visual details, the themes of the poem remain consistent with previous ones. The struggle and survival of the flower are celebrated, and beauty is defined in terms of experience, freedom, and vulnerability. However, the "grated" and "split" shells imply far more than the idea that the flower has, as an independent

being, made itself vulnerable in a harsh environment. Initially, the juxtapositon of the flexible, soft flower with the hard and cracked shells seem to suggest the flower is more adaptable to the surroundings than the broken shells. However, the crevices in the shells and the implied gaps between the pebbles create a sense of layers and depths. In this regard, the composition evident in this stanza bears sexual associations as well. There is, after all, something sensual and striking about the poppy roots reaching into the wet depths that lie beneath the pebbles. Even the conch shells, although they are split, continue to hint at the sensual splendor of hidden depths and crevices that one might compare with the human form. This sexual subtext extends to the last stanza as well.

The final perspective for viewing the poppy's form happens at even closer proximity. The reader is brought in so close that the poppy's petals take up the field of vision and become "wide-spread." Under such close scrutiny, subtle blends in colors - gold, orange, red - project from the center outward in fire-like waves. Comparable to O'Keefe's paintings of fiery cannas and poppies, H.D.'s image also evokes sexual connotations. The fleshy petals, characterized by their colors indicating heat, ask the reader to imagine these features in the female form. However, throughout the flower poems, H.D. demands her reader look at these forms with fresh eyes so that one sees, as though for the first time, the hard edges, rough surfaces, and more easily identifiable masculine features of each flower's form. In addition, the question of the last stanza (what meadow yields/so fragrant a leaf/as your bright leaf?) signals that the speaker has a lover in mind. It would be safe to assume, based on the depiction of the poppy and the Sapphic style of the poem, that the two lovers

are both women. Furthermore, the poem, like the others, advances themes about freedom, sexual experience, and the beauty found in worldly adventure. After all, the poppy in stanza three is not sheltered, but searches and finds its place in the world. Independence, freedom, the desiring subject: these thematic aspects of the poem like its visual features, mix what may be perceived as masculine traits or behaviors with feminine ones.

As a whole, the poem exists as a sort of montage of varied organic bodies – husk, shell, wood, rock, poppy, human. The fragmentary style of each stanza, the emphasis on "visual patterns, dissolves, superimpositions and the cock-eyed vision of consciousness with its own distortions and angles," parallels montage design (Du Plessis 59). Montage does overlay images, make use of repetitions, produce unusual patterns, and render unique perceptions of everyday objects and ideas. The connection between dissolve and montage might not seem as evident, though, because dissolve is a cinematic technique often used to describe H.D.'s later work.

As a cinematic technique, dissolve makes the editing process apparent to audience. Rather than seamlessly cutting away to another frame, dissolve highlights the fact of editing by slowing down the succession of frames so that one image dissolves into the next. This technique resembles montage in that it calls attention to the process of perception. It also shows the audience that their perception of an image is manipulated. The technique demonstrates to an audience that what they are viewing and how they are viewing it is dependent upon a process of selection.

The structure of "Sea Iris" is different from all the other flower poems in that it is divided into two separate and distinctly labeled sections. Each section contains

two depictions of and two contexts for perceiving the sea iris. In the first section, we find the iris literally strewn among moss, weeds, and sand. Because the setting is so sparse, this iris could easily be situated just about anywhere one might find these basic items. The images compiled in this section, however, organize a more complicated understanding of the iris's context. An image of a torn petal doubles for a broken shell, and an image of the stem doubles the shadow of a twig. These mirror images anticipate a partial dissolve of the iris's present context into a past one.

Weed, moss weed,
root tangled in sand,
sea iris, brittle flower,
one petal like a shell
is broken,
and you print a shadow
like a thin twig.

(*CP* 36)

The setting for the second section is ancient Greece, and image of the iris dissolves into the image of murexes being pulled up from nets dipped into the sea waters by fishermen. The murex is a mussel that lives in a spiny-covered shell and produces a purple dye. The analogous qualities of each object are the blue colors each delivers and the rough textures each needs to survive. Essentially, the dissolve of the iris into the murex serves as a means to connect two distinct social locations and time periods. In juxtaposing these contexts and situations, H.D. does more than call attention to comparable visual features found in unlike forms. She also links the past and present in a manner that fuses her own poems to Sappho's.

The two separate sections slow down the temporal frame so that the reader more fully understands the sense of simultaneity. This flower poem also integrates

the line, "sweet and salt," from Sappho's own poetry. The erotic connotations of this line, the reference to ancient Greece, and H.D.'s visual illustration of the "rigid myrrh-bud" introduce a somewhat ambi-sexual subtext. Sappho's reputation as a lover of women and men underlines a level of gender and sexual ambiguity, while the bud's rigidness stresses the hermaphroditic characteristics of both flower and human form. Consequently, this poem, along with all the flower poems, structures a chain of organic transformations where a shell, for example, becomes a petal, a petal then becomes flesh, and flesh eventually signifies sexual organ. Every step in the chain estranges the audience from the initial image, for only at a distance will the familiar forms, shapes, and colors of the objects be seen in a fresh light. The defamiliarizing effects, then, allow audiences to see the hermaphroditic features of a flower and, in turn, the hermaphroditic characteristics of the human form. Thus, by altering the way we see one form, the flower, montage also changes the way we see subsequent forms. So if the flower is a conventional symbol for femininity, then the strategy that modifies perceptions of the flower also brackets, for further scrutiny, those shared attributes thought to exist between the flower and female body. Thus, montage design introduces new dimensions through which we might comprehend female identity in *Sea Garden*; accordingly, the varying shapes, angles, and textures open fresh imaginative possibilities with every unusual affinity discovered in the multiple folds of rose petals, irregular indentations on stems or petals, in layers and striations of agate, or the upon shell spines, spikes, and grooves of each flower poem.

Montage Principle and Androgynous Imagery in the Visual Art of Hannah Höch

Montage principle produces perplexing juxtapositions that defy easy and familiar resolutions. In Höch's visual art, montage principle allows audiences to explore gender and sexual identity in a more critical framework. Because Höch's designs utilize so many ambiguously gendered figures, they offer audiences the opportunity to interrogate cultural definitions without dictating any clear answers. According to Lavin, in Höch's work, "her representations of androgyny" establish "a radical and non-hierarchical sexual ambiguity" (202). Of particular interest are two parallel compilations, pages twenty-eight and twenty-nine respectively, from Höch's scrapbook (1933).

On page twenty-eight, four photographs of women are cut to the size of small photographic strip frames and then arranged in a four square pattern. In the upper left quadrant, a slightly longer, more rectangular photo of Kiki the model fills the space. Her hair is short, eye make-up dramatic, and she wears a floral motif jacket. Under Kiki, sits a photograph of an actress dressed in a gypsy-like scarf and earrings. This photograph is cut in a manner that exposes an L-shaped media printed border revealing that the photograph was probably selected from a theater program or magazine. Beside her and to the right, the artist situates yet another rectangular shaped photograph of a scarf-wearing woman. In the far right corner, another smaller, squared photograph rests. This photo displays a woman wearing a multi-layered cowl neck shirt that rises up around her neck and face. Her hair is cut short in what seems to be arbitrarily fashioned layers of varied lengths that complete this model's wild look. As she looks askance, this model's gaze appears more fully averted than the others. While each woman's portrait visually represents some

masculine attribute assigned to the new woman (career, short hair, etc.), this last photo signifies a more androgynous identity. She does not smile for the camera, and she does not don a flower or scarf. For these reasons, she appears to be the most radical of the four. Unlike the others, her demeanor and style deny the spectator access to her image.

As Lavin notes, Höch enjoyed collecting, cutting, and assembling images of the new woman, and these photographs exemplify Höch's fascination with the modern woman. On some level, all of them – models, actresses, artists – are variations of the same type of woman, and their side by side, frame by frame juxtaposition reflects this duplication. Their arrangement on the page is of special interest, though, for the balance of assembled shapes form two adjacent and parallel vertical planes that seem to suggest a series of analogies between representational features embodied by two corresponding photos. In other words, the design seems to imply a comparison of female portraits from top to bottom.

A comparative relationship drawn between Kiki and the gypsy looking actress is mirrored in a similar comparison between the other scarf-wearer and the wild-looking model. In these cases, the analogy made is based on the juxtaposition that situates the more gender neutral figures at the top and the scarf-wearing figures at the bottom. Much of Höch's work imbues images of the modern woman with a sense of freedom or exhilaration. Whether Höch privileges what might be seen as the more radical modern women in this four portrait series is an interesting question. In her work as a whole, she explores a variety of new woman representations cut out of different visual media. These scrapbook compositions are no different in that regard.

However, are the substitutions made in the montage compilation placed on page twenty-nine of the scrapbook provide the basis for some remarkable interpretations.

In the compilation on the next page, the portraits of three of the women--the two with scarves and Kiki—have been replaced by what looks like two nearly identical botanical drawings and a photo of a wild, tall flower. The botanical drawings, in keeping with the scrapbook theme, resemble pressed flowers. However, in the far left corner, one of the same photos appears: the woman with the wild haphazardly designed hair. This new page repeats the same four-square pattern as the previous one, and it implies that a representational analogy also exists. At first glance, this composition emphasizes disjuncture among the four portraits since the woman represents a human form and the other photos represent flower forms two of which are only prints of drawn flowers rather than photos of living ones. The repetition in design form indicates that some meaningful similarity exists between the other women and these three flower representations. Because the new woman is a figure often represented as bearing ambiguous gender traits, the substitution of flowers for humans in this instance may be understood as a reinforcement of her androgynous qualities since flowers contain both male and female sex organs. This is a significant possibility, but perhaps not the only one. Another level of analysis might contemplate why the composition foregrounds a disruption between the living and non-living. Following the previous design pattern, the wild-haired woman in this montage is positioned as an opposite but comparable figure to one of the botanical prints. The photo of the tall and living wildflower is subsequently also aligned with one of the botanical prints. Is there a connection to be drawn between

the pressed flowers and the scarved women? Or the wildflower and Kiki?

One analogy manufactured by the design is as follows: New Woman is to traditional artistic technique as wild flower is to pressed flower. The new woman, epitomized by the ultra modern female figure, resembles the disruptive innovations in avant-garde art. Her demeanor defies conventional expectations for how a woman sits for a portrait, and her hair cut follows no recognizable aesthetic. A wildflower also resides outside a cultivated life as it is set free in terms of how or where it grows. Using this line of thought, one can also say, then, that traditional art is death and avant-garde art is life since the precise botanical drawings appear lifeless in comparison to the vibrant photo of the wild flower. What makes these analogies possible is a system of substitutions, and this brings us to one more point of analysis.

These two designs in the scrapbook operate in much the same way as a child's puzzle in which the viewer is asked to locate the picture that does not belong. In the first composition, the photo of the wild-haired woman stands out against the rest of the images because she does not fit model portrait conventions. She does not smile, does not look neat and tidy, and does gaze directly at the camera. Clearly she is an unconventional figure, and her status as such is confirmed when the other women are removed from view and replaced by three images of flowers. If we know that the flower images are substitutions for the other women, then how do we explain the difference between the wildflower and the flower drawings? One explanation is that the two botanical prints are substitutions for the scarf-wearing women in the first design, while the wildflower is a substitution for Kiki. Kiki's appearance is, afterall, somewhat less conventional in the sense that her clothing and hair are less gender

specific. Together, these two compositions invite viewers to explore their cultural expectations about gender as they attempt to make sense of what might otherwise seem to be the random juxtaposition of images. Through the process of mentally engaging the viewer, Höch's scrapbook montage designs force her audience to take notice of perceptual processes that impose meaning on objects of the consciousness. That is, the analogical demands of her designs in this case make the spectator aware that they are participants in the process of inventing meaning through the discovery of less obvious relationships.

In *Seven-League Boots* (1934), Höch assembles a pair of legs and a shell to resemble a bird in flight over a mountain landscape. To form this unusual bird, the legs and crotch area of a dancer have been cut from a photograph. The photo has caught the legs in the middle of a split leap, and they are bare except for a pair of tall boots. A shell has been strategically cut and placed over the crotch area. The shell spirals outward to form a point. It can be argues that this highly suggestive shell signifies an "erect penis" and that the image as a whole is that of a "transsexual" (193). Lavin reads the shell image as a representation male sexual organs. She writes, "male genitalia are also suggested by the bulbous section of the shell that hangs between the legs. The spread- eagled legs and the strapped on phallus set up for the viewer a reading of this surreal body fragment as not only androgynous but transsexual" (Lavin 193). However, this reading does not account for the androgynous qualities derived from the shell's characteristics that mimic the female sexual organs. The spiraling concentric circles displayed by the shell are also a sort of universal image for female sexuality. In addition, the shell is almost always

recognized for having deep and hidden compartments unavailable from the field of vision. The shell brings an abstract level to comprehending the sexual identity of this figure, and presses the viewer to consider how sexual identity can be understood as a process of the perception. That is, an audience can discern images relating to both masculine and feminine sexual traits. There is also something significant about the feeling of exhilaration that exudes from the shape of a bird in flight. In this respect, the spread legs also signal the thrill of being a freely sexual being not tied to social categories or gender definitions.

Tamer (1930) illustrates several absurd correlations between an androgynous animal trainer and a seal. This particular montage displays one of Höch's more androgynously constructed figures. The primary figure in this design, the animal trainer, consists of several body parts combined to create a whole form. A black and white photo of a mannequin's head is pasted onto a man's chest donning an elaborately decorated circus performer jacket. Two highly muscled, masculine, and naked arms are cut and pasted to the jacket, appearing to emerge from arm holes where the sleeves have been cut away. The upper torso is connected to a woman's skirt, making the lower body look like a stylish model. In the lower right hand corner of the montage, the head of a dappled seal gazes of to the right. Two Marlene Dietrich style eyes have been cut and arranged on the seal's face.[6] The shape and style of the eyes mirror those of the trainer.

This montage is unique, in part, because of the way it has been carefully framed and presented to the viewing audience. The montage appears as though

[6] Many photos of the German actress illustrate the wide-set, dramatically made-up eyes of the actress. This potential reference also reinforces the gender ambiguity of the montage since, as Lavin notes, any reference to Dietrich would create a lesbian context or androgynous reference at this time (202).

someone has stripped away layers of tin and paper to reveal the trainer and seal. The outside of the frame is fashioned to look like rusty steel. Around the edges, metal studs are fastened to appear as though the steel has been bolted down. Frayed and torn paper jutting out around the trainer and seal accentuate the idea that layers had to be ripped away to expose the two figures. Behind the trainer, the edges marking the open part of the frame--the part that holds the photographic portrait—is barely exposed. All of these aspects announce that the "viewer is always aware of looking at photo fragments" so that "the constructed nature of the figure is evident" (193). This montage design foregrounds how social roles influence the way bodies are presented and read by others.

