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**The Modernist Crisis of Meaning:
Parallels in Stream of Consciousness Writing and Avant-garde Cinema
across Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States.**



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Introduction

If not totally new in kind, modernist innovation *was* spectacularly, inescapably new in extent (...) A contemporary urge not just for change, but to ‘change everything’...

(Stevenson 1992: 5, original emphasis)

When Virginia Woolf decreed that “On or about December 1910 human character changed” (1966: 320) she rather neatly encapsulated the birth of Modernism, a time which dismantled the meliorist myth and many of the grand narratives that had defined human society in the preceding centuries. Culturally, the modernists sought to break and remake society, intellectually, they considered themselves in the new light of psychoanalysis and aesthetically, they were desirous of new, authentic forms of creative expression. These radical social, philosophical and artistic upheavals are well documented and manifested themselves in various, compelling ways across multiple forms of art making. Of particular note, is the rise of the stream of consciousness narrative, a mode employed perhaps most notably by Joyce, Woolf and Faulkner, which dialectically embodies both the modern breakdown of meaning and an intense desire to shape and construct human experience anew through language. Simultaneously, during the early twentieth century silent cinema flourished, and in particular the development of an utterly new genre of avant-garde cinema saw a swathe of filmmakers like Wiene, Vertov and Buñuel fixated upon heightened images and film’s relationship to reality.

While most scholars, from Bluestone (1957) to Kellman (1987) passing through Murray (1972), assert that novels and cinema are just ontologically different - as Kellman so succinctly identifies: “the most elementary observations on film and literature begin with the realization that the medium of the first is images, whereas the medium of the second is words,” (1987: 473-4) - and in essence that it is therefore fruitless to compare them, in this dissertation I am

nevertheless interested in exploring the parallels that exist between stream of consciousness writing and early experimental cinema during the Modernist era by studying these two distinct artistic movements in tandem. By choosing to reject, as Cohen does, the accepted antithetical binary of “word against image” (1979: 3), I instead intend to consider how both of these new forms of expression grappled similarly with questions of meaning in an epoch of change and uncertainty.

The purpose of this dissertation is not to contend that literature and film are identical, because plainly they aren't. Nor is it to propose that Faulkner was a Vertov enthusiast, nor that Buñuel devoured the pages of Joyce, or that Woolf watched Wiene. Although she did, in fact, and it was an experience which led her to contemplate whether “thought could be conveyed by shape more effectively than by words” (Woolf 1954, 215-216). As, despite this affiliation, it would be naïve to doggedly argue that these individual creators were profoundly, or alternately, not at all aware of and influenced by their artistic contemporaries across mediums, and moreover, impossible to meaningfully substantiate. Rather, I pose that during the Modernist epoch there existed a proliferation of broadly similar artistic works across different mediums - particularly between literature and film - in the locus point of the Western world; Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States. Furthermore, this broad similarity, in both construction and content, is attributable to same phenomenon that in the realm of science is termed the theory of multiple discovery. Throughout recent history many sociologists have chronicled that some fifteen hundred scientific discoveries which were thought to be unique or individual were in fact multiples of one another that developed separately - ergo by different scientists in different places - but chronologically in tandem (Brannigan & Wanner 1983: 140). One of the most widely accepted theories that ascribes causation to this phenomenon is Kroeber's conception of cultural determinism and his suggestion that these simultaneous inventions “provide evidence for the inevitable maturational development of human societies” and elucidate universal patterns in culture and cultural production (qtd. in Brannigan & Wanner 1983: 136).

As Malcolm Gladwell poetically phrases it in his own, more discursive writings on multiple discoveries, these new ideas, these inventions, “must be in the air, products of the intellectual climate of a specific time and place” (2008, online), must be, as it were, in the zeitgeist.

While the premise of new ideas just floating ‘in the air,’ may initially appear a little esoteric or uncritical, I believe it actually provides a succinct way to epitomise what I seek to uncover in this thesis: whether similar cultural milieus informed by global events, intertwined histories and shared preceding scientific, intellectual, philosophical and artistic movements, naturally lead to broadly similar forms of cultural production, even when these forms of production are new, and are employed across different mediums. Given that we already accept Modernism as a kind of unified or codified movement which operated across a number of cultural modes and in a number of different cultural spaces, we can further take into account the fact that “five people came up with the steamboat, and nine people came up with the telescope” (Gladwell: 2008). That is, I propose that we can similarly accept that while each steamboat and telescope was in some way a unique or distinct manifestation of their creator’s vision, they were developed in light of extremely similar purposes, conditions and ideas. Ergo, we can look to stream of consciousness writing and early avant-garde cinema for their similarities rather than their differences. Thus, while I am also not implying that Faulkner, Vertov, Woolf et al., had identical lived experiences, styles, artistic purposes or texts, it can certainly be argued that they belonged to the same broad artistic and intellectual milieu, and thus, as Gladwell would say, breathed in at least some of the same air.