There are several bizarre connections that play out the constructed quality of social roles in general. The title for the montage, "tamer," plays with the masculine associations linked to circus lion tamers. Those who train lions for performances are often thought to be strong and manly. After all, the logic of dominance would reinforce this idea. The trainer who is thought of as dominating the most ferocious of animals is bound to confirm the notion that men are naturally strong and commanding. Essentially the androgynous characteristics of the trainer subvert the traditional order of the chain where man is at the top, then woman, and last, animal. Furthermore, the lion is not dangerous in Höch's montage. It is, at best, only a sea lion. Yet the seal also seems to make fun of the trainer with its sly stare and smirk. More correlations exist between the seal and trainer that undermine conventional ideas about dominance and order. The seal's eyes double the eyes on the trainer's head to suggest that they are really a mirror image of one another rather than master

and slave. And, on another level, the seal's eyes, cut from a model's face, make it seem as though the seal is posing for a portrait. This heightens the sense of absurdity generally; although, I would add that it also makes the practice of sitting for portraits seem strange and artificial as well.

As with other montage designs, a list of possible analogies emerges out of the odd juxtapositions. For example: photographer is to a model as a trainer is to a seal; gendered behavior is to an animal as social practice is to nature. On the one hand, we see in Höch's design that the authority bestowed upon trainers and photographers is questionable because both manipulate an audience's perception of their performers. Yet, by including a seal with "bedroom eyes," it also becomes clear that gender roles and sexuality are merely performances. In fact, they train us to perform specific behaviors. The connection between gendered behavior and the seal is so absurd that it disrupts the viewer from thinking about gendered behavior as natural. The use of such living, organic materials — the seal, the shell, the flower — become objects of substitution that aid in defamiliarizing audiences from the conventional definitions for gender and sexual identity that control human behaviors.

Montage Principle and Feminist Possibility

Montage strategy and phenomenological philosophy produce a powerful set of tools for investigating cultural definitions of gender and sexuality. If what we know is produced through perception, informed by structures of meaning already in place before the perception occurs, then aimed at an actual object and reified through the object of the consciousness--then we cannot ever see the actual object as it "really is."

However, as Irigaray suggests, "what matters is not the existence of the object—*as such it is indifferent*—but the simple effect of a representation upon the subject, its reflection" (207). For example, a body or a flower does not know that it is a body or a flower since these are conceptual attributes applied to organic forms, an application that assigns their place within a system of logic. In a sense, then, all objects, forms, and bodies serve a specular function. That is, they reflect back and affirm a whole network of meaning. One purpose for montage is that it distorts this reflection through its serial nature and depictive (Eisensteinian) elements that establish the conditions necessary for a sense of metaperception that underscores the divorce between the object of the consciousness from the actual object. In other words, by "increasing the difficulty and duration of perception," as Shklovsky says, montage makes the object seem indifferent to the viewer's knowledge of it. This is also a goal for feminists that wish to complicate cultural definitions for gender and sexuality. Judith Butler writes: "Bodies only become whole, i.e., totalities, by the idealizing and totalizing specular image which is sustained through time by the sexually marked name (72). Montage, then, is a vehicle of feminist possibility, a way of thinking about the body as an Eisensteinian concept – one that sustains the illusion of totality, but is really put together from a multitude of parts. Moreover, if the actual object cannot be known outside of the projections imposed on it through the consciousness, then shifting perceptions of the concept are possible through seeing the multitude of parts in different configurations. In the case of H.D.'s poems, a flower can be seen as a series of parts (petals, fibers, cells, or varying lines, shapes, textures) that no longer resemble the concept of a flower. In the case of feminism, the body can be seen in a

state of Eisensteinian depiction as well—skin, muscle tissue, nerve cells or varying lines, shapes, and textures. Devoid of totality, the perceptions of such a body may resist categorization. In other words, the metaperception dimension of montage allows for the bracketing of concepts such as femininity or masculinity as well as the imaginable separation of concepts such as gender or sex from the forms they have come to define. With methods of defamilarization, for example, one could potentially arrest the process of perception so that it is possible to perceive that a concept is an object of the consciousness as it is applied to the object in question. Thus, distorting the specular image ruins the illusion morphological totality; it becomes, as in the case of H.D. and Höch, a manner by which a body assumes a certain level of indetermination, a "play of analogies, in which indetermination will always have acted" and which "boundlessly enlarges the mode of conceiving" (Irigaray 208).

Chapter Four: Convulsive Beauty: Images of Hysteria and Transgressive Sexuality in the Photographs of Claude Cahun and the Narratives of Djuna Barnes

"For all poets, almost, woman incarnates nature, but for Breton she not only expresses nature she releases it." (235)
" one would like to know if for her also love is the key to the world and revelation of beauty" (237)
Simone DeBeauvoir, *The Second Sex*

"Not only does Sade anticipate what has been called the 'pansexuality' of Freud, but he makes of eroticism the mainspring of human behavior Libido is everywhere, and it is always far more than itself" (52)
"Sade does not give us the work of a free man" (54)
Simone DeBeauvoir, *Must We Burn Sade?*

That Simone DeBeauvoir criticized the surrealists for their sexism and also expressed interest in the writings of Sade, who was greatly revered by surrealists and whose model of transgressive sexuality influenced them, might seem like a conflict of interests. What is even more intriguing is that she may not have been the only modern woman to have articulated this presumed conflict, a conflict perceivable today by a dual expression a critical view toward the representation of women in surrealist texts and an intellectual interest in the socially challenging sexual radicalism presented by surrealism generally. Although they are not nearly as renowned as DeBeauvoir, Claude Cahun and Djuna Barnes are two modern women whose work is critically engaged with surrealism in this manner. Evidence of this engagement may be read in the ways that Cahun and Barnes construct portraits of hysteria that appear to critically respond to essentialist images of women in surrealism, images such as André Breton's figures of women that, as De Beauvoir notes, become icons for the "release" of natural impulses. Like many other surrealists (and Sade before them), Cahun and Barnes also formulate a model of transgressive sexuality. However, Cahun and Barnes foreground forms of sexual transgression that can be perceived as undermining some psychological models for understanding

gender and sexuality.

Susan Suleiman's notion of a "double allegiance" may help explain how women who either witnessed or participated in the early stages of surrealism could become both critical of this movement as well as interested in forms of transgressive sexuality that influenced it. Suleiman uses "double allegiance" to describe the ways that many post-modern women writers and artists draw from the early twentieth century avant-garde works of men as well as feminism (Chadwick 131). Her claim is that the works produced by these women reveal, through intertextual study, responses to both the avant-garde movements and an emerging feminist imagination. That is, "double allegiance" alludes to a process of cultural and textual assimilation in which women borrow, adapt, and alter the radical ideas of the avant-garde in ways that also repudiate forms of misogyny evident within the avant-garde. Although early surrealists such as Cahun and Barnes may not have had the benefits of post-modern feminist theory, the concept of double allegiance can be said to apply to their work as well.

In the following discussion, I examine a sampling of images present in Cahun's autoportraits and Barnes' novel *Nightwood* in order to explore parallels between the ways that these two surrealists adapted and altered images of convulsive beauty to formulate expressions of sexual difference. Convulsive beauty, a term coined by Breton to describe a surrealist method for depicting failed social repression with images depicting unacceptable libidinal desires, developed out of theories of psychology that presented hysteria and transgressive sexual behavior as evidence of sexual suppression. Surrealists like Breton were deeply influenced by psychological

theories—so much so that some of the sexist overtones that colored such theories could not help but be replicated in surrealism. The image of hysteria, anchored in theories about female sexuality, when used as an "expression of nature," to borrow DeBeauvoir's phrase, is one such example. Because these theories are so closely tied to surrealist understandings of convulsive beauty, the following essay is divided into four parts. The first two sections explain the ways that surrealist understandings of psychological theories color various portraits of convulsive beauty in the texts of Breton, Bellmer, and Dali. Although these sections deal mainly with the representation of women in surrealism, they are a necessary starting point for discussing the challenges for re-imagining convulsive beauty in the work of Cahun and Barnes. In the final two sections, I analyze images of hysteria and sexuality in Cahun's photographs and Barnes' narrative *Nightwood*. The image of hysteria in Cahun's *Autoportrait No. 95* and Barnes' narrative may be read in tandem with one another as a sort of rejection of the way that surrealists like Breton equated women with nature through depictions of unsublimated desire exhibited during hysteria. Images of Cahun's anamorphic bodies and the "pan-sexuality" of Barnes' literary character Robin Vote allude to an expression of convulsive beauty that calls attention to the limitations of surrealist models of transgressive sexuality that are ultimately grounded in essentialist perspectives of gender and sexual identity.

Analyzing the work of Cahun and Barnes through the lens of convulsive beauty makes sense even though it might not seem like an obvious point of comparison. In fact, comparing a French photographer with an American writer might alone raise some eyebrows. Before developing my analysis further, I must

make several points explaining the logic of this comparison. One important point to remember is that both of these women were absent from historical narratives about modernism and the avant-garde, and this oversight may have blinded many scholars as to the similarities of their interests in surrealism. In the wake of Shari Benstock's *Women of the Left Bank*, scholars in modernist studies witnessed a re-awakening of scholarship on Barnes in the eighties. It was not until the early nineties that the photographs of Cahun came to the foreground of studies about surrealism. This re-awakening is largely due to the work of François Leperlier who has been credited with rediscovering Cahun after assembling an exhibition catalogue of her photographs in 1992 (Soloman-Godeau 112). To explain more fully why Cahun and Barnes seem to have receded into the shadows while figures like Breton came to be known as the "father of surrealism," we must also consider the limitations women experienced within early French surrealist circles generally.

As many critics have already noted, women were not accepted as leaders or even major figures within the movement and rarely signed manifestoes of other important historical documents. However, women like Cahun participated by exhibiting their art with surrealists and, although Barnes never formally participated in surrealist activities, she did contribute to the movement by actively developing surrealist principles in her work. Even though women were encouraged to adopt and develop surrealist principles, they were not fully acknowledged by their male surrealist counterparts. Suleiman contends, though, that this kind of relationship women had with surrealism - a relationship characterized by a certain level of acceptance minus the privileges of full membership—kept women on the margins of

an avant-garde group that was already positioning itself on the fringes of society. In Suleiman's mind, this creates a "double margin" for these women. However, Cahun and Barnes' relationship to surrealism is a bit more difficult to define. While it is true that they were marginalized from the inner circle of French surrealism (and by inner circle I mean the social group dominated by figures like Breton, Aragon, Dali, Ernst, Eluard, Bataille and so on), the idea of a double margin does not adequately provide a sense of the many other Paris groups that also existed on the social fringes and welcomed figures like Cahun and Barnes.

As lesbian women, Cahun and Barnes were part of another cultural milieu altogether. It should be no surprise, though, that the left bank of Paris, which flourished with new salons, artists, writers, and a whole underground homosexual culture during the twenties and thirties, could become home to both the French surrealist photographer Claude Cahun and the American surrealist writer Djuna Barnes. By the early 1920s Lucy Schwob had already changed her name to Claude Cahun and moved to the Montparnasse quarter of Paris with her stepsister and life-long companion Marcel Moore, formerly known as Suzanne Malherbe (Kline 70). Within a few years of Cahun's move to Paris and not more than a few streets away, Barnes took up residence first at the boulevard Saint Germain and later at rue Saint Romain, with her lover Thelma Wood. There is no published record of the lives of Cahun and Barnes ever having intersected, but they did share common acquaintances in Adrienne Monnier and Sylvia Beach as well as a common salon, rue de l'Odéon group. As one might imagine, such social groups along the left bank were somewhat removed from Breton's inner circle. Critics often mention Breton's inability to

accept homosexuality, and, given this information, it seems unlikely that these social groups would openly collaborate with members in the inner circle of surrealism.

The image of Cahun and Barnes as active intellectuals in the Montparnasse quarter of Paris produces interesting insight into the diversity of cultural groups and artistic production during the modern period as well. In light of this image, any notion of a double margin, as useful as this notion is, really must be complicated a bit. It appears that there has been a multitude of marginal social circles discussed so far: surrealism, women in surrealism, homosexuals in surrealism, women on the left bank of Paris, lesbian women of the left bank of Paris. Cahun and Barnes moved among and on the boundaries of all these social circles. The sense of social diversity and even individual mobility that one might perceive from this knowledge about Cahun and Barnes' social experiences challenges the usual assumptions that marginalization results in artistic contraint or personal stagnation. This kind of overlap between marginal social groups also seems counter-intuitive to categories that define academic periodization.

Literary and artistic periods have traditionally been defined by nationality or have been limited in terms of strictly defined boundaries describing specific literary or artistic movements. The influx of expatriates to Paris during the modern period tends to complicate this sensibility, though. Perhaps the issue of nationality partially explains why many scholars have not ventured many analyses comparing women of the European avant-garde with women expatriates in Paris. Comparing Cahun, a French photographer, with Barnes, an American writer, makes sense because they were both immersed in and responded to a similar set of social circumstances. It also

makes sense because transnational and inter-artistic influences are two unique features that characterize literary modernism.

The similar set of social circumstances experienced by Cahun and Barnes likely influenced the ways that they present ambiguously gendered bodies and alternative sexual preferences in their art. It was during her time on the left bank that Cahun began producing the autoportraits that staged a multitude of ambiguously gendered identities: a bald-headed hybrid, a puppet, a swami, a male "dandy" (replete with masculinized nipples and weight-lifting barbell), and a number of other personalities. The staging of these various identities have lead many critics to discuss the way these portraits foreground issues about gender identity and performance. Undeniably, the concept of gender as masquerade is a theme among these photographs.

It was also during Barnes' time in Paris that she, too, worked on a number of narratives that question gender roles and sexual preferences. *Ryder* (1928), a parody of patriarchal family traditions, and *Ladies Almanack* (1928), a playful satire about the women of Natalie Barney's salon, are examples. However, Barnes' most famous narrative, *Nightwood* (1936), contains stronger parallels with the photographs of Cahun. Characters in this narrative play with both gender and sexual roles. The doctor, Matthew O'Connor, tries on different gender roles as a transvestite, and the "femme-fatale," Robin Vote, tries on different sexual orientations. We must also remember that at the same time that Cahun and Barnes were producing their art, Joan Rivère was completing essays such as "Womanliness as Masquerade" (1929) that discuss femininity as a staged role. Also, Freud began speculating that sexual

behaviors were learned through socialization. In addition, presenting shocking sexual perversions as a form of "convulsive beauty" became one of the main surrealist strategies for combating bourgeois social attitudes. It is not difficult to see that questions about gender and sexuality pervading early twentieth-century discourse influenced surrealism to a fair degree. There are some key differences between the ways women like Cahun and Barnes and inner-circle surrealists like Breton approached such questions. What follows defines these differences.

Surrealism and Convulsive Beauty

Sexual deviance and social transgression often formed a symbiotic relationship in the surrealist assault on normative culture. There is perhaps no stronger combination of cultural understandings about sexuality and surrealist themes of social transgression than in the idea of convulsive beauty. Although the phrase "convulsive beauty" first appears in Breton's novel *Nadja*, the root idea for this concept originates in studies about social repression. On a literal level, the "convulsive" aspect of convulsive beauty refers to the seizures that displayed physical evidence of social repression during fits of hysteria.[1] On another very basic level, convulsive beauty, as subject matter for art, demonstrates the surrealist commitment to compromise traditional aesthetics by shocking audiences with a range of

[1] The association of convulsions and hysteria are well researched. In Sander Gilman's research about the image of the hysteric, he finds that the bodily convulsions associated with hysteria were sometimes misdiagnosed epileptic seizures or other disease related spasms. Gilman also notes that the convulsive seizures of the female hysteric were compared (by Freud) to the bodily demeanor exhibited during coitus. Such convulsions were also accompanied by a state of shock and disassociation.

unspeakable human expressions: hysteria, obscenity, pornography, violence, and insanity. In this regard, convulsive beauty became an anti-aesthetic tenet intended to rescue art from traditional aesthetics as well as a method for depicting the psychological breakdown of social repression and, consequently, the instability of social norms.

Many surrealists used images of failed repression to depict the psychological impact of socializing forces on individual lives. Sublimation and desublimation are useful categories for discussing the impact that Freud's ideas had on this form of surrealist thought.[2] The unspeakable realities defined by the madness of hysteria or the perversion of obsessive neuroses, according to Freud, results from some sort of failed repression. In " 'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness," Freud writes that such psychoneuroses stem from unsatisfied "sexual needs" bound to the "suppression of instincts" (186). The suppression of these unsanctioned sexual instincts occurs during a process Freud identifies as sublimation. In Freudian terms, sublimation is the process by which a desire or sexual impulse is successfully converted into a socially sanctioned activity. By contrast, desublimation is the resurgence of the sexual impulse that often manifests itself in some deviant form of sexual expression. In short, by artistically presenting social perversions as failed sublimations or desublimations, surrealists provided audiences with a visual image depicting the restrictive nature of social norms. The representation of such

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[2] Hal Foster uses the psychological categories of sublimation and desublimation to discuss the influence of Freud on surrealist formulations of convulsive beauty. Foster notes that these are particularly useful categories for surrealism because "a desublimatory account of representation contradicts our most cherished narratives of the history of art, indeed of civilization..." (113). My analysis of these categories departs from Foster's use of them in that I explore the way these categories reflect cultural ideas about gender and resonate somewhat differently in texts produced by surrealists such as Cahun and Barnes.

socializing failures provided a window of opportunity for artists to shock audiences into being more critical of the social systems that influence human behavior. After all, for a desublimatory action to take place, a sublimation or repression of an unsocialized ("natural") instinct of some sort would have occurred first. This is why DeBeauvior proclaims that the unrestrained libidinal nature of Sade's work demonstrates the degree to which he is not free. That is, for a transgression to occur, a social law restricting individual freedoms must be broken. Convulsive beauty, recorded in *Nadja* (1928) as surrealist mantra ("beauty will be convulsive or will not be at all"), became more than a model of transgressive sexuality. Over time, convulsive beauty also became a critical method for undermining confidence in the stability of the human mind and in the authority of social systems. Because of the influential nature Freud's ideas had on surrealist thought, it is fair to say that convulsive beauty emerged as an art of desublimation. However, it is also fair to say that the image of women played an important role in this emerging art form.

Breton's surrealist text, *Nadja*, for example, is famous for its expressions of "l'amour fou" and convulsive beauty. At the first sight of Nadja, the sexually deviant, mad muse of this work, Breton is struck with a mad love that jolts him into a new world where he begins to see the mechanizing forces of his society in a new way. In the same vein of psycho-sexual shock, Hans Bellmer's famous dolls posit dissected, sadistically contorted female bodies as expressions of repressed desires gone awry. Finally, combining the images of hysterical beauty and sexual fetishism, Salvador Dali's photomontage, *The Phenomenon of Ecstasy* (1933), displays a series of faces, resembling moments of ecstasy along with a repetition of body parts, ears, in a way

that lead the viewer's eye around the frame. In the mode of this repetition, we not only see Dali communicating the force of libidinal drives vis à vis hysteria and fetishism, but we also see an expression of those forces percolating beneath the very means of mass production and social automation. The work is, after all, organized by the principle of repetition en masse. Influenced heavily by psychoanalytic theories about hysteria and sexual perversion as physical evidence of social repression, each one of these examples explodes the shocking nature of sexual deviance to illuminate what the surrealists felt to be the restrictive nature of bourgeois society as well as the oppressive nature of the Taylorist and Fordist mentalities that came to define modern capitalism. So, convulsive beauty, in the form of Breton's Nadja, Bellmer's dolls, and Dali's ecstatic faces and fragmented ears, all portray the desublimation of desire whether it occurs under the guise of sexual promiscuity, sadism, hysteria, or fetishism. Each of these examples also figures images of women as the key to portraying the release of repressed desires.

Breton uses the image of Nadja as a prop in his narrative, an example of madness and sexuality that challenges the moral fictions of his society. After imagining Nadja observing people riding to and from work in the second class metro cars of Paris, Breton turns to his muse and, in mid-conversation with her, states, "How I loathe the servitude people try to hold up to me as being so valuable" (*Nadja* 68). Fundamentally surrealist in nature, this statement reveals the general disgust that this movement's practitioners felt at the sights of an early twentieth century where people moved mechanically in and out of metro cars and up and down streets, so alienated that they see and hear no one—not even Breton's beloved Nadja. Consider

also that, in Breton's eyes, Nadja symbolizes everything unencumbered by bourgeois culture. She embodies the very qualities of a child—innocent, imaginative, random, and irrational. In Breton's mind, she lives freely, but at the margins of society—in poverty and always one step away from prostitution. She is the perfect icon for Breton to hold up in contrast to city dwellers who are marked more by blind acceptance to bourgeois notions about the value of class status, work, marriage, and propriety than they are by any sense of freedom. Nadja, in fact, functions as the figure through which Breton ventriloquizes much of his critique that a new wave of industrialism coupled with conventional social values were producing overly-sublimated individuals as well as increasing social disinterest.

Nadja, on the other hand, stands on the Paris streets in contrast to the individuals who find ways to express their desires in a more sublimated manner as they shop or walk to work. As Breton narrates the experiences of his daily activities in Paris, he often describes Nadja as a figure who exists outside the social order. Upon noticing her standing in the midst of a busy sidewalk, he comments on the remarkable difference in her demeanor. She dresses oddly but stands upright observing, in still silence, the pedestrian flow around her. Moreover, on her eyelids, she wears eyeliner that reminds Breton of the actress Blanche Derval who portrays the sexually perverse character Mademoiselle Solange in the play *Les Détraquées*. She is outside the mainstream in every possible way and, as such, is Breton's portrait of desublimation. The feminine body constructed as an icon portraying desublimation is a familiar portrait in surrealism.

Bellmer began constructing and photographing the mutilated mannequin dolls

otherwise known as *Les Poupées* in Nazi Germany during the early thirties. The dolls stage sadistic violations of barely recognizable bodies. However, the youthfully feminine characteristics marking the bodies--mary-jane shoes, long, blonde, curly hair--are a crucial part of Bellmer's social critique. The most common argument about the dolls is that they signify what fascist societies fear most: the loss of control. These dolls represent the feminine weakness of the violated victim as well as the uncontrollable sexual desires of the victimizer. In Bellmer's case, the violated, fragmented feminine body becomes an icon to critically antagonize the role of control and authority in the fascist imagination. Much has been made of the fact that some of the dolls' legs form the shape of a swastika, thereby creating a symbol of a violated and weak Nazi social body. In a larger sense, though, the desublimated eruption of sadistic desires alludes to the failure of a restrictive society. That is, it entertains the possibility that a society that represses its members too much causes its members to lose control over expressing desire in socially acceptable ways. In any case, Bellmer categorically defines an essentially weaker feminine "other" to make his point.

There is, perhaps, no example more rich with the subtle complexities of convulsive beauty than what can be found in the images integrated into one of Dali's works. In the photomontage *The Phenomenon of Ecstasy*, Dali assembles a series of faces and arranges them in a way that lead the eye around the frame, exposing hysteria, chaos, and passion--the viewer, artist, and objects out of control--as sources of artistic inspiration. There are several levels of expression that arise from the link between repetition and sexuality in this work. The repetition of body parts denotes sexual fetishism and sexual obsession, unacceptable desires caught in a

compulsive drive to repeat the same action again and again. However, the repetition of parts also mirrors the assembly-line forces of mass reproduction. This dual sensibility links Freud and Marx in interpreting this piece, and, as a result, what we arrive at is possible commentary about the way that libidinal drives emerge contained and limited by what Erich Fromm calls "acquisitive drives" or commodity fetishism (488). That is, the economic and ideological drives that motivate individuals to produce and consume products on a massive scale also provides another outlet for assimilating transgressive desires. Herbert Marcuse's concept of repressive desublimation is another way of describing this co-opting phenomenon. Marcuse uses this term to describe the release of sexual impulses in a way that reinforces other socially conformist functions (76). To understand the photomontage as an articulated protest about the effects of commodity culture and repressive desublimation does not fully explain the relationship between the ecstatic faces and fragmented ears, though. There are other levels of interpretation to discuss.

The ecstatic faces are primarily those of women, and the ears appear large and masculine. Could it be that the sounds of ecstasy imagined coming from the mouths of these women, their faces thrown backward in the pose of hysteric passion, are intended for the ears of the men? When Fromm discusses the acquisitive drive, he refers to the narcissistic need in humans to feel important as it is redirected into the commodity market as a form of conspicuous consumption. Does Dali's photomontage also reveal a slightly different sort of acquisitive drive, a drive to appropriate the feminine? In *The Phenomenon of Ecstasy*, Dali shows the communication of sexual fulfillment connecting the faces and ears in this piece

becoming fragmented by a commodity market. However, another reading might tell us that what the commodity market has interrupted is the (now imagined silent) source of confirmation for men: women's ecstasy. Undeniably, the female faces launch a potential critique of modern capitalism in this photomontage. Whether one recognizes the female hysteric as an object of desire to be seen, an icon of madness juxtaposed against the forces of social automation, or whether one recognizes female faces of ecstasy as an object of desire that, when heard, confirm a sense of virility in men, the appropriation of the feminine remains a constant. In fact, it remains a constant in each of the examples presented by Breton, Bellmer, and Dali. Convulsive beauty as it is staged by these three surrealists also parallels what Marcuse refers to as controlled desublimation. Consider that Breton's romanticized version of hysterical beauty, Bellmer's fragmented bodies, and Dali's montage of ecstatic faces are all safely caged within a discourse of convulsive beauty that reinforces hegemonic codes of gender and sexual identity.

In the case of Dali's photomontage, codes of gender and sexuality also parallel Freud's descriptions of gender differences characterizing failed sublimations. In using icons representative of both hysteria and obsessive neuroses, Dali presents the range of psychoneuroses Freud outlines in "'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness" (1924). There is no mistaking the fact that the photomontage presents images of hysteria with a series of women's faces, while the images of sadistic compulsive behavior are represented by the series of men's ears. In this case, as in the case of Freud's essay, the expressions of unacceptable sexual instincts—hysteria and perversion—are also categorized according to gender. In

Freud's essay, he specifically depicts women as maintaining a more passive, weaker set of sexual instincts: "Quite frequently a brother is a sexual pervert, while his sister, who, being a woman, possesses a weaker sexual instinct, is a neurotic whose symptoms express the same inclinations as the perversions of her more sexually active brother" (191-92). Note that in Freud's language the term, "female neurotic," is clearly another descriptive term describing the weak constitution of the "hysteric." In contrast, Freud codes the "active" and "aggressive" behavior of the "pervert" as masculine in nature.

Freud excludes women from the category of "pervert" as early as his essay "The Aetiology of Hysteria" (1896) when he observes that the psychoneuroses of men are obsessive in nature because they can be traced to sexual aggression during childhood. Perceived as lacking the same aggressive nature in childhood, women would then rarely be diagnosed as seeking to repeat the same compulsive behavior over and over since they would not have a similar buried childhood memory. Such ideas categorize women as essentially capable of only one form of desublimatory behavior, hysteria, and render invisible the transgressive nature of female perversion. The significance, in terms of surrealism, is that the exclusion of women from the category of perversion also, very subtly, excludes them from more shocking (and potentially more socially critical) depictions of transgression. Still of great importance, though, is the way in which gendered representations of hysteria reveal a system of logic in early psychology wherein women's behavior is more closely related to the unconscious because they were believed to sublimate those impulses less effectively. However, the psychological study of neuroses linked to memories

buried in the unconscious mind reveals another important level of meaning in Dali's work.

On a visual level, the faces and ears of the photomontage form a chain that spirals around the frame toward a larger, somewhat centered photograph displaying the face of a hysteric woman. In two of Freud's early essays The "Aetiology of Hysteria" and "Sexuality in the Aetiology of the Neuroses" (1898), he characterizes hysteria and obsessive perversions as points of discovery in a chain of unconscious thoughts and memories that lead back to a sexually traumatic childhood experience that has been buried in the unconscious. Freud writes: "...after the chains of memories have converged, we come to the field of sexuality and to a small number of experiences which occur for the most part at the same period of life...in these experiences, it seems, that we are to look for the aetiology of hysteria" (200). Consider that on a symbolic level the chains of individual photographs in the photomontage double as erupting behaviors and memories that, converging together, present clues to discovering the root cause of the neurosis buried in the unconscious mind. How are we to then understand the placement of the hysteric woman as a focal point? It is possible that the montage of individual photographs surrounding this woman present the audience with the chains of behaviors, memories, and thoughts that make up her neurosis? There is another possibility. As a focal point, she could also symbolize the unconscious where the cause for neurosis (hysteria or obsession) has been buried. So, whether the images of female hysteria in this work symbolically represent the unconscious mind, unsublimated sexual instincts, or just plain madness, the common thread is the belief that the female body is weaker and therefore closer to

the unconscious.

Today scholars combining the study of surrealism with examinations of gender must identify important complications in the ways that the female body became appropriated and coded as a site manifesting expressions of repressed unconscious desires. This depiction of the female body as rife with expressions of sexual energy and madness emerges out of the influence of psychological theories on surrealist thought. From nineteenth-century analyses of female hysteria to Freud's later discussion of human sexuality, the field of psychology has traditionally portrayed the female body as a body more likely to remain child-like and less likely to effectively sublimate desire.