The question then of what exactly was in the air that these composers breathed in is necessary to define and bring some parameters to this discussion. It is well established that, among many other factors, the unprecedented destruction of World War I irrevocably shook the sensibilities and beliefs of the West. So did Freud’s work. However, beyond these rich contextual conditions, which are, and could be the sole discussion of papers much larger in scope than this one, it is the essential transformation of meaning and certainty which occurred

during this time, both as a phenomenological experience and in terms of textual manifestations, which is at the core of this study. Certainly, it must be acknowledged that if we trace the literary tradition back to the Classical era we encounter Plato, whose analysis of the mimetic process of writing already perceived poetry - as a representation of reality based in feeling rather than knowledge - in essence as a “degraded copy” (Leitch 2001: 7) or “distorted image” which fundamentally failed to “capture the likeness of the original” (Plato qtd. in Leitch 2001: 50), that is, as something which fails to make the meaning it intends. Yet, it must also be stated that Plato equally perceived the potential reception or interpretation of poems to be so powerful as to be dangerous (qtd. in Leitch 2001: 35-6). Jumping forward to the end of what can be argued as one of history’s most illustrious dramatic careers, Shakespeare’s final play, *The Tempest* - critically accepted by a plethora of critics as an allegorical farewell to his craft (Homan 1973) - culminates with Prospero’s famed soliloquy where he laments that “These our actors, As I foretold you, were all spirits, and Are melted into air, into thin air (...) like the baseless fabric of this vision” (2000: 687). This aching recognition of the insubstantiality or meaningless of his world, becomes a dramatic surrogate for Shakespeare’s own creations. Yet simultaneously this soliloquy also embodies a commentary on the “gorgeous” (2000: 687) quality of this imagined space, owing perhaps to a humanist, Renaissance faith in the arts and a more singular sense that audience appreciation of a dramatic work justified its own existence, upheld its own coherent meaning (Homan 1973: 76). Likewise, well into the eighteenth century even as the novel became the dominant mode of written expression and this kind of “scepticism about language” grew, despite the semantic acknowledgement that “words did not all stand for real objects, or did not stand for them in the same way,” there was still a sense that philosophy could solve this “problem” and “discover their rationale” (Watt 2000: 27-8). This, I would contend, is the primary distinction between Modernism and the periods of artistic production that preceded it. In a Modernist light the question of meaning and how it can be meaningfully expressed in textual productions not only amplified, but - for both creators and critics - became

divorced from the more steadfast certainty in its power, beauty or ability to be concretely known, which had maintained a sense of epistemological stability in preceding eras. In no small part because, as modernist poet and essayist T. S. Eliot himself articulated, the world “is itself meaningless” (qtd. in Quigley 2015: 1). Thus, whilst an interrogation of meaning is not new, it takes on a particularly heightened importance during the Modernist epoch, and becomes, as I have termed, a crisis.

Given this preoccupation with meaning, in the broader sense and in context of textual construction, what these artists breathed out of their shared milieu, out of this zeitgeist, is then of far greater importance to this dissertation. That is, how these writers and filmmakers translated their experience of the Modern existence - with all of its requisite instability and doubt as to objective certainties - into works of art that expressed new realities of consciousness and distinctly subjective, interior worlds. Modernist authors turned to stream of consciousness writing; a literary mode, which Humphrey in his expansive study critically distilled to a thematic study of consciousness itself, at all levels from the most “inchoate” to the highest realm of “rational communicable awareness” (1958: 2). This style, as Bowling also effectively summarised in his early studies, was characterised by two particularly distinct artistic choices. Firstly, in contrast to internal monologue - which characteristically featured an “active mind” which reconciled its own impressions with concrete thoughts and ideas - stream of consciousness writing rather channelled a “passive” mind, concerned only with the sensory impressions of the moment, or “pure sensations and images” (1950: 342). Secondly, Bowling suggests that stream of consciousness writing “attempts to give a direct quotation of the mind,” as Humphrey would similarly attest, “not merely of the language area but of the whole consciousness,” and critically “without any intervention by way of comment or explanation on the part of the author” (1950: 345). At the same time, these authors’ avant-garde contemporaries also developed a handful of their own aesthetic models across the different European-American film schools. While unique - and I certainly acknowledge and appreciate the nuance which

separates the unpredictable, collaged images of Man Ray's New York dada and surrealist "cinepoem" *Emak-Bakia* (1926) (Ray qtd. in Aiken 1983: 240) from the feminist and impressionist sensibilities that cross with surrealism in Germaine Dulac's *La Coquille et le clergyman* (1928, *The Seashell and the Clergyman*) - in the case of my thesis, these models by necessity must be reduced to a broad collective. A collective that focused on what Bazin terms "plastic expressionism and the symbolic relation between images;" as films defined by their exploration of montage and compositional elements (2005: 33). Again, I elect to focus on similarities and unifying qualities because beyond authorial integrity and independence, the most defining feature of the avant-garde cinema of the Modernist epoch, as Aiken says regarding *Emak-Bakia* is its potent and "starling ability to communicate outside the bounds of rationality" (1983: 240), "to reveal both the known and unknown aspects of the phenomenal world" (Marcus 1998: 242) and to most essentially, represent consciousness.