Surrealism and Psychology

The main source for such accounts of the female body originated in the medical communities of nineteenth century France.[1] During this time, many medical authorities claimed that hysteria was an inherent condition caused by the female reproductive organs. Authorities like Legrand Du Salle, a doctor at the Salpêtrière, named moral degeneracy as a main cause for hysteria (Matlock 154). By 1882, Henri Huchard suggested that hysteria was a form of sexual degeneracy that led to nymphomania (Matlock 155). So when Jean Marie Charcot took over the Salpêtrière in 1872, medical and psychoanalytic theories had already posited the female body as more likely to fall victim to hysteria whether the cause was physical, moral, mental,

[1] In Scenes of Seduction: Prostitution, Hysteria, and Reading Difference in Nineteenth Century France, Jann Matlock identifies depictions of sexuality as the common thread among medical descriptions of hysteria in nineteenth century France. Matlock describes the common characteristic in these discourses as a portrayal of "flooding sexual energies through defenseless bodies" (2).

or sexual. Charcot is famous for popularizing diagnoses of hysteria in the late nineteenth century and was known to orchestrate interrogations and treatments of hysterics in front of large audiences of medical students and social dignitaries. Freud was among Charcot's students in attendance during these famous lectures, and so it should be no surprise that Freud's theories on human sexuality were deeply influenced by the nineteenth-century medical and psychological theories.

In Freud's "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (1905), the unconscious is described as having primal sexual drives that are constantly being suppressed. Freud postulates that all humans are initially born to express sexual desire in a "polymorphous" fashion until they gain the socialization necessary to appropriately express these drives. According to Freud, this is largely because during the early years of infancy and childhood there is no unconscious to be repressed since the "mental dams" of "disgust, shame, and morality" have not impressed themselves in the child's mind (262). In Freud's mind, though, both children and women are more likely to be led (presumably by a stronger, aggressive force) into unacceptable sexual behaviors or even the perversions outlined in this essay: inversion (homosexuality), fetishism, scopophilia, bestiality, incest, sadism, and masochism. About the disposition toward polymorphous perversity, Freud writes:

> It is an instructive fact that under the influence of seduction children can become polymorphously perverse, and can be led into all possible kinds of sexual irregularities. This shows that an aptitude for them is innately present in their disposition. There is consequently little resistance towards carrying them out, since the mental dams—shame, disgust, and morality - have either

not yet been constructed at all or are only in course of construction, according to the age of the child. In this respect children behave in the same kind of way as an average uncultivated woman in whom the same polymorphously perverse disposition persists. (268)

The idea here about seduction and external influences as a developing force for psychological conflict (hysteria or perversity) in those persons more predisposed to it can be traced to Freud's essay "The Aetiology of Hysteria." Remember, this is the essay in which Freud argues that a psychosexual conflict can be traced to some act of sexual aggression experienced during childhood. However, in the cultural equation where women and children possess the same mental framework, a reality exists in which a woman's childhood never ends. Potentially, a woman could have a traumatic experience that might precipitate hysteria at any time during her life. This mirrors Charcot's own belief about the hysteric being "predisposed" to experiencing this disease.

The parallel characterization of women and children as figures more easily seduced is explored in later writings as well. What Freud begins in "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," he elaborates in his later discussion of the Oedipal/Electra complexes. Because a woman does not ever really have "true" castration fear, she does not fully process the important stages of socialization, does not reach the superego stage, and remains immature. Thus, she may not have the self-regulating mechanism to fend off a "clever seducer" (268). In other words, the female body is a body that never actually reaches the final stages of appropriate socialization. In describing the female body this way, Freud echoes the characterizations of women

created by the medical authorities of nineteenth-century France. Where Freud's thought departs from many of the theories of his time, though, is in the analysis that desires are repressed and/or sublimated and that psychological conflicts take physical and behavioral forms when those sublimations are no longer effective. However, even in these innovative analyses, cultural ideas about gender come into play. For example, if the prevalent logic in psychology is that the female body is weak and less capable of socialization then it also stands to reason that the female body would not be capable of a complete sublimation of sexual instincts either. So, when Freud characterizes hysteria as a weaker form of desublimation in "'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness," this characterization is tied to the belief that women remain partially unsublimated anyway. Using the same logic, women would only be capable of partial desublimations. (For a complete desublimation to occur, a complete sublimation would have to take place.) In a strange twist, as this logic informs the surrealist imagination, it also precludes women from representing the more shocking forms of sexual transgression. That is, it reserves the strongest forms of desublimations for those "stronger" bodies that have undergone full sublimation. Considering that most figures of women in surrealism take the place of hysterics (Dali), muses (Breton), or victims (Bellmer), this seems to be the case. In any event, within the discourse of psychology, women's bodies, defined as "weaker" bodies, were poised as sites more likely to exhibit failed sublimations, and, for this reason, they became attractive to surrealism.

Considering that Breton trained at a neuropsychiatric clinic during WWI as a medical student under one of Charcot's assistants, Raoul Leroy, it is fairly easy to

trace the impact psychology theories had in the early stages of surrealism (Foster 1).[2] It is no secret, for example, that Breton and Aragon rifled through Charcot's photographic records (*Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*) in search of inspirational images among the documented cases of hysteria (Foster 49). "Le Cinquantenaire de l'hystérie," an article by Breton and Aragon published in *La Révolution Surréaliste*, showcases some of the photographs from *Iconographie de la Salpêtrière* (Suleiman 105). Freud's ideas also made a significant impact on Breton when Freud's essays became available in translation in 1922 (Foster 2). Also, given the predilection medical theories had for characterizing the female body as predisposed to hysteria, perversity, and other physical or behavioral manifestations of desublimation, it is no wonder that surrealists appropriated and valorized figures like the female hysteric as an oppositional force that confounds and combats the rational thinking and repressive mores of bourgeois society. The female hysteric became a mascot for surrealism, playing the role of madness in opposition to social order, the role of chaos in opposition to Taylorist organization, and more generally, the role of nature in opposition to culture. The key complication here is that in the process of appropriating the female body in such a way, surrealists like Breton, Bellmer, and Dali reconstitute social repression with categories of gender and sexual difference even as they seek to liberate their society from such fixed categories. That is, they relegate the female body to the confinements of a gender defined by madness and a sexuality defined by male desire.

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[2] Both Hal Foster in Compulsive Beauty and Susan Suleiman in Subversive Intent mention Charcot's student, Joseph Babinski, as an influence on Breton's thinking. Freud and Babinski were contemporaries both students of Charcot. Breton worked with Babinski in a medical facility in La Pitié during WWI.

Very recently critics such as Whitney Chadwick have begun to assess the ways that women surrealists responded to such appropriations of the female body. The body of work produced by male surrealists, as Chadwick describes it, is marked by the inclination to "project their desires outward" onto the female body, while many women began exploring such differences using their own image (4) to resist the "voyeuristic gaze" of Western culture (11). What the following comparative analysis adds to such recent academic discourse is a discussion of the way that the photographer Claude Cahun and the writer Djuna Barnes respond to the concept of convulsive beauty as they deploy the strategy of simulation to stage the body of the hysteric and re-imagine that body through anamorphic representation and multivalent sexuality in their works. In Cahun's *Autoportrait no. 95* and Barnes' *Nightwood*, the female body does not operate as a vehicle to stage desublimations, but instead becomes a source to stage surrealist appropriations of the female body.

Simulations of Hysteria in Autoportrait 95 and Nightwood

The work of Laura Mulvey can be useful in analyzing how Cahun and Barnes orchestrate a theatrics for presenting the female body as both subject and object. Although Mulvey deals mainly with film narrative, her ideas about the ways that the staging of scene can influence how women occupy the role of a passive object to be viewed is important.[3] According to Mulvey, the camera or artist's presence in the staging of a realistic scene is lost, resulting in the naturalizing effect in which the spectator becomes an untroubled voyeur focused on the object of desire as it is manufactured for the audience. For the surrealist, the undisturbed voyeur/voyant

[3] I am drawing on Mulvey's ideas as they are articulated in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."

relationship that Mulvey discusses, it seems, can be disrupted in a couple of ways. The production of the scene can be foregrounded to destroy the sense of realism, thereby exposing the object of desire as mere fabrication, or the object of desire can be distorted so that it no longer resembles itself.

Cahun and Barnes manage to disturb the viewer's attention as the inanimate objects of a scene are fetishized in order to heighten the fabrication of the scene, calling attention to the object of desire as mere simulation. This strategy, simulation, is a method for drawing attention to the constructed nature of images, signs, and meanings. As Jean Baudrillard describes, simulation "plays at being an appearance" and yet results in "the radical negation of the sign" (6). That is, simulation calls attention to the fact that signs exist without referents or underlying truths grounded in some affirmed reality. As both Gilles Deleuze and Hal Foster have argued, simulation also undermines the hierarchy of "idea and representation" – the distinction between the notion of the original and true copy, an image that resembles the idea, and the bad copy that does not (97). In the Platonic idea of representation, "images [are] divided between proper claimants and false claimants to the idea, between good iconic copies that resemble the idea and bad fantasmic simulacra that insinuate it" (Foster 97). Both Cahun and Barnes simulate the female hysteric in order to call attention to the way that this image has been shaped and constructed in surrealist social texts as an idea that has no original truth.

In *Autoportrait 95*, Cahun stages the presentation of her body as it sinks and disappears into various forms of vegetation. She lies reclined, eyes closed and nearly nude except for an obviously fake animal skin that covers part of her body and a

large, singular animal tooth necklace, probably plastic, adorning her neck. By the nature of her expression, we can tell that this woman is in a completely dissociative state. In contrast to so many of the autoportraits where her body takes over the frame, here Cahun's body takes up a small portion of the lower area of the frame. The plants overwhelm most of the rest of the photograph. It is unclear as to whether this woman is being dangerously consumed by her surroundings or is merely in a deep sleep.

Some critics have suggested that Cahun's autoportraits produced in the late thirties, like this one, are less political than her earlier works on the basis that they are less radical in questioning gender assumptions (Kline 76). I disagree, though. The pose in this autoportrait, a woman reclining, eyes closed, head turned dramatically to the side, is far too similar to the images of hysterical beauty and ecstasy emerging in works like Dali's *The Phenomenon of Ecstasy*. The dissociative state she appears to be in, the division of her mind from "reality" as captured in her closed expression, was, in the minds of psychoanalysts like Charcot and Freud, the common symptomatic phenomenon of hysteria (Foster 49). I believe there is even more to this photograph than merely some kind of intertextual reference to hysteria, though.

The excessive attention given to the plants and other natural imagery seems undercut by the small samples of manufactured nativism such as the animal skin and tooth. It is as though Cahun has constructed a hard edginess within a pre-raphaelite portrait of nature and female sexuality. The play of natural vegetation and manufactured nativism brackets the category of the natural altogether. It seems to ask, is there anything "natural" about nature? Further still, Cahun has juxtaposed this figure's unknowable expression against objects and surroundings that denote

primativism. Does the assumed primative state exist? Finally, this woman, the object of desire, the "beloved object" of the photograph, does not return a gaze that would "invest all being with significance."[6] Is there anything womanly about woman? Does woman as the object of desire, the erotic muse or hysterical beauty projected into surrealist works like Dali's, exist? Further still, there is something incredibly curious about the perfectly shaped Victorian style ringlets worn by this woman. Are we to believe that this primordial, uncivilized woman woke up early to style her hair before falling back into her pose within the natural world? The fur, the tooth, and the clearly out of place Victorian hairstyle all produce a certain level of kitsch value within this photograph.

Consider also the implications of feminine figures in psychoanalytic theory like the hysteric. Woman, by virtue of her gender, is understood to remain in something of a pre-socialized existence ruled by uncontrollable desires. As Freud theorizes, women are less likely to reach the full stages of socialization, the super-ego stages, because they lack castration fear. So for some surrealists, "woman," who was thought to exist in some sort of pre-socialized state, became a perfect sort of muse to play the role of "nature" in opposition to the oppressive forces of "culture." Within the frame of this photograph, nothing exists outside of culture for Cahun. What we see in this photo is a simulation (or bad copy) of the culturally constructed object of desire in surrealist works. The obvious fakery of Cahun's strategically placed faux fur and tooth provide us with a humorously bad copy of the ecstatic.

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[6] I quote George Bataille here. In his study about eroticism, Bataille theorizes that individuation ceases and human connection restored when the "beloved" object returns the gaze of desire. In a sense, the closed eyes in this photograph draw attention to a failure to affirm the existence of a viewer. See P.21 of *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality*.

If Herbert Marcuse is right in that "the truly avant-garde works...communicate the break with communication," then Cahun's *Autoportrait no. 95* qualifies as a truly avant-garde work (68). It not only manages to communicate the break between signifier and signified, the image of the female hysteric and the lack of a corresponding truth to this image, but it also manages to communicate its difference from the representation of hysteria in works like *The Phenomenon of Ecstasy*. Cahun, by simulating the hysteric as well as calling attention to the surrealist appropriation of the feminine other, has found a way to make that image less meaningful (68). Are all women in art simply simulations--referents with no real truths behind them?

In order to draw attention to constructions of femininity as fantasy, Barnes also calls into question the categories of nature and culture as she simulates the female hysteric in *Nightwood*. By staging a scene wherein the main character of *Nightwood*, Robin Vote, appears as the overdrawn, "bad copy" of hysterical beauty, Barnes also produces questions about the construction of such figures in Breton's *Nadja*. The absurdity of Breton's mad love for Nadja is evident in the initial presentation of Robin Vote. Just as Breton is immediately struck by the image of Nadja as a figure existing outside the realm of rational bourgeois civilization, in this particular scene, Robin Vote's image is staged among a series of chaotic jungle like images, and Felix is stuck with a mad love for her. Barnes introduces Robin to her audience through the voyeuristic gaze of Felix.

Appearing as part dream image from a painting by proto-surrealist Henri Rouseau, the narrator paints a portrait of Robin so exotic and fantastic that her very pores emanate the smell of "earth-flesh" (34). In some sort of European hostel, Felix

first discovers Robin sleeping on a bed surrounded by natural chaos constituted by a "confusion of potted plants," "exotic palms," and "unseen birds" (34). The description of her body is equally as exotic as her surroundings:

> The perfume that her body exhaled was the quality of that earth-flesh, fungi, which smells of captured dampness and yet is so dry, overcast with the odour of oil of amber, which is an inner malady of the sea, making her seem as if she had invaded a sleep incautious and entire. Her skin was the texture of plant life, and beneath it one sensed a frame, broad, porous, and sleep-worn, as if sleep were a decay fishing her beneath the visible surface...Like a painting by the *douanier* Rousseau, she seemed to lie in a jungle trapped in a drawing room (in the apprehension of which the walls have made their escape), thrown in among the carnivorous flowers as their ration; the set, the property of an unseen *dompteur*, half lord, half promoter, over which one expects to hear the strains of an orchestra of wood winds render a serenade which will popularize the wilderness. (34-35)

This passage from *Nightwood* works on several levels. For all of the ways that Robin's body mirrors the natural vegetation with her "earth-flesh," many props in this scene seem just as manufactured as the fake fur in Cahun's autoportrait. The plants are "potted," and the so-called jungle is "trapped in a drawing room." And based on what we already know about the surrealist sensibility that conflates woman with the natural and primordial, we can see that Robin is not only not "natural," but also does not serve the role of erotic muse in the same way Nadja did for Breton. In Barnes' case, the persuasive force of the mad love that Felix experiences upon seeing Robin is

undermined by the narrator's inclusion of details that disrupts the audience's participation in his voyeurism. Specifically, Robin's clothing, "flannel trousers" and "lacquered pumps," reveal a certain level of plasticity and drag queen performance in the midst of such wild and natural vegetation (34).

The image of hysteric beauty is further undermined as Felix mistakes Robin's "pose of annihilation" as the fainting spell of a hysteric. This pose, so often depicted as the death-like throws of ecstasy in the photographic images of Charcot's patients at the Salpêtrière as well as in the ecstatic faces of Dali's photomontage, here becomes something of a joke. As Felix demands that her face be splashed with water and her wrists slapped, Robin sits up, stares straight at Felix and replies, "I was alright" (35).

What is more, the language used by Barnes seems, at times, "borrowed" from her surrealist contemporaries. Barnes' framing of Robin Vote in this scene not only plays with the association of women with nature generally, but also with associations made between women and nature in a passage of Louis Aragon's *Paris Peasant*. The passage of Aragon's text describes woman as a body interchangeable with the seas, mountains, and foliage of the natural landscape. At the end of this meditation, Aragon insists: "Woman has taken her seat in ethereal arena where all that is dust, butterfly powder, efflorescence and reflection becomes the effluvium of her flesh and the charm of her transit" (171). The language Aragon uses – "ethereal," "efflorescence," "reflection," and "effluvium" – elevates woman to a realm so ephemereal that she is virtually unknowable. Barnes develops a similar kind of language, a kind of language that denotes the unknowability of Robin Vote. However, in the *Nightwood* passage, she undermines Aragon's romanticism with

descriptive terms like "decay," "deteriorations," and "dampness" that make Robin Vote's body seem ephemeral and unknowable because it is deteriorating and corpse-like. Any romantically mysterious and unknowable qualities attributed to Robin Vote's body are attributed to her through the gaze of Felix—a gaze that mirrors the one Breton and Aragon develop for women in their texts.

Suleiman's idea that women surrealists respond intertextually and, at times, polemically applies appropriately to this scene of the narrative, for Barnes' passage can also be said to undermine the role of exoticism in surrealism in other subtle references. Barnes is not the only one to refer to Henri Rousseau as the "douanier Rousseau." Breton and other avant-gardists of the period also use the Rousseau's nickname, " le douanier," in discussions about the artist (Conley 123). Surrealists such as Breton revered Rousseau because of the so-called "primitive" quality characterizing the style and subject matter of his painting: brilliant color, fantastic dream images, and exotic non-western settings. In contrast, Barnes' passage calls attention to the association of women and the exotic in art generally.

With the jungle-like images and reclining female figure, Barnes text also refers to Henri Rousseau's painting, "The Dream," which contains dense and overwhelming jungle foliage that encapsulates a space where a reclining nude rests as though on a chaise lounge. The narrator's descriptive comparison between Robin's image and the painting calls attention to the obvious staging of such scenes. So we return to the same question, are all women in art merely simulations with no real truths behind them? To return to Barnes passage, the "set," or artistic scene where images are staged is "the property of an unseen dompteur." Just as this dompteur or

artist acts as a kind of ringmaster who controls our perception of the event, so, too, do Breton, Bellmer, Dali, Cahun and Barnes control our perception of convulsive beauty. What Cahun and Barnes' use of simulation provides is the sense of that surrealist construction. The image of hysteria works as another version of Rivière's account of womanliness as a mask with nothing beneath it. By calling up the image of hysteria, an image of a female body where lingering pre-oedipal, pre-conscious impulses created a convenient sense of primitive sexuality—of the *natural*--for surrealism, and then undermining the sense of reality afforded this image, Cahun and Barnes also set the stage to re-invent that body as no longer limited to the mask of womanliness.

Re-forming Transgressive Sexuality: The Anamorphic Bodies of Cahun and Barnes

The second strategy used by Cahun and Barnes to disrupt the perspective of their audience is the way that they distort the object of desire by staging the body as both anamorphic and abject. The term anamorphic stems from the Greek word, anamorphosis, which means "formed again." In art, though, anamorphic generally refers to the extreme distortion of an image that results in a dramatically altered perspective. It is in this regard that the anamorphic and abject seem to meet on common ground. As Julia Kristeva explains, when the object of desire becomes abject, when it causes a feeling of revulsion, it is at this point that it begins to be "what disturbs identity, system, [and] order" (4). The abject image, like the anamorphic image, has the potential to seriously challenge its audience precisely because it is an image that resides "beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable" (Kristeva 1). Perhaps yet another way to think about the anamorphic and

abject is through the French concept, *informe*, which refers to the formless or unrepresentable.[7] In Edwin Carels' estimation, for example, the anamorphic is "an intangible construction" viewable only "through a warped mirror" (196). Similarly, the abject, according to Kristeva, is an invocation of images that call attention to the limits of the signifying economy. It is a sort of invocation of what Lacan calls "lack" in that it revisits a moment in which the recognition of the self/other binary confounds one's sense of wholeness.[8] But Kristeva also describes the abject in terms of the fearing the reproductive female body. It is here, I think, that the application of Kristeva's ideas about the abject departs somewhat from the work of Cahun and Barnes. Both Cahun and Barnes tend to emphasize non-feminine and non-reproductive bodies. So when Cahun distorts the image of her own body into something that bears no marks of gender, and when Barnes re-shapes a female sexuality that bears no marks of heterosexual interest, they are also focusing their audience's point of view toward the limits of knowledge, and consequently, the margins of society.

In *Que me veux-tu?*, one of Cahun's rarely titled autoportraits, the artist poses as a two-headed hybrid. This pair of super-imposed, shaved heads are morphed

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[7] Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss provide an extensive discussion of *informe* as it relates to modern art in *Formless: A User's Guide*. The concept gained philosophical status in Georges Bataille's *Documents* in which he provided a "dictionary" entry for the term. He also refers to it as "a term that serves to bring things down in the world" and "gets itself squashed everywhere" (*Visions of Excess* 31). Bataille describes the purpose of *informe* as a subversive force that, because of its unclassifiable qualities, undermines hierarchies between terms: "...affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only *formless* amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit" (31).

[8] Lacan's idea of lack refers to the inability to create or sustain stable meaning. His analysis of the mirror-stage, for example, contends that upon visualizing the specular "I," the child misrecognizes the individual body as signifier or image symbolizing the self. What the child has witnessed is the self individuated and separate from the mother. Lack is a reference to the sense of incompleteness felt at the prospect of a non-existent "whole" self.

together at the shoulder and, rather than having them look into the camera, Cahun has her two heads search for something from one another. Perhaps playing with the idea of split subjectivities, the artist manages to demonstrate, through visual medium, the impossible task of "knowing" oneself. One of the heads is posed with a questioning look and the other, stiff, stoic, tight-lipped, and immobile, appears as though she refuses to answer the question, "What do you want from me?" More interesting, still, is the trademark shaved head and distorted body. Here is where Cahun transforms the object of desire, the female body, into something unrecognizable to the viewer. The shaved head and distorted body is a kind of staging of the abject. The body in this photograph is an image of sexual inversion, containing features that are neither "male" nor "female" nor even altogether quite human.

Cahun again approaches the limits of the viewer's knowledge as she stages her body in an autoportrait that Katy Kline aptly describes as an "anamorphic self-study in a void" (73). In this particular portrait, Cahun's head is shaved, photographically distorted, elongated, and pulled until it appears nearly cylindrical or cone-shaped. The ears are stretched and the bare shoulders are sharply ended so that the figure looks like a bust floating or peering out of a dark void. The gender traits are ambiguous. The stretched head, though, is nearly phallic in appearance. Kline attributes this mixing of gender traits to Cahun's interest in nineteenth century sexologist Havelock Ellis's idea of a third sex that is neither masculine nor feminine (71). Much has been made of the fact that Cahun translated Ellis's studies on sexuality into French. In his studies discussing homosexuality, Ellis claims that humans are born both male and female and that sexual orientation develops later. The

underlying logic of Ellis's study insinuates that because homosexuals (like all humans) are born male and female and because their sexual orientation is part of the same developmental phenomenon, homosexuals constitute another category--a 'third sex' (132). What Ellis offers is an alternative perspective to conventional thought about homosexuality during this time. Cultural understandings of homosexuality during this period often made the assumption that homosexuality is derivative of heterosexuality. Freud capitulates this thinking in "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" when he discusses inversion as a phenomenon where a homosexual man really believes he is a woman in search of a man (244). Soloman-Godeau considers Cahun's interest in Ellis's work crucial to understanding the androgynous images in her photographs as "rejections of female homosexuality as either deviant or imitative" (120). What we do see in the anamorphic images are bodies that defy the audience's impulses to find characteristics imitative of conventional gender roles or heterosexual behaviors.

In the lighting of this black and white photograph, Cahun's body appears as a hallucination against the void around it. In this case as well, the specular image disorients the viewer from owning the object of desire in any conventional sense. The idea of the unstable subject is an important aspect of these works. However, this particular figure of ghostliness and its combined distorted form also calls attention to the fragile nature of, not only the mind's inability to create and sustain meaning, but also the body's inability to create and sustain meaning --in particular, gendered meanings.

The central difference in these bodily distortions and other depictions of

convulsive beauty is the emphasis Cahun places on making her bodies appear non-gendered. So although other depictions of convulsive beauty, depictions such as Bellmer's dolls or Dali's montage, distort and stage abject realities with images of desublimating bodies—horrifying ones—they are still bodies that depend on categorical definitions of gender. What is horrifying about Bellmer's dolls, for example, is exactly what we recognize in them—the fact that they are coded as young defenseless women. In contrast, what is shocking about Cahun's bodies is exactly what we do not recognize in them. So anamorphic abjection is different than Freudian influenced images of perversion characterized by regressive desublimation because the use of anamorphic distortion calls attention to the formlessness of form, not the transgression of it.

Like Cahun's bodies that seem to exist as empty signifiers, Barnes' depiction of sexual practice in *Nightwood* challenges the reader to confront the limits of understanding sexual behavior. If much of this novel is driven by the sexual triangle that maintains Robin as the object of desire which defies possession and rotates characters in and out of the positions of her wanton, obsessed lovers, then the final scene of this work transforms this triangle and cancels out desire altogether. In this scene, Nora, one of Robin's lovers, searches for her dog and stumbles upon a light coming from a dilapidated chapel in the dark woods. There she witnesses a scene of unspeakable sexual behavior between Robin and her dog:

> ...Robin began going down. Sliding down she went; down, her hair swinging, her arms held out, and the dog stood there, rearing back, his forelegs slanting; his paws trembling under the trembling of his rump, his

> hackle standing; his mouth open, his tongue slung sideways over his sharp bight teeth; whining and waiting. And down she went, until her head swung against his; on all fours now, dragging her knees. The veins stood out on her neck, under her ears, swelled in her arms, and wide and throbbing rose up on her fingers as she moved forward. (169)

This shocking scene leaves Nora speechless. No character contemplations, no explanations, and no dialogue. Like those abject sexual scenes in Sade's texts, this, too, cannot be assimilated into normative conceptual structures. And since no voyeur (certainly not Nora anyway) can participate in her abject passion, Robin is released from her status as the object of desire. The sexual triangle that once kept Robin in focus as the object of desire has now, with the inclusion of an animal lover, been distorted and reformed into something new and perhaps not altogether human. Notice the way that Robin's own body, "on all fours," in this scene morphs into an animal shape in this passage.

The final shocking image of bestiality in *Nightwood* forces the reader to the limits of transgressive sexuality. Through the body of Robin Vote, Barnes stages a spectrum of perversion—beginning with sexual inversion and ending with bestiality—that maps a dynamics of regression. The depiction of sexual regression as transgression, a major feature of Bellmer's project, manifests itself a little differently in Barnes' text. Bellmer's re-eruption of the sexual impulse that presents itself as sexual sadism is a sublimated desire that has been desublimated. The result of Barnes' dynamics of regression is that the same body, Robin, experiences nearly every form of perversion outlined in Freud's essay on sexuality as opposed to

Bellmer's project where the same set of perversions are displayed as actions forced on different anonymous female bodies. In addition, the end result of Barnes' depiction of Robin's multivalent sexuality is a speechlessness that signifies the abject nature of the unspeakable and unknowable object of desire, Robin Vote. So when Barnes portrays Robin experiencing a multitude of the sexually deviant behaviors outlined in Freud's essay, she plays with the notion that sexuality can be formed and reformed. Rather than being on a strict trajectory of sublimation and desublimation, sexuality, as Barnes imagines it in *Nightwood*, can be reformulated outside a linear regression model. It is, in a sense, just as much anamorphic as it is multivalent or polymorphic. Still, another way to discuss the way Barnes' depiction of transgressive sexuality challenges the Freudian model is to look at the way transgressive female sexuality was portrayed in theories of psychology.

In several psychological theories about female sexuality, women are thought to lack the assertiveness and aggression necessary to fully indulge in shocking forms of perversion.[9] As previously suggested, Freud duplicates this belief as he describes the difference between masculine and feminine forms of perversion in which the "brother is a sexual pervert" and his sister, "being a woman," assumes the weaker version of his behavior by becoming "a neurotic whose symptoms express the same inclinations as the perversions of her sexually more active brother" (Freud 191). The weaker "feminine" version of perversion was depicted, in early psychology, as the neurosis known as hysteria while the more active "masculine" version was depicted

[9] Rita Felski documents this phenomenon more extensively in *The Gender of Modernity*. Another example Felski documents, besides Freud, is Gatian de Gaeton de Clérambault. This French psychologist studied fetishism and believed that women "lacked the transgressive erotic imagination characteristic of the true pervert" (184).

through descriptions of fetishism, sadism, masochism, and bestiality. Robin Vote assumes an active role in indulging the full range of transgressive sexual behaviors and, in the process, repudiates the one-dimensional image of female sexuality as it is portrayed in the figure of the hysteric.

The images of anamorphic bodies in Cahun's photographs and Barnes' narrative critically re-invent the representation of sexual radicalism that became part of convulsive beauty in early twentieth century surrealism. Underlying any analysis of the way that Cahun and Barnes develop convulsive beauty is the question that DeBeauvior poses in her critical commentary about the portrait of "woman" in surrealist texts. What is the key to revelation for women in surrealism? Certainly this question cannot be answered in any general sense. However, the works discussed so far suggest a more specific answer for Cahun and Barnes. Convulsive beauty as it is staged by Breton, Bellmer, Dali, and Aragon reinforces social and sexual difference as it incorporates the female body as a model of desublimation. The simulation of that model through critically staged images of hysteria and the replacement of that same model with images of anamorphic bodies poses an expanded version of convulsive beauty, one that creates the opportunity for a re-release of identity and libidinal current in surrealist ideology. This suggests that it is not some search for a singular revelation of "love" that energizes the work of Cahun and Barnes but the freedom to invent critically engaging expressions of sexual difference.