In the context of this dissertation, Bowling again seems to illuminate most fully what is at the heart of, in fact both modes of expression, by describing the 'stream' itself as the "point at which the mind drops below the level of language usage" to function by means of these "pure images and sensations" (1950: 337), serving as a reminder that writing or written language is not the innate or singular tool by which one can manifest the interior mindscape. In this vein, I return to Humphrey who neatly proclaimed: "The ingenious minds of the writers we have been considering, like their contemporaries in the sister arts, especially in the cinema, found techniques which were devised to project the duality and the flux of mental life" (1958: 121). Likewise, to Cohen, one of the staunchest supporters of the translatable qualities of film and literature, who in his own words posits a kind of "mutation" which occurred between the two mediums during the modern age (1979: 3), leading to their possession of increasingly similar, or shared qualities. While the characteristics of these two modes of expression are vast, and evidently well theorised by critics, building upon Humphrey and Cohen's ideas I specifically seek to convey that both of these mediums are similar in their preoccupation with imagery,

semiotics, abstractions, interiority, ephemerality and authenticity. That is, I seek to show how these movements, developing in historical tandem, reflected similar conceptual preoccupations and represented these in a similar aesthetic manner appropriate to their unique form. In essence, the purpose of this dissertation is to uncover how creators across both mediums utilised their chosen artistic form in broadly similar ways in an effort to represent consciousness, and thus through the interiority-focused modernist lens, meaning.

Although it must be acknowledged that there are ample studies which broadly consider the relationship between literature and cinema - such as those mentioned above - many have typically focused on conventional ideas of narratology. For example, Soviet filmmaker and theorist Sergei Eisenstein's highly influential study of montage theory suggested that the New American Cinema film form, with pioneer D. W. Griffith at the helm, developed as a direct manifestation of Charles Dickens' "slightly exaggerated" mechanism of characterisation, use of symbolism, moral and emotive narrative thrust and perhaps most importantly, his "visual images," which Eisenstein suggests appear in a "very montage arrangement" as to also give "exact direction to the 'performer'" (1977: 208-12); which is to say in essence that linear mainstream cinema was born of the conventions of linear mainstream literature. Yet interestingly, in the same chapter Eisenstein discounts avant-garde films like Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920) from his comparative study of the two mediums, under the justification that visual and theatrical "expressionism left barely a trace on our cinema" and that films in this vein represented "inadequacies in the field of film technique" (1977: 203). And although there are, of course, critical discourses which have focused more exclusively on the avant-garde like those by Bru et al. (2009), which have acknowledged the relationship of cinema to the literature of the time, and vice versa, they still typically haven't sought to make the direct parallels I intend to here. And similarly, while there is a minor body of work which investigates more specifically how the subset of stream of consciousness writing has directly been manifested in cinema, it has tended to have a more contemporary cinematic focus. For

example, Trotter's study of three 'stream of consciousness' films: *The Conformist* (1970), *Providence* (1977) and *Requiem for a Dream* (2000), promisingly concluded that these films had "devices for rendering the multi-dimensional quality of consciousness that (could) be considered analogous to the strategies employed by literature" (2002: 299). However, she also approached these films as works which had taken deliberate influence from the now historical Modernist literature movement. Thus, while the study of the interrelationship between these mediums is a well-trodden path, there is less which studies these two distinct artistic movements - stream of consciousness writing and early avant-garde cinema - in tandem.

Therefore, in this dissertation I will overarchingly be guided by a Structuralist framework, harking to Saussure's consideration of the relationship of language, and it's "atom:" the "sign," to meaning (Leitch 2001: 958). Separating my investigation into two chapters I will focus firstly upon the way these works are constructed - on their preoccupation with imagery, semiotics, abstractions - or, on what Compagnon might call the "aesthetics of the new" (1994: 10). Here, I will use a more specific semiotic framework, again in the vein of Saussure's own analysis of sign, signified and signifier, and his essential conception of language as the place "where the elements of sound and thought combine" (qtd. in Leitch 2001: 967). In complement with this Saussurean Structuralist approach, the second chapter of this dissertation will drill more deeply into the concepts that underscore these texts, blending Psychoanalytical Literary Criticism and Freud's posited interrelationship between dreams, the unconscious mind and literature (Leitch 2001: 913-18) to consider the aforementioned ideas of interiority, ephemerality and authenticity. Taking a temporal cue from Woolf's assertion about the birth of Modernism and Adorno's notable aphorism that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (qtd in Leitch 2001: 1220) I will also narrow my field of study to the Early Modernist period, predominately the post WWI era, deliberately distancing my chosen artists from both their predecessors - recognising of course that writers as early as Sterne in the eighteenth century, were experimenting with stream of consciousness writing (O'Brien Shaffer 1977) - as well as

their High Modernist and Post-Modernist successors. Whilst a larger study could encompass many more examples, and arguably therefore extrapolate wider conclusions, the texts chosen for this thesis represent a desire to encompass varying places, dates and styles within this specified period in order to illustrate, if only superficially at times, the full potential breadth of these parallels. Furthermore, to stand as paragons for what is a much broader body of work, I have also typically elected those texts considered to be seminal, such as those by famed authors like Joyce, Woolf and Faulkner.