Chapter Five: Invention Without Bounds: The Marvelous Image in the Poems of Nancy Cunard and Stories of Leonora Carrington

Writing about surrealism in a 1927 issue of *The Outlook*, Nancy Cunard issues an implicit defense of the esoteric poetics characterizing this avant-garde movement as she states, "that a thing must be understood to be enjoyed is not more than fifty percent true" (Rosemont 26). Cunard continues her defense by explaining that "fine poetry gives the reader surprise at the writer's invention" (26). The primacy of an artist's freedom to invent rather than to follow defines a core surrealist belief: artistic expression should make full use of imaginative capabilities as a means for challenging bourgeois definitions for art. In this regard, surrealist writing is an anti-literature of sorts as it eschews any aesthetic sensibility and relies, instead, on forms of free association which encourage the writer to continually invent and re-invent meaning. Equally important to surrealism, though, is the potential for artistic invention to create surprise in the audience. In fact, one of the central purposes behind surrealist strategies for writing is not only to liberate the artist from the constraints of her own reality, but also for reality, as the audience knows it, to cease in its appearance as "normal." Cunard's descriptions of an experimental poetics promoting invention echo André Breton's discussions of the marvelous in his 1924 *Manifesto of Surrealism* where he outlines methods for inventing alternative perspectives of reality through the juxtaposition of unlike images, objects, or ideas.

In his first manifesto, Breton describes the development of an "imagination which knows no bounds" and the means for rendering it--the marvelous (4). The marvelous, a means for freeing the artist's discovery process from conventional

thought, invents imaginative possibility through contradiction. According to Breton, the marvelous is valuable precisely because "the value of the image depends upon the beauty of the spark obtained," a spark which is "a function of the difference of potential between the two conductors" (37). It is this moment of contradiction or confusion—"the difference of potential"—that defamiliarizes one from a conventional understanding of reality. In this regard, the marvelous functions as a method for bringing together two modes of thinking or two visions of the world. This moment of contradiction between the two also involves a moment of surprise at seeing the normal, or mundane in an unfamiliar light. In Cunard's article, this is described as a process of recognizing "fifty percent," or just half of what is communicated, as a force that brings an audience great surprise and discovery. Cunard's reference to "fifty-percent" is, in fact, a way of acknowledging that there is a component of meaning missing that has yet to be invented. In many cases, the process of discovery required to interpret a piece of surrealist writing acts as a revelation to the audience that reality need not be imagined as it is. The difficulty of trying to read the bizarre in a traditional way often, because of its ridiculousness, elicits laughter and undermines the authority of conventional thought.

Breton's manifestoes are full of such contradictory phrases. Max Morise's statement that "cephalpods have more reasons to hate progress than do quadrupeds," or Comte de Lautrémont's cryptic phrase, "the ruby of champagne" are two examples (38). Perhaps Lautrémont's most famous phrase "the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table" best incorporates the elements of surprise and discovery through a chance assembling of items from seemingly

different worlds. In this case, surprise is initiated by a confrontation with objects that appear non-analogous to the setting or reality in which they are found. The chance element in assembling these items is at the source of the invention or discovery process. It is what Breton refers to as "fortuitous juxtaposition"—a kind of accidental defamiliarization—so that the spontaneously assembled items present a process of invention for both artist and audience (37). The free association of the sewing machine, umbrella, and dissecting table is evidence of the way the unconscious aids in inventing something new.

Breton gives Lautrémont's famous assemblage a purely Freudian reading, explaining that the items represent repressed sexual desire as the umbrella can be interpreted as a symbol for a man, the sewing machine a woman, and the dissecting table a bed. However, the meaning attributed to this assemblage is, by no means, limited to one reading. In addition to perhaps making us laugh, the ridiculous juxtaposition of an umbrella and sewing machine against the sterile surroundings of a scientific laboratory somehow also asks us to re-evaluate the scientific authority given to such surroundings. Regardless of the interpretation, the key to accidental defamilarization is that it can be conjured up through exposure to everyday items. In this respect, surrealist thinking becomes accessible to everyone as it places the potential for illuminative, non-conformist revelations into everyday objects and individual experiences.

For surrealism, the marvelous is also about finding inspirations and creativity that have been buried or ignored. In the strictest (Bretonian) sense, it is a "fortuitous juxtaposition" that reveals the imaginative impulses and desires repressed through

years of socialization. In a broader sense, though, it can be described, using Pierre Reverdy's phrase, as the juxtaposition of "two distant realities" (Breton, 36). This more expanded description is useful because it captures the spirit of surrealist writing more generally. Although Breton defines surrealist methods as they are driven by "psychic automatism," the unconscious that freely links images or events together, not all surrealist writing need be composed entirely by chance. More purposeful juxtapositions seem to particularly fit certain forms of surrealist parody that rely on a more intertextual system of reference that aligns two different perspectives of reality. Much of the surrealist writing produced by Cunard and Carrington appears to have engaged the marvelous in both of these regards: as a spontaneous assemblage of seemingly unrelated items and as a slightly more purposeful juxtaposition of items.

In what follows, I analyze the way that the marvelous plays an important role in the work of Cunard and Carrington. In the early poems of Cunard and the early short stories of Carrington, the marvelous becomes the means to engage the fantastical worlds of alchemy and magic within the confinements of otherwise aristocratic or bourgeois settings. Both of these women come from families where social manners were of the utmost importance, and this, no doubt, influenced their attraction to the marvelous as a means for escape or as a means to challenge social constraints placed on women. Cunard's poems, "Sublunary" and "Bottles, Mirrors And Alchemy" as well as Carrington's "The Debutante" and "Cast Down by Sadness" capture the dream-like quality of the marvelous that derives from assembling images or events in an unexpected fashion. These early writings draw interesting and insightful parallels between the developments of these two women as

each adapts surrealist writing forms in ways that transport women from familiar bourgeois settings into active roles within fantastical worlds. Such works, when coupled with later writings such as Cunard's *Parallax* and Carrington's *The Hearing Trumpet*, also outline a more expanded use of the marvelous that includes forms of parody that pose specific questions about the ways that sexual difference is created.[1]

In *Parallax*, Cunard poses questions about the aesthetic authority afforded writers like T.S. Eliot as they construct particular visions of modern sexuality in their work. Carrington also features questions about the construction of models for feminine behavior as she parodies the authority bestowed upon administrators of social institutions in *The Hearing Trumpet*. Cunard assembles a number of freely-associated, somewhat nonsensical images along with very recognizable ones from *The Waste Land*. Among the assembled images there are the juxtaposition of refined women with those women who live on the street. Carrington's novel *The Hearing Trumpet* foregrounds the role of sexual difference in society and literature by using two intersecting plots. In the first plot, the novel's protagonist, Marian Leatherby, struggles to be free from the tyranny of being institutionalized in a home for elderly women. The second plot line involves a struggle to restore the Holy Grail to its proper home: an underworld cavern kept by a wild, winking goddess disguised as a nun. In both *Parallax* and *The Hearing Trumpet*, these writers juxtapose distant but connected worlds -- Eliot's careful literary method delivering themes of infertility against Cunard's free automatism and a nursing home against the backdrop of a

[1] Cunard's poems "Sublunary" and "Bottles, Mirrors And Alchemy" are part of the collected poems published under the book title, *Sublunary*, in 1923. *Parallax* was published in 1925. "The Debutante" was written by Carrington in 1937. The date for "Cast Down By Sadness" is somewhere between 1937 and 1940. The date of completion for The Hearing Trumpet is estimated by Kathy Wacker to be between 1942 and 1947.

hidden medieval history that reveals a goddess as the protector for the holy grail. Inventing new perspectives that parody authority and tradition, Cunard and Carrington, unlike Breton, sustain a form of the marvelous that is not primarily Freudian in nature. Instead, they re-invent the processes of surrealist discovery by expanding them to include a more feminist imagination.

A comparative analysis of Cunard and Carrington is a tempting one to make for reasons other than the similarities characterizing their responses to the challenges of surrealist writing methods. Both of these women also faced similar challenges in lived experiences. Descendants of staunch, wealthy British families, Cunard and Carrington defied the wishes of their parents to become part of the bohemian Paris culture during the twenties and thirties. Cunard arrived in Paris in the early twenties and, according to Hugh Ford, had already become "a commanding figure in Montparnasse" (xi). It was during this time that she befriended dadaists Man Ray and Tristan Tzara and began a romantic relationship with the surrealist Louis Aragon. Like Cunard, Carrington left England for the more liberated lifestyle the left bank of Paris offered. After being expelled from several schools, Carrington's parents finally agreed to send her to Amédée Ozenfant's art academy where she met Max Ernst in 1936 (Wacker 1). By 1937, Carrington and Ernst were living in Paris together, and Carrington was showing her paintings in a few surrealist exhibits (Conley 49). However, the relationships with Ernst and Aragon did not produce a ready invitation to assume public roles in the surrealist movement. Although there is evidence that Cunard and Carrington were privy to surrealist meetings and even participated in some surrealist exhibitions, it is clear that women never signed major manifestoes or

actively participated in high profile activities in the early years of surrealism. It was not until 1935 that women actually began signing surrealist tracts. However, the manifestoes that are most often cited today as being influential to the movement usually contain the signatures of surrealist men. Such notable exclusions did not stop either one of these women from adapting and developing surrealist writing methods to their own liking.

Alchemy and the Marvelous: The Role of Transformation in the poems of Nancy Cunard and Stories of Leonora Carrington

Alchemy often refers to the medieval practice that combines the study of chemical properties and metaphysical questions. At the most basic level, though, alchemy involves the transformation of the ordinary into the extraordinary, magical, or supernatural. The long standing interest expressed by Breton and many other surrealists in alchemy, magic, and the occult has been documented by many. It is not difficult to see the connection between this interest and the marvelous, either. After all, the marvelous is more than a technique for tapping into buried imaginative impulses. It is also about transformation. In the case of the marvelous, the transformation takes place on the level of individual perspectives and ordinary objects with the help of imagination.

Although surrealists are drawn to alchemy and the marvelous for similar reasons, depictions of alchemy and uses of the marvelous in surrealist writing point toward distinct differences in the work of women like Cunard and Carrington and that of Breton. In many instances, surrealists championed the association of women and

magic. The association was a bit romantic, though, with women playing the role of muse for the male surrealist. In such instances, woman was seen as "controlled by magic" rather than "in full control of their magical and alchemical powers" (Wacker 2). The writing of Cunard and Carrington departs from their fellow surrealists in that their works depict women whose connection to the supernatural issues a means to escape the boredom of domestic confinement. Thus, the female figures in their work are not mere receptacles for magic, but instead, they are active participants in the invocation and use of these powers.

Cunard's poem, "Sublunary," contains alchemy, magic, and impressions of an alternative metaphysical locale. The setting for this poem is a group of ancient ruins underneath a moon in the English countryside. In the literal situation of the poem, several friends join an alchemist in a secret meeting. It is here that they "adventure[d] into wizardry" (10). In conjuring up the magic services of a wizard, the friends attempt to gain a new vision of their own world as they open a portal into a past one. The images and language of the poem capture the moment this window into the past opens as boundaries of the past and present become blurred:

> The moon grew yet more slight, ethereal, western,
> And in the great worlds streets thin cats and ghosts
> Trod the transparent shadows, liberated
> By this rare interval of dark and dawn. (10)

The details of the modern world, stray cats walking along streets, could just as easily be an image of the past. By juxtaposing ghosts of the past with images of the present and by capturing that liminal "interval of time" between "dark and dawn" a feeling of

simultaneity is achieved. Through this integration of "two distant realities," the poem definitely demonstrates obvious characteristics of the marvelous as well as the sense of invention and imagination that accompanies those characteristics. The poem ends as the friends, transformed by their experience, leave the secret meeting.

"Bottles, Mirrors, And Alchemy" contains a similar emphasis on the importance of alchemy and magic to summon imagination and incite the transformation of individual perspectives. Unlike "Sublunary," where the magic happens well outside a bourgeois setting, in this poem, a magic portal is opened within domestic trappings. The literal situation is a tour of a friend's family estate, a task which the speaker initially finds full of "drowsy, pointless information" (31). However, along the tour, the speaker approaches an old room of the family home full of portraits she describes as "faded ancestor[s]" about whom "dark legends are told" (30). As the tour continues, the speaker summons an alchemist of the past and escapes the tedium of the day by falling "into a latent zone of fancies" (30). Drawing together the tedium of historical fact with supernatural magic, Cunard invents a new perspective of her speaker's present reality. Stuffy family portraits transform into mysterious connections to an untold past. We see, through this transformation, the possibilities of a present reality being rejuvenated by the latent stories and meanings obscured by the conventional and mundane narratives about the estate's history.

Certainly, one of the key differences between the use of the marvelous in the writing of Cunard and Carrington is one of volume. Cunard's use of the marvelous surfaces in some of her early poems but does not continue consistently throughout her writing career. By 1930, Cunard's interests had transitioned to the promotion and

preservation of the arts produced by the African diaspora. Works such as *Henry Music* (1930), poetry written to accompany jazz compositions by Henry Crowder, and *Negro Anthology* (1934), a collection of writings by members of the African diaspora across the globe, reflect this transition. However, Carrington's use of the marvelous can be traced throughout her writing and painting career. Early stories written in Paris during the thirties as well as works produced after her exile in Mexico remain surrealist in both form and content.

Stories such as "Cast Down by Sadness" and "The Debutante" (1937) illustrate Carrington's particular brand of the marvelous. Gloria Feman Orenstein describes Carrington's use of the marvelous as a juxtaposition of the present world with an "ancient" one that has been buried within "our history and our psyche" (58). Rich in emotive value and fantastic occurrences, Carrington's writing resembles an imaginative dream world rich with talking animals, unexplained specters, and incredible human transformations. Often challenging social expectation, Carrington's female characters exhibit, like Cunard's, a drive to escape the mental and physical confinements of their society. Instead of summoning a wizard or alchemist to create that portal to another reality, Carrington's characters often make that transition through their connection to the animal or spiritual world. In Orenstein's perspective, this is a world where the ancient may be equated with a kind of Jungian collective unconscious. The collective unconscious is Jung's term referring to a hidden cultural memory or universal unconsciousness in which all humans are connected. Carrington includes, in her version of a collective unconscious, all the flora and fauna of the natural world. So where Breton's use of the marvelous reveals latent sexual desires

consistent with a Freudian perspective, Carrington's employment of the marvelous reveals desires which are unlimited in terms of space and time, the spiritual and physical, or human and animal realms.

In "The Debutante," one of Carrington's female protagonists, disinterested in feminine social rituals, persuades a hyena to attend a debutante ball in her place. In order to produce an acceptable human disguise, the woman and hyena murder a maid and remove her face for the hyena's mask. When the hyena as impostor is finally discovered, it eats the mask and escapes the ball. Katharine Conley provides an evocative reading of this particular story, suggesting that the story reveals a hunger for "freedom, love, [and] the ability to create artistically" (55). In Conley's analysis, the latent desire in the work is the wish to expose a "wilder," "freer" self and rid oneself of the feminine mask society forces one to wear (51). This expressed desire to free oneself from social constraints is a common surrealist theme. However, the manner in which Carrington's writing presents this theme is somewhat unique. In much of Carrington's work a major character finds a double in a parallel, but connected animal or natural world. It is often through this double that repressed desires are revealed.