As I proceed with this analysis, I return to renowned film theorist's Andre Bazin's formative essay *In Defence of Mixed Cinema* and its core supposition that the critical societal upheavals which occurred post World War I ushered in a new artistic age of hybridity and crosspollination; "of a certain aesthetic convergence" (2005: 63) between literature and cinema. In this paper, he deftly postulates three key tenets which uphold my own nascent theory. Firstly, he pronounces that during Modernism, we reach "the point at which the avant-garde has now arrived; the making of films that dare to take their inspiration from a novel-like style one might describe as ultracinematographic" (64). In continuation, he speaks of these ultracinematographic films and filmmakers as utterly aware of the ability of the image to not only document and represent the outer world, but the inner. In what would typically be called a novelistic sense, critically denied of cinema, he instead argues that these films "postulate that all is in the consciousness and that this consciousness can be known" (62), that they genuinely expose and explore inner life. While he does not enter into specific tracts of textual analysis, his final influential point is that the aesthetics of the cinema helped modernist novelists, including, he mentions, stream of consciousness writers like Dos Passos to "refurbish his technical equipment" (61). In essence then, Bazin asserts that the conditions of the Modernist era led to the creation of artistic works which transcended traditional ideas of form, and it is in this light that I begin my analysis of these two movements; stream of consciousness writing and early avant-garde cinema.

1. Construction: The Aesthetics of the New

Art always involves imitation, but henceforth what is imitated is the essential or conceptual, not the immediate and simple-minded appearance of things...

(Compagnon 1994: 39)

When artist Joseph Cornell first screened *Rose Hobart* in 1936, which would later become one of the United States' most famous early surrealist films, fellow filmmaker and artist Salvador Dalí famously knocked over the projector half way through its exhibition, having flown into a mad rage. Accounts of the incident understandably vary, but it has been recorded that he spat "Joseph Cornell, you are a plagiarist of my unconscious mind!" (qtd in Corman: 2010, online). This is a fantastical remark, which would seem difficult to believe, should not so many other reports similarly validate that Dalí rued, if not so poetically, that Cornell had made the exact film he wanted to make, had somehow stolen his own unarticulated idea (MoMA Learning: 2020, online). *Rose Hobart*, an utterly reimagined collage of the 1931 conventional talkie film *East of Borneo* is argued to be "a breathtaking example of the potential for surrealistic imagery within a conventional Hollywood film once it is liberated from its narrative causality" (Sitney qtd. in Corman: 2010, online), and is an entirely surreal, poetic and dreamlike film. Its key importance here is, given that Dalí was only a visitor to North America, how his rather spectacular reaction certainly begins to elucidate the Gladwellian idea that these revolutionary aesthetic ideas really were floating in the air, spanning continents even.

Moreover, Cornell's is a film, which in its brazen dismantling of conventional cinema and narratology epitomises the 'aesthetics of the new' that I will be focusing upon in this chapter, this distinctly Modernist focus of breaking and remaking pre-existing modes of expression. It is self-evident that both stream of consciousness writing and avant-garde cinema derive much of their own style from a repudiation of "traditional aesthetic principles and

limitations” (Ketchiff 1984: 7), namely those belonging to realism. Compagnon speaks of a “quest for essence” (1994: 43) residing at the heart of the Modern aesthetic, or a quest for the non-representational, a desire to move beyond the surface level or external ‘appearance of things’ and instead attempt to locate meaning by constructing new modes of expression which not only acknowledge but embrace the pluralities and subjectivities of reality. Although she does so endeavouring to more semantically draw the line between Modernism at large and the avant-garde, Eysteinsson provides a neat checklist of some of the defining aesthetic features of the era, features that I would argue are evident in the broad majority of stream of consciousness novels and avant-garde films, and which are equally made apparent in *Rose Hobart*. Eysteinsson describes texts characterised by “movement,” “play, chance, disorder, chaos,” a “fragmentary, open, porous” form, “upheaval of language/discourse” and an “inward turn” to the conscious and subconscious (2009: 32-3), a useful collation of categories to support my discussion in this chapter. *Rose Hobart* can also certainly be viewed in these terms as in its complete disruption of linearity, it rather operates as a succession of playful, chaotic and fragmented images that evoke “the processes of the untamed mind” (Corman: 2010, online) and which exist in the liminal space, or “marginal area where the conscious and the unconscious meet” (Sitney qtd. in Corman: 2010). Relying acutely on the power of these heightened images and on the associative potential of such images to make and translate its surprising meaning, the film showcases that in the absence of a singular narrative thrust, in this open form, imagery, semiotics and abstractions are at the core of meaning making; and these are the three dimensions by which I will focus my analysis and comparisons in this chapter.

In order to draw out these parallels I will focus principally upon four texts. In representation of avant-garde cinema, I will examine *Un Chien andalou* (1929, *An Andalusian Dog*) by Luis Buñuel and *Человек с кино-аппаратом* (1929, *Man with a Movie Camera*) by Dziga Vertov, two films which were released in the same year and emblemise two distinct but interconnected styles: the utterly surreal and the montage or collage movement. In literary

terms, in this chapter I will focus on James Joyce's paradigmatic text *Ulysses* (1922) and the first novel in John Dos Passos' *U.S.A* trilogy, *The 42nd Parallel*, released independently in 1930 and rereleased in the trilogy's unification in 1938 with *1919* (1932) and *Big Money* (1936).