In "Cast Down by Sadness," a female narrator recalls an event where she stumbles upon a mansion and is met by a fantastic looking woman, Arabelle Pegase, dressed in "ostrich feathers," "lace," and "jewels" (53). The mansion appears fantastically structured as well. Described in the dream language of surrealism, it is a mix of things—"covered in sculptures and terraces...one beyond the other in stupefying confusion" (52). These dream images are folded together with very

conventional, bourgeois activities like formal dinners. The narrator of this story is invited to dine with Pegase and her son in the mansion where a ghost-like figure appears, floating at the table. Pegase follows the shadowy figure outside to a lake where she undresses and wrestles the spectre. The specter, a silent, luminous figure, resembles some sort of manifestation of the moon and is cast down from the sky in search of company. The specter also doubles for the protagonist who wanders in search of company as well. During the encounter, Pegase drowns fighting the ghost, her son turns to dust, and the narrator is left isolated and alone.

The character, Arabelle Pegase, adds a new series of twists to myths about self-love like the story of narcissus. In the Greek myth, Narcissus, catching his reflection in the water, falls in love with his own image and drowns. The associations between Arabelle Pegase and Narcissus emerge during the narrator's first meeting with her. From the ensuing conversation between these women, we find out that Pegase visits the lake often and weeps in amazement at her own beauty. A number of peacocks frequent the same lake, acting as the animal double to Pegase's presence. Pegase reinforces this connection as she admits to wearing "blue peacock underwear" decorated with "eyes embroidered all over it" (52). The eyes exist, she confesses, so that they can have the pleasure of her viewing her body all the time. Perhaps the greatest act of hubris committed by this woman is suggesting to the narrator that her beauty "rivals the moon" (51). Her narcissistic behavior borders on the perverse as she later proclaims that she makes herself beautiful for her son to enjoy and reminds him that he calls her "Little Sister" instead of mother.

Obviously the didactic element driving myths like the one about Narcissus is

to remind people that they are capable of drowning in their own self love and becoming oblivious to the needs of others. In terms of the collective unconscious, this story provides a more feminist warning about what happens when women believe their sole purpose is to attract the gaze of others. In Jung's collective unconscious, the experiences of humans form an ancestry that dates back to the beginning of human life and becomes passed down through time. Carrington's story embodies the breadth of this scope as she mixes both primal elements from the natural world, the moon, along with details of the modern world. Pegase performs the role of a female archetype, one who identifies with a patriarchal world where the feminine role is defined by sexual competition. So what might have appeared as an eccentric, rich, bourgeois mother of the modern world becomes, in Carrington's story, an image held up to the scrutiny of an older form of universal knowledge about the perversions of beauty and arrogance. In this way, the assembled images and spontaneous recanting of the fantastic story reveal previously buried aspects of the collective unconscious and a feminist warning about the destructiveness in turning female objectification into a sense of self-worth. Carrington's form of the marvelous excavates a very different kind of unconscious thought than what might be unearthed by Breton's description of the marvelous. Breton's understanding of the marvelous suggests that the fortuitous juxtaposition of spontaneously associated items can expose repressed elements of the individual unconscious mind. However, Carrington expands the individual unconscious to include a universal or collective unconscious—one in which female archetypes are brought to light.

Cunard's main criterion for "fine" poetry, that it give the reader surprise through inventiveness, was certainly not a lost concept in her own writing. Although, in the case of her long poem, *Parallax*, it seems to have been lost on many of those who have reviewed it. Written and published in 1925, *Parallax* demonstrates the influences of Cunard's involvement with the Surrealist Movement in its early stages. The poem has several of the hallmarks of surrealist writing: sudden free associations, a constantly changing setting or venue, the feeling of spontaneity that comes from the free indirect discourse referred to by surrealists as "automatic writing," a sense of parody, and odd or strangely placed images, such as a suddenly introduced skeleton or corpse-like figure. That the poem strikingly parallels these features of surrealist writing has been somewhat overlooked. This seems somewhat remarkable given the title Cunard uses for the poem. One meaning for the term parallax is a vantage point from which to view two elements. Essentially, this is one more way to describe the marvelous image that brings together two distant realities in a parallel fashion in order to create a new vantage point for an audience. Cunard's biographer, Anne Chisholm describes the poem as one of the best Cunard wrote, but does not connect its features to surrealism. Chisholm writes:

> *Parallax* is probably Nancy's best poetry. It recounts the thoughts, wanderings, imaginary and real, of a young poet, from London to Provence, Paris and Italy; he broods on love, age, friendship and aspiration, exploring his relationship with the past and the inspiration of great poetry and painting. The poem has powerful, sometimes obtrusive, links with T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, which had obviously had a profound impact on Nancy when it

was published in 1922. (98)

Early reviewers of the poem also emphasized the poem's resemblances to *The Waste Land*. One of Cunard's early critics, a reviewer for *Daily News*, described the poem as "a rather delirious echo of Mr. T.S. Eliot's Waste Land" (Chisholm 98). One reviewer for *Outlook*, however, characterized the poem as capturing the feeling of walking "a clear swept, trimly bordered garden path around the center of a volcano" (Chisholm 99). Ironically, all of these assessments contain an implicit or undergirding reference to some aspect of the poem's surrealist features. In the case of Chisholm's description, the poem does focus on the thoughts of a young poet who, like Eliot, explores his past and the inspiration of "great" literary traditions. However, the combination of such inspirations and the overall anti-literary qualities of the poem produce an inherent irony in the piece.

The fact the poem is a "delirious echo" of Eliot's work could not be more true. Many of the parallels between *The Waste Land* and *Parallax* seem too clearly communicated to be perceived as unintentional references. Cunard is not the first poet to respond to *The Waste Land* in a reflective manner either. William Carlos Williams's *Spring and All* integrates fragments of poetry and prose in a non-linear fashion while also juxtaposing the natural landscape against images of modern life. However, Williams's poem is purposely more affirmative toward modern life than Eliot's. Cunard's *Parallax* also incorporates fragments of experiences and juxtaposes the natural landscape against urban settings. However, in contrast to both Eliot and Williams, Cunard develops her poem in a more fluid style characteristic of automatic writing rather than in a minimalist style that emphasizes fragmentation. The poem

also shows a surrealist inclination toward the use of assemblage—an assemblage that juxtaposes Eliot's artistic inspirations against the anti-aesthetic tenets of Surrealist writing. Cunard also uses the Surrealist technique of "doubling" in a way that parodies Eliot's attempts to integrate various literary traditions.

Generally speaking, the purpose of a surrealist technique like doubling is to both recreate and subvert a socially constructed vision of "reality" by defamiliarizing an audience from an established idea. In "The Debutante" and "Cast Down By Sadness," Carrington constructs animal doubles for her characters that subvert the objectified images of women. The hyena in "The Debutante" showcases the artificial nature of the expectations for women as he wears a female mask and acts as a stand-in for a debutante. The peacock in "Cast Down By Sadness" mirrors the self-objectification of Arabelle Pegase. Leonora Carrington's *Self-Portrait: The Inn of the Dawn Horse* (1937) is another good example of this form of cultural critique. In this particular painting, Carrington calls attention to the way that the idea of "woman" is constructed and reproduced through by the stagnant familiarities of bourgeois domesticity. At first glance, we see these familiar trappings in a room decorated with soft blue walls, a window with classically styled gold curtains, and a seemingly benign blue and red slipper dressing chair. However, the woman sitting in the chair is unnaturally stiff and her gaze is locked in a frozen stare. Opposite her, a small fantastic beast with human eyes that exactly mirror the woman's also stare. Behind the seated woman, a white wooden rocking horse hangs on the wall and its double image, a free white horse, gallops away just outside the window. What these double images—woman/animal and wooden horse/real horse—work to convey is that a

bourgeois domestic concept of woman is as artificial, wooden, and unnatural as the wooden woman or wooden horse. The disruptive analogy of rocking horse/woman is at the center of this process of defamilarization. As the viewer recognizes the frightening resemblance between two unlike things in this instance, a wooden object and a human form, their confidence in what constitutes a domestic space or a woman is undermined.[2] In the case of this self-portrait, the two sets of doubled images also strike a discontinuous but parallel series of unlike or contradictory images—the kind of contradictory images that often characterize the marvelous.

In the case of Cunard's poem, Eliot's poetic persona can be seen in the figure of a serious, studious poet, and Tireseus from *The Waste Land* can be seen in the figure of a skeleton. Undermining the received notions of what makes literature, of what is aesthetic, and of the value afforded tradition, is one of the outcomes of these doubles in *Parallax*. Analyzing the use of doubling in *Parallax* is appropriate if one considers the way that doubling works as another form of surrealist juxtaposition. With this poem, the juxtaposition affords a certain level of parody. One can read it as an elaborate poem that operates by appropriating aspects of *The Waste Land* and making commentary on it by altering the already elaborate designs of Eliot. In evoking Eliot's work, in juxtaposing recognizable formulations of his poem against the spontaneity of automatic writing, Cunard levels the value of Eliot's allusive modernist aesthetic to her own writing expression. And, on their most basic level,

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[2] Katharine Conley also argues that this self-portrait presents a tension between domestic constraint and the desire for freedom. Conley's explication also takes into account biographical information so that the white horse represents Ernst and or surrealism while the Victorian chair represents Carrington's Victorian upbringing. For an extended discussion pertaining to this information see *Automatic Woman: The Representation of Woman in Surrealism* P.51-55. Other readings have suggested that the white horse is a symbol from Celtic mythology or a symbol of primal sexuality.

they are both rhetorical positions using a medium of expression—language—to communicate a message. Doubling is also a way of describing the poetic speaker's ethos in this poem. This doubled ethos, defined by a speaker that invokes and mimics Eliot's text as well as a speaker that offers a perspective different from that of Eliot, contradicts the implicit nostalgia for the past that can be found in his poem. More specifically, the alternative perspective offered in Cunard's text critiques the portrayal of female sexuality that exists in *The Waste Land*. Her own style, though, which appears spontaneous, carries emotional verve, and contains an air of verbosity, produces an ironic juxtaposition against the sparse abstractions of *The Waste Land*. The contradictory tension brought about by mixing together different perspectives and styles in this text produces the spark of discovery that Breton describes in his manifesto and the surprise revelation Cunard names as poetic inventiveness in her article. It is as if Cunard seems to say that in spite of the mythical allusions, complex metaphors, sparsely used language, and obscure references that make up his thoroughly modern style, Eliot remains old-fashioned.

It is important, as well, to emphasize how closely Cunard integrates familiar aspects of *The Waste Land*. After all, to simply paraphrase Eliot's vision of the past would certainly not capture the impact that his poem must have had on an audience that had likely never seen anything quite like the fragmentary scenes of the "unreal" city Eliot fashions. So impressive in its difficulty, originality, and its consistent appeal to a socially agreed claim about the destructiveness of war, it would be difficult to challenge the ethos Eliot's poetic speaker creates. For this reason, Cunard's incorporation of selected images, themes, and devices from *The Waste Land*

into her anti-aesthetic, writer- as-spontaneous-inventor style that assists in dramatizing Eliot's rhetoric of decline is particularly effective. This rhetoric of decline implies that a lack of spirituality, tradition, and strong leadership are some of the controlling factors in this decline.

It is possible to argue that *The Waste Land* is a project to expose the continuity between the past and present because it contains so many allusions to folk myths about fertility and vegetation rites as well as to old religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism. However, the images of the "unreal city" serve as a means to suggest that modern Londoners are disconnected from the past and one another. And, as many critics have noted, the implied vision in *The Waste Land* is that the social values and mores of the past were far better and less problematic than those of his present. The potential for disruption exists in *The Waste Land*, but Eliot works hard to bridge the disruption between past and present. The reconstruction of tradition, social habit, or anything that resembled the past, is exactly what the Surrealists wished to free themselves from. One role for a doubled ethos in Cunard's poem, then, is to call into question the reliability of only one perspective of the modern condition.

Consider the following comparison between the two poems. In *The Waste Land*, Eliot begins with images of infertility, "dead land," "dried tubers," and "dead trees" before taking the reader to witness several scenes which he believed would represent the social anomie of a post-war London. Then, Eliot, the would-be-speaker-poet, is effaced by the figure of Tireseus who leads the reader through several scenes: lower class women in a bar who discuss a recent abortion and a tawdry, indifferent sexual affair between a clerk and a typist. *Parallax* begins with the image

of a presumptuous "poet-fool" working from a rented room completely self-absorbed in his intellectual work. This work, described as a "tapping of brains" and "inquisitive tasting of hearts," portrays the poet-fool as a disaffected intellectual who exploits the minds and hearts of others as a means to create his vision (5). Here, in this room, the poet-fool produces an intellectual "credo" that "threads doubt with belief" (5). Next, the speaker of *Parallax* characterizes the poet-fool's nostalgic view of the past while calling up allusions to the images of disentegration offered in *The Waste Land*: "Earth, earth, with consuming breast,/Across its ruined waste, its tortuous acre" (5). A few lines later the speaker of *Parallax* comments: "This clouded fool,/This poet-fool must halt in every tavern/Observing the crusty wrecks of aftermath." This is, perhaps, a reference to Eliot's poem as it portrays the common lives of Londoners in bars during the last call for drinks and in other spaces of their daily lives. The position to pass judgement on other peoples' lives as though he "would have every milestone back of him" seems to point toward the falsity of taking any one individual perspective as an authoritative one (5).

Cunard, in the opening, treats us to two subjects – the speaker of *Parallax* and the poet-fool. Quickly though Cunard introduces us to a third figure, a skeleton, which effaces the poet-fool. This skeleton acts much like Eliot's Tireseus figure in *The Waste Land* as it visits scenes from a post-war London. In one scene, the reader is taken along the streets of London encountering street prostitutes on the way to a fashionable restaurant. Here Cunard mocks conservative perspectives of female sexuality by sarcastically commenting on the way the "skeleton" views the women: "O vulgar lures of a curl!/Tricks, catches, nimble fingered ruffian/adolescence/whose

beauty pulls/The will to fragments-"(6). Cunard's speaker ironically introduces a rhetorical question which does not make a hierarchical distinction between the prostitutes of the street and the moral aristocratic women inside the restaurant: "Lily and pleasant rose,/Street lily, alley rose/For all Love to be sold, who will not buy? Or how many prodigal francs/from serious patriarchal banks/Must build the card-house for this 'Grand Amour'" (7). The juxtaposition of these seemingly unlike images and their striking resemblance based on the system of patriarchal banks is another form the marvelous that creates a spark of contradiction and revelation. The juxtaposition of alley and pleasant rose highlights the false and hypocritical social distinctions made between "good" and "bad" female sexual practices. Furthermore, the question posed suggests a very different vision of past tradition than is offered by Eliot's perspective.