1.1. Imagery

Dalí perhaps had no reason to experience such consternation at *Rose Hobart's* screening, because he had already played a critical role in the seminal surrealist film of the early Modern period as the screenwriter of *An Andalusian Dog* alongside Buñuel. A film of striking and memorable imagery, it seems a fitting place to start considering aesthetic parallels. The film, which opens with an entirely standard title card that proclaims 'once upon a time' is quickly followed by, in stark juxtaposition, one of the most startling and incendiary images of cinematic history: a young woman's eye being slit open with a razorblade. From the outset, Buñuel and Dalí relish in their destruction of "the logic of film narration" and somewhat both gleefully and violently reveal the "arbitrariness" of "filmic conventions" and codes of representation (Thiher 1977: 41); in short, they force viewers to open their eyes and to discover new ways of seeing. It is worthy here to consider this film in correlation with André Breton's writings in his famed *Surrealist Manifesto* (1924). In his exaltation of the imagination, Breton levels a considered critique at the conventional arts, particularly novels, which he denounces as "nothing but so many superimposed images taken from some stock catalogue" (1969: 7). Particularly, in decrying their "desire for analysis (...) over the sentiments" he condemns the "vacuity" (1969: 7-9) of texts borne of the flawed "ideology of realistic mimesis" (Thiher 1977: 39). Buñuel and Dalí's film then, as a work of unadulterated surrealism, is an attempt to systematically "subvert the rules of the game, whether it be in the realm of syntax, narration, or iconic representation" (Thiher 1977: 39) and in turn to construct new images with new meanings.

In this rejection and subversion, *An Andalusian Dog* diffuses an already extremely loose narrative of this same young woman's interactions, both sexual and violent, with three different men into a space of disrupted continuity and cacophonous imagery. Thus, in place of a broad discussion of the film's ideological or narrative frame, I will narrow my analysis to the construction and aesthetic function of this imagery, enabling parallels with the works of some of Buñuel's literary contemporaries to be illustrated more simply. Further, as it will come to be explored in greater detail in my second chapter, this film, like most of the texts selected for this dissertation, represents an exploration of the mind and the way in which the subjective frame interacts with the objective or outer world, and this will be another guiding principle by which I will select images. In this light, three key dimensions of *An Andalusian Dog*'s imagery are worth mentioning. Firstly, is the use of masking or matte shots. This device reimagines and intensifies the more conventional close up shot, the tool which many critics already saw as the linchpin of a "wholly new visual rhetoric" (Freidberg 1998: 1), one that revealed "entirely new structural formations of the subject" (Epstein qtd. in Friedberg 1998: 1) by departing from 'realistic' vision to create new images, attuned to a new sensibility of depth, previously considered perceptually and objectively impossible. Taking this idea and amplifying it, by literally hiding parts of the image, Buñuel succeeds in drawing attention to the liminal space which exists between the subjective and objective worlds. By both masking and in turn revealing the exterior worlds that exist beyond his central players, Buñuel uses imagery - and at its most simple a contrast of dark and light - to reveal and revel in the naturally solipsistic



Figure 1 - Masking, *An Andalusian Dog*

gaze of the inner self, and at other times to direct our attention to the spaces at the margins, on the periphery of our conscious experience. Richardson also describes this interplay of light and dark as a fundamental component of the surrealist aesthetic; this creates a dialectic between sight and thought in

such a way that it balances “making manifest what is latent” in our consciousness “without destroying the mystery of its latency” (2006: 1). As evidenced in *fig. 1*, Buñuel heightens an already arresting image with his use of masking to, on one level, embody the young male and female protagonists’ ‘tunnel vision’ as voyeurs of this scene, and on another level to enmesh us in the mind’s eye of the pictured figure themselves: to see them and the object of their transfixion simultaneously. He does so to explore this connection between sight and thought perception, on both of the levels on which this image operates, and to break from a conventional cinematic frame, which more objectively reveals everything at once. Critically, Buñuel refuses to explicitly divulge the meaning of, or ascribe a singular significance to, the image depicted in *fig. 1*, revealing neither a concrete narrative or aesthetic purpose. This kind of ambiguity is common, and allows the film to reveal what is “dormant” (Richardson 2006: 1) within our psyche, without over explaining the inexplicable. In essence, Buñuel uses masking to both mirror our way of perceiving in its fragmented, personal and changeable forms, and to pull us more deeply into the screen consciousness through an upheaval of cinema language.

Additionally, Buñuel utilises overlaying or crosscutting to depict another liminal space, the one which exists between reality and imagination. Utilised throughout to disrupt conventional sequencing and continuity, and to collapse the binaries that epistemological thinking would establish between the natural, the human and the industrial, and between beauty and horror, Buñuel’s crosscutting rather reveals that through the subjective lens of consciousness all things can coexist and blur. Thus, he transfigures these oppositions, and even grander ones like those between “real and imaginary” and “life and death,” until they are “no longer perceived as contradictions” (Richardson 2006: 5). This overlaying is a critical part of what gives the film its oneiric ambiguity and it is showcased most clearly in the film’s scene of



Figure 2 - Overlaying, *An Andalusian Dog*

sexual violence. As seen in *fig. 2* the film loosely flutters back and forth between depictions of reality and depictions of what we can presuppose to be the male protagonist's imagination. However, given the film's already disrupted chronology and narrative, this constant overlaying defies our ability to ascertain which image is concrete and which is dream imagery, again moving us away from binaries and towards an experience which more cogently constructs a space which simulates consciousness. There our perceptions of fantasy, reality and dream are inextricably and inexorably intertwined thus adhering to Breton's vision of works that "encompass the entire psychophysical field" and replace "external reality by a psychic reality" (1965: 70). Also, taking into consideration Pallasma's idea that a singular frame can encapsulate an "entire cinematic narrative" because "a cinematic frame is not merely a visual image" but something which is capable of altering our perception of, and the way that we read action and time (2013: 85), Buñuel's overlaying becomes even more interesting. It enables him to exponentially stretch the potential and plurality of any single cinematic frame or image to invite greater openness, dimension and depth. Perhaps meaning is equivocal, but there is a new image, or a new way of structuring, of layering image which can both enact and resonate with this quality.

Although there are endless dimensions of this film which could be examined, given the limited scope of this thesis the third key aesthetic I would like to call attention to is Buñuel's use of absurdist imagery. While more commonly associated with post-Camus High Modernism, the utilisation of absurd images is undeniable in *An Andalusian Dog*. To again use this concept,

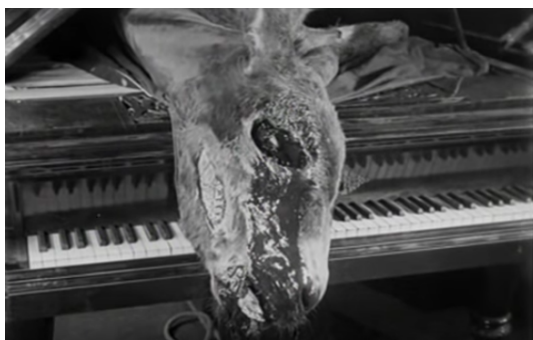


Figure 3 - Absurdist Imagery, *An Andalusian Dog*

it is as if Buñuel overlays a layer of normalcy, of something with an objectively tangible quality, with something utterly at odds with this world to remind us simultaneously of the strangeness and unpredictability of our inner world and its referential nature, and then in turn for us to question

those images of purported normalcy. In a film rife with perplexing imagery, the image of two dead donkeys atop two grand pianos pulled by two tablet-bearing priests, as seen in *fig 3.*, stands as particularly salient. Thiher suggests that such juxtapositions between normal and absurd images, “could be likened to a surrealist simile in which the bringing together of entirely disparate images creates a dislocation of our normal way of viewing relations and reveals the marvellous,” and furthermore articulates that the film recalls “the surrealist contention that the true workings of the mind must be expressed” by this “marvellous inherent in the quotidian” (1977: 43-4). Cohn in her writings about the intersection of surrealism and absurdism touches on a similar thread, describing the intersection as a blend of “oneiric strangeness with quotidian familiarity to dramatize man’s metaphysical situation” (1964: 164). Distancing his work from any religious, or more likely anti-religious ideology - which is a theme for an entirely different paper - it is clear that Buñuel uses absurdist imagery within a surrealist frame in the way Cohn posits, and in such a way that could perhaps be best summarised as an exploration of a third liminal space - that between our physical and metaphysical reality - using stark visual exaggeration and strangeness to convey the nature of the subjective self in an epoch of existential uncertainty. In essence, Buñuel’s absurdism represents an attempt to push the boundaries of logic in his individual images and in the cinema space as a whole; similarly, to test nothing short of the logical boundaries of our existence.

While Buñuel’s vision may seem uniquely and distinctly visual, as Maier recognises many of the images of *An Andalusian Dog* are in fact rooted in his own literary works (1996: 386). Of particular interest are not only the connections she makes between the literal images themselves - for example the iconic swarming ants of the film, which, as she rightly identifies appear in both a number of Buñuel’s short prose pieces and Dalí’s own artworks (1996: 390) - but her suggestion that Buñuel uses discrete written and filmic devices to evoke the *same* effect. According to Maier, there are not only thematic and iconographic similarities in his works, but “many correspondences between the verbal and visual modes of expression” (1996: 393). For

example, she compares his use of the slow-motion technique in *An Andalusian Dog* to the “hyperbolize(d)” images of his narration in his short prose piece *Diluvio* (1925), which makes everything in the text appear “to float almost motionlessly” (1996: 388). And, although Buñuel’s own writing did not typically employ a stream of consciousness style, considering the clear parallels between his use of both the written and visual form becomes a jumping off point by which to consider the similarities between the film and *Ulysses*.

In much the same way that Buñuel predicates his subversive vision on the archetypal ‘once upon a time,’ in *Ulysses* Joyce patterns both his narrative and main characters, Stephen Dedalus, Leopold and Molly Bloom, “in burlesque fashion” or parody after Homer’s *Odyssey*, translating Classical heroism to an “age of small issues” (Humphrey 1958: 87, 90). Critics, to use the word in the pejorative sense, often diminish the novel to the unattributable quote: “Man goes for a walk around Dublin. Nothing happens.” They are not entirely wrong, because nothing much does happen in the novel, at least not in the conventional sense. *Ulysses* appropriates - deliberately of course - one of the world’s greatest epics into a vision which utterly eschews teleological narrative, and in this dearth of expected plotting Joyce rather sinks into the “consciousness, inner discourse” and “cast of mind of his characters” (Stevenson 1992: 48); also, into the unscripted and unorchestrated ebbs and flows of natural - unfictionalised - life. Masterfully reimagining idiosyncrasies of both character and language, Joyce embeds his characters, their idiomatically unique voices and their conscious space within the narration to the extent that the two become inextricable. Or, as Stevenson attests, “the gravitational field or spheres of influence” belonging to Joyce’s characters are employed with “unusual frequency and adroitly, and extend unusually far,” so far in fact that the novel appears to be directly written by them (1992: 48). And thus, like Buñuel, Joyce counters convention in his journey to discover new modes of expression and new levels of authentic interior experience.