Eliot focuses on scenes that show infertility working primarily at the level of the common woman found in bars or in sexual affairs with lower-class clerks. The presentation of sexual practices based on "patriarchal banks" implicitly questions Eliot's treatment of the unmarried and presumably loveless sexual affair between the clerk and typist. In *The Waste Land*, this affair is treated as an example of the social anomie particular to a modern era where traditional mores have declined. What Cunard suggests in her post-war London scene is that, rather than a case of too much social change, there has not been enough of it. If sexual affairs are loveless, they are no different from traditional marriages since both aristocratic women (pleasant roses) and prostitutes (alley roses) are forced to sell themselves to the highest bidder. That is, rather than merely aiming her disdain at the present state of affairs as Eliot does,

Cunard, like many of the Surrealists, registers her disgust with the institution of marriage as it has continually shaped notions of proper sexual conduct. And it is in this way, that the juxtaposition of images—whore and wife—takes on the ability to portray and to make known, for the audience, the invisible reality that shapes their lives. What this juxtaposition connotes, in addition to announcing such binaries as whore/wife or bad sexual conduct/good sexual conduct, is a tension between past and present or tradition and transgression. It reveals, then, an awareness of how easily the reproduction of received social values, social thought, and social relationships becomes hidden even in the thoroughly modern literary imagination of Eliot.

In different moments throughout *Parallax*, Cunard captures Eliot's implicit nostalgia for the order of tradition as she paraphrases his purpose in the "poet-fool" who "murmurs about 'lost days'.../...look[s] in the deep wells of the sky and compose[s] the past" against a present day backdrop of "hill ruins," "grass ruins," "desiccated pools," and spider[s] in draughty husks" (12). This constant "doubling" of Eliot's textual elements inside her own free associative text, the purposefully assembled, juxtaposed images, the doubled speaking voice, all open the possibility for looking at Eliot's nostalgia, in spite of a devastating war, as not so unquestionably natural. The final lines of Cunard's poem capture the rhythm of Eliot's message to "give, sympathize, and control," only the final message is amended. It reads: "In doubt, in shame, in silence.'" (24) Although this rather enigmatic ending provides a number of possible interpretations, I tend to read it as a powerful suggestion about the failure in relying on the past to bridge different peoples and heal the social problems of the present. Instead of maintaining a sense of confidence in the ability for building

bridges to heal class difference through charity and sympathy, surrealists were generally in favor of the complete destruction of bourgeois class values. Cunard's message seems to indicate that a climate of change produces doubt in the confidence imbued in past modes for apprehending social values and does little to end a sense of embarrassment or discomfort felt by the bourgeoisie at the sight of working class people.

Playing upon the distinction between her critique of tradition and Eliot's call to reformulate it, Cunard engages the figure of the nostalgic poet-fool (Eliot), the ineffectual skeleton (Tireseus) and the poetic speaker of *Parallax*. In the figure of the poet-fool, we can see a perspective of modernism that has been constructed by the literary imagination of Eliot. With the figure of the skeleton, we can read Eliot's effort to anchor cultural tradition through the appropriation of traditional literary images like Tireseus. Finally, in the speaker of *Parallax*, we not only see Eliot's efforts parodied in the surrealist vein, but we also see post-war London in lieu of historical, cultural and social reproduction.

Under the intellectual circumstances of the marvelous, surrealist automatism, and parody, Cunard formulates a space to discuss the social direction of a modern literary imagination as it constructs ideas for what constitutes acceptable sexual and social behavior. The word that holds the title of Cunard's text, parallax, refers to both a sense of change as well as two distinct viewpoints from which to view a given object. Given the nature of the text, the title is a provocative choice. If the object, in this case, is modernism, then the title alludes to Cunard's own participation in the articulation of difference between two perspectives of modernism, Eliot's and her

own, as it regards tradition and defines social reality. Like the "dialectic optic" that Walter Benjamin speaks of, a method of comprehension that "perceives the everyday as impenetrable" and "the impenetrable as everyday," so, too, Cunard renders a method of seeing the residue of social and cultural tradition as impenetrable in both ideology and in art (190). Benjamin's term, "dialectic optic," is yet one more way of describing the effect of the marvelous to create tension between two seemingly unlike terms that invent a new form of comprehension. The distance between the perspectives offered in the texts of Eliot and Cunard and juxtaposed in *Parallax* produce that tension. In Carrington's novel, *The Hearing Trumpet*, the tension is created by the juxtaposition of two parallel worlds with seemingly unrelated plots.

The Hearing Trumpet is nothing if not fundamentally surrealist in nature. Carrington assembles a variety of otherworldly dream images to playfully undermine a discourse of reason that prevails in the most oppressive of places - a mental institution. A cloud transforms into a large queen bee wearing an "iron crown" and "chrystalline wings" (148). A six winged beast breaks out of a tower where it has been incarcerated. The protagonist meets her double stirring a pot of stew in an underworld cavern. By the end of the novel, a group of wolf-headed beings drive around in an ark with central heating. All of these images and many others are juxtaposed against tyrannical forms of authority found in mental and religious institutions.

The Hearing Trumpet is Carrington's most famous surrealist work. It was written in Mexico some time after her move there in 1942 and the exact date it was completed is not clearly documented, but Kathy Wacker estimates that it was

sometime in the late forties (3). This text was lost for many years, eventually rediscovered and published in French in 1974 (Byatt vii). Several critics have been quick to note similarities between this work and *Down Below*, an autobiographically based account of her incarceration in a mental institution in Spain. Carrington is sharp in her message about the exploitation of patients in mental institutions, too.

Marian Leatherby, a sharp-witted elderly woman, is sent by her family to live in an institution. Administrative authority at this institution is channeled through the guises of medical and religious expertise that are used to justify social injustice. The critique of administrative authority at such institutions is parodied through a variety of absurdities. For example, the administrator's diagnosis of Marian's inability to adjust institutionalized life is couched in the posture of self-evident reason, but remains odd and unwarranted. To Marian the administrator states: "Live your daily tasks with attention and effort...Vice and Habit mean the same thing. As long as we are victims of Habit we are slaves to Vice. I advise you to begin by giving up cauliflower" (58). Although cauliflower abstinence is a ridiculous cure for Marian's so-called greed, the administrator, who takes on the psuedo-role of a priest giving penance, attempts to convince her to accept his diagnosis and cure purely based on his imagined authority. Denying her the not-so sensual pleasure of eating this blasé vegetable only serves to demonstrate as an example of the power wielded over her. Carrington also takes a stab at the kind of ridiculous penance often given during religious confessional. In the case of this novel, the role of priest and mental institution administrator has been blended into one being.

Social injustice emerges in many forms. A patient's worth is reduced to a

quantifiable cash figure. Those patients whose families pay "extras" have more rights than those who do not. When Natcha Gonzales (who is adored by the administration for her "Holy Visions") kills the elderly cross-dresser, Maude, the administrators fail to remove her until someone pays double her worth to have her removed.

The critique of authority is not limited to mental institutions, though. Carrington also parodies the authority of the Church as she integrates the story of the winking abbess, Doña Rosalinda. In fact, it is at this point in Carrington's work that the two worlds—modern nursing home and medieval church—seem to be most strongly juxtaposed. At this point of juxtaposition it also becomes most clear, as Breton might say, that, for Marian, "existence is elsewhere" (47). That is, the imaginatively rediscovered medieval world, the world of the abbess, drives Marian's thoughts and enables her to uncover the debris of lies that exist to uphold unsubstantiated forms of authority from the priests of Doña Rosalinda's time to medical administrators of Marian's time.

Marian first uncovers several mysteries about this strange nun. She reads a two- hundred-year-old letter written by a priest that protests the canonization of the abbess. The priest objects to her canonization based on evidence that she has "a knowledge of herbs," performs "orgiastic dancing," poisons an aristocrat, and writes manuscripts decorated with "Dodo skins decorated with small rubies" (98). Apparently, another claim the priest makes against the abbess is that she is also said to have levitated with a bishop after smelling blue vapors and later gives birth to a winged boy before fragmenting into a multitude of pieces.

Such information parodies the church's authority in a couple of ways. Since

we know, based on Marian's telekinetic connection with the abbess, that Doña Rosalinda truly has otherworldly, non-church sanctioned powers, the fact that the church, in spite of the priest's unbelievable charges, canonizes her anyway proves that it does not possess the power to perceive any event, person or thing that exists outside of the reality defined by religious law. Also, because smelling blue vapors seems more appealing than the traditional religious course of actions defined by self-flagellation, the abbess's actions seem more interesting and acceptable. In turn, this undermines the letter's persuasiveness in convincing us that Doña Rosalinda is some sort of evil witch. Marian's reaction to the letter confirms this point: "The fact that the snooping priest, Dominico Eucaristo Deseos, had done his best to portray her in a pernicious light, hardly distorted the purity of her original image. She must have been a remarkable woman" (128). Another reading of his is that it is actually a satire of the way that religious and moral authorities influence historical depictions of women. Only in Carrington's world it is the priest who pays. Carrington mentions that the church beheads the priest for his heretical remarks.

Suleiman describes *The Hearing Trumpet* as "closer to Surrealist parody in the manner of Aragon, Desnos, or Peret" only "told from a different subject position" (172). In her parodies of authority, Carrington also includes an awareness of sexual difference. Suleiman argues that this sexual difference manifests itself in two primary forms. Marian is institutionalized because she is an elderly woman whose family wants her out of the way and whose place in society becomes devalued as a result of her waning beauty. Another way that the issue of sexual difference comes into play is through the re-invention of traditional literary tales. The Holy Grail is

returned to the care of Doña Rosalinda, who operates as a female deity. Re-investing these older tales with a sense of feminine contributions to a larger collective unconscious is a consistent trait in Carrington's work. However, I would also add that Carrington's novel also establishes an inquiry into the ways that forms of authority are culturally reproduced over time and re-emerge in new guises. After all, the institution Marian resides in carries all the traces of a convent of the past. It is an all-female institution, the painting of the abbess resides within it as a sort of time portal, and the administrator acts as a kind of bishop or priest. In this blending of time and place, we do see humorous accounts of the ineffectuality of sanctioned authority. The bishops and priests acting as directors over the life of Doña Rosalinda are as ineffectual as the administrators of Marian's mental institution. In addition, though, there seems to be included in the mix a general mockery of myth and tradition -- myths as outworn as the quest for the Holy Grail and traditions as outworn as penance and self-denial. Carrington's humor and creative inventiveness challenges the serious - even pious - qualities bestowed upon social authority. The inventive qualities of Cunard's text, *Parallax*, perform a similar function. In both these works, we see new manifestations of surrealist methods for rendering the effects of the marvelous in socially critical ways.

Not bound by any steadfast set of artistic rules governing its employment, the marvelous image exists as a general heuristic for creating challenges to various forms of social authority. The processes of invention and discovery rendered by surrealism's marvelous image in Cunard's and Carrington's work show the way that the marvelous image can be adapted and expanded to include a more feminist

imagination. In light of their contributions to surrealism, the historical obscurity of these women can seem somewhat baffling. However, the roles Nancy Cunard and Leonora Carrington played in surrealism have traditionally been defined by their involvement with their more famous male counterparts, Louis Aragon and Max Ernst. Until the recent scholarly re-evaluation of writers like Cunard and Carrington, the commonly held myth was that the main contribution such women made was in the role of eccentric lover. It is true that Cunard and Carrington moved to Paris and became participants in the surrealist avant-garde between the first and second world war. Their involvement with the avant-garde hardly began or ended with their romantic relationships, though. Suleiman's descriptive phrase identifying womens' social situation within the avant-garde, "the double margin," is one way to explain the lack of critical attention writers like Cunard and Carrington have received (14). Because the modernist avant-garde positioned itself at the social margins and because women inhabited a marginal space within those avant-garde circles, the artistic production of writers like Cunard and Carrington become doubly displaced. It is not astonishing, then, that the work of Cunard and Carrington has only begun to receive attention for the inventive qualities that mark surrealist texts. Displaced or not, the inventive qualities of surrealist methods combine with a feminist imagination in their writing and continue to produce surprise and discovery in a new audience of readers.

Conclusion: Disruptive Analogy and Women of the Avant-Garde

Examining the role European avant-garde movements play in the development of modernist works is important because it offers key insights into how many

divergent ideological perspectives existed within a short period of artistic production, roughly those fifty years during the first half of the twentieth-century. So often it has been the case that literary scholarship becomes focused on writers such as Pound and Eliot; and while it is not my intent to hold them up as straw-men targets, it is appropriate to acknowledge that both writers reach back to the myths and traditions of the past in order to yoke old cultural legacies to their present time. Such a move is analogical in nature, and it relies on the strategic presentation of resemblances between old and new in order to renew cultural values instead of transforming them.[3] However, as I have suggested, the poetry and prose of modern ex-patriots such as Loy, H.D., Barnes, Cunard, and Carrington show us alternative methods of analogical comparison, ones that emphasize the separation of past values and present ideas.

All the avant-garde methods I have discussed – dynamism and the drama of objects, montage, convulsive beauty, and the marvelous – utilize the principle of disruptive analogy. Rather than constructing a bridge to embrace the past, the shocking and disorienting enterprise of producing a disruptive analogy pushes audiences to look at tradition from a critical distance because it forces bizarre and unlikely comparisons among images, objects, or ideas, resulting in either an audience's struggle to find similarity at all or in an audience's struggle to deal with a shocking and unforeseen similarity. Thus, the purpose of disruptive analogy is to interrupt conventional ways of thinking through defamiliarization, to open up new

[3] See Pamela Genova's discussion of Octavio Paz and modernism in "How Modern is the Surreal?" Genova writes: "It is the embracing of a plurality of traditions, as witnessed in the work of such celebrated Modernists as Pound and Eliot, that leads to the perception of the movement as a return to classical tradition. Paz suggests that the aesthetic principles of Surrealism turn away from a reintegration of Europe's legends and rites, and attack the alters and institutions of the past, embodying more a spirit of *revolution* than *restoration*" (85).

ways of seeing relationships among images, objects, or ideas, and to separate art from the repressiveness of the past. In the case of futurism and the drama of objects, Loy and Wulz disrupt the representation of realism by distorting the spatial perspective of objects and the concepts of domesticity and womanhood associated with them. Following suit, H.D. and Höch draw on the montage techniques for assembling odd juxtapositions in order to disrupt the process of perception, revealing the possible alienation of the object or image apprehended by an audience from the ideas of femininity and sexual identity attached to the same image or object. Disruptive analogy emerges again with convulsive beauty and the emphasis on a disparity between a coherent reality in which social norms sustain order and the transgressive impulses of humans disrupting mental and bodily control. Cahun and Barnes, in this case, shock audiences by relating psychological regression to unthinkable forms of deviant female sexuality and by forcing audiences to look at the possibility of non-gendered bodies. Finally, Carrington and Cunard manage to disrupt worlds as they deploy the double perspective of the marvelous to disintegrate the boundaries between the worlds of fantasy and institutional authority in order to re-determine the logic defining how women should live. These findings demonstrate the degree to which avant-garde techniques became accessible tools for women during this time as well as the manner in which they aided critical inquiry into the construction of gender and sexual difference.

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