Given that it may seem audacious to compare a novel of over 250,000 words and a film of a tidy 21-minute runtime (and I grant that it is), here, I will only draw close textual evidence

from the novel's final and culminating chapter "Penelope" in order to establish a more plausible parameter of comparison and to ensure that my focus remains tightly on the question of aesthetics and imagery. I have selected this particular section of the novel for two key reasons. One, because as the only chapter written from Molly's perspective it seems to underscore the novel's leitmotif of the parallax and the idea of subjective perspective; two, because this chapter is widely accepted as exhibiting an "extreme form of stream of consciousness" (Hayman qtd. in Smurthwaite 2006: 76). Thus, given that "Penelope," in its eight drifting sentences, showcases a particularly heightened and sustained utilisation of stream of consciousness writing, akin to Buñuel's heightened use of the surrealist mode, it makes it a more obvious place from which to attempt to draw comparisons between the two texts. Smurthwaite frames his exploration of this chapter through Sir Francis Galton's psychological categorisation of individuals into either verbalisers or visualisers, that is, people who fundamentally think and express in words or in images. Although he grants that in a novel it is "necessary to convert these images into words" (2006: 77), he maintains that Molly Bloom is a visualiser with a memory that "verg(es) on the eidetic" (2006: 78) and upholds Kumar's conception of the chapter functioning as Molly's "film de conscience," which projects scenes from her life in "cinematographic succession" (qtd. in Smurthwaite 2006: 79), both within her mind and into the minds of readers. In doing so Smurthwaite helps to affirm that stream of consciousness writing represents a shift towards more visually focused mechanisms of representation, or perhaps into a new mechanism of language altogether.

Although the ways in which the imagery of Molly's inner world can be approached are near limitless, as with *An Andalusian Dog* here I will narrow my focus to the same three distinct aesthetic dimensions I have analysed for the film. Buñuel's use of masking can rather neatly be transposed to Joyce's utilisation of narrative parallax or focalisation. "Penelope" makes immense use of the subjective frame, without neglecting the objective world with which it intersects, and it does so by artfully directing our focus through images which reveal Molly's

distinctively personal perception and then offering glimpses of the world at large. In the first of Molly's eight sentences as we are welcomed into her consciousness we see how it "flow(s) freely, associatively, sometimes arbitrarily between subjects, between thoughts, in flickering, almost seamless succession" (Stevenson 1992: 49), most notably shifting between her current physical reality, her own inner mindscape and her projections about her husband's experiences and inner world, thus occupying this subjective-objective liminal space. In the chapter's primary episode, in which Molly considers Leopold's request for "breakfast in bed with a couple of eggs" (Joyce 2008: 10522) the narrative begins focused on the physical immediacy which grounds the scene. This is constituted by the early morning and the Blooms' bed, before Molly's vision pulls back to reveal this segment's first layer of reminiscence: the City Arms hotel. This is another physical space but it is one which similarly broadens beyond its own physical confines as Molly's mind continues to drift outwards, to her recollections of the woman who inhabited that space with them when Leopold was sick and then further out beyond that to her reflections on Leopold's behaviour during this time. From there Molly's consciousness pulls completely back, shedding any physical actuality as she considers generally how "weak and puling" men are when sick and "how they want a woman to get well" (10530). Subsequently her frame of view begins to shrink back into reminisces tethered to physical experience and space, to the day "he sprained his foot" and "she wore that dress" on sugarloaf Mountain, and then closer in again, back to their bedroom and her dislike of "bandaging and dosing" and the time Leopold "cut his toe" (10530). Finally, the narrative matte or mask narrows our field of vision back to the bed which Molly shares with her husband, and her dual conviction that "he came somewhere I'm sure by his appetite" but "anyway love it's not" (10539, original punctuation). This short opening passage, like the chapter at large, moves "without formal obstructions" (Richardson qtd. in Stevenson 1992: 49) such as punctuation. Instead, Joyce applies a linguistic manner of masking, of shifting, obscuring and revealing distinct images through interconnected episodic threads and juxtapositions between the literal

physicality of the space or moment and Molly's mindscape, which alternately encompasses a far grander field of view and a microcosmic view of the self that excludes all else. In doing so, Joyce emulates the fragmentary and paradoxically inward and outward looking thoughts and sensations of Molly and evokes an aesthetic parallax. His parallax is maybe best described by Stevens Heusel, who says it translates the readers' experience to a "visual field" which affords us "three-dimensional views" (1983: 135) by constantly shifting our perception of events, scenes, objects and characters, much as our subjective perceptions naturally do. Interestingly she also uses distinctly cinematic language like "depth perception," to articulate the literary phenomenon whereby Joyce's shifting focalisation makes the protagonist become "focused" when the "background becomes blurry" and vice versa (1983: 143-44). In very much the same manner as *An Andalusian Dog*, the wholeness or fullness of the image and its meaning changes as the focus is changed, or the mask is moved.

Likewise, Buñuel's overlaying and crosscutting, translates to the flowing nature of Joyce's stream itself; to the constantly shifting, ephemeral elisions of "Penelope," in which ideas, tangents and above all images intersect and intertwine. Capturing the same liminality as Buñuel's film, Joyce's stream allows not only for thoughts which encircle, or zoom in and out of her physical experience, but for past, present and future, for dreams, memories, imagination and reality to coexist on one plane with limited consideration of the traditional dictates of continuity:

a quarter after what an unearthly hour I suppose theyre just getting up in China now combing out their pigtails for the day well soon have the nuns ringing the angelus theyve nobody coming in to spoil their sleep except an odd priest or two for his night office or the alarmclock next door at cockshout clattering the brains out of itself let me see if I can doze off 1 2 3 4 5 what kind of flowers are those they invented like the stars the wallpaper in Lombard street was much nicer the apron he gave me was like that something only I only wore it twice better lower this lamp and try again so as I can get up early Ill go to Lambes there beside Findlaters and get them to send us some flowers to put about the place in case he brings him home tomorrow today I mean no no Fridays an unlucky day first I want to do the place up someway the dust grows in it I think while Im asleep then we can have music and cigarettes... (Joyce 2008: 11280, original spelling)

In an already astonishing chapter, this section stands as one of the richest examples of Buñuelesque overlaying, fusing together Molly's present reality with recollections of her past, musings about a country diametrically opposed to her own, her desires both mundane and more profound, the minutiae of dust and her domestic plans for the day, and a strange comingling of superstition and religious imagery. Critically, Joyce moves back and forth through these images so rapidly that in the minds of readers it evokes the doubled or overlayed images of the film, which play simultaneously for viewers. Much as a man's hand in close up overlays to become another man's armpit, then a spiny sea urchin upon sand, then a lone figure in a street in *An Andalusian Dog*, Joyce presents this same constant transmutation and blurring of images, where the cohesion which ties these images together lies only in the psyche of the protagonist and creator. Given that the constant of Molly's mindscape is movement, she embodies "the flux that unites opposites" including "the ideal and the material" (Brivic 1990: 753). Furthermore, I would also argue that similarly to Pallasma's "epic" frames (2013: 85), the depth of imagery held within just one moment of the mind's eye, both Molly's and our own as readers seems to contain a multitude of narratives in one, suggesting that if meaning cannot be narrowed and confined, perhaps it can alternately be expanded.

Finally, Joyce certainly has the same preoccupation with absurdist imagery, specifically the same intersection of the everyday with the surreal observations of the mind, and between physical and metaphysical possibilities. In particular Molly's use of comparatives produces the same effect as Buñuel's 'surrealist similes,' revealing the same ability to physically depict in a verbal-visual form this overlaying of normalcy and strangeness. One particularly edifying example occurs when Molly takes aim at her husband's faults. In a short section of prose, he is a man who "doesn't know poetry from a cabbage," is "like a priest or a butcher or those old hypocrites in the time of Julius Caesar" and a metaphorical "old Lion" (Joyce 2008: 11912). Using Molly as his mouthpiece, Joyce relishes in the strangeness of both Leopold's character and the strangeness of Molly's observations and descriptions, embracing the fact that we have

“any kind of expression in us all of us the same” (11210). However, more than this conceptual absurdity or images of absurd quality, which could be drawn upon endlessly in this chapter, what is relevant here is the way in which Joyce synthesises and embeds the fundamentally farcical nature of existence into his mode of expression, into his very choice of language and words. Quigley describes *Ulysses* as a novel which “revel(s) in language’s slipperiness, puns, and portmanteaux” (2015: 104) in Molly’s “frseeeeeeeefronnnng” and “sweeeetsonnnng,” (Joyce 2008: 10813). It follows besides a Wittgensteinian approach to language as “language-game” (Wittgenstein qtd. in Quigley 2015: 106), accordingly utilising “verbal play” to both defy the “traditional form of the novel” (2015: 106) and “to run against the boundaries of language” (Wittgenstein qtd. in Quigley 2015:108). In other words, *Ulysses* wilfully embraces linguistic “nonsense” (Wittgenstein qtd. in Quigley 2015:108) or what Sotirova calls a kind of “experimental incoherence” (2013: 30). In an entirely playful and self-referential way, Molly Bloom’s stream of consciousness thus epitomises what Quigley describes as the Modernist awareness of the vagueness of language (2015) and Joyce’s corresponding approach to antithetically push words to the limits of coherence. This is perhaps best illustrated in Molly’s unwitting parody of metempsychosis, when she says, “I asked him about her and that word met something with hoses in it and he came out with some jawbreakers about the incarnation he never can explain a thing simply the way a body can understand” (Joyce 2008: 10794). Rather than seeing the unalterable uncertainty of meaning - particularly that mediated through language, whether manifest in image or in word - as a negative, Joyce, and likewise Buñuel, instead cast off the shackles of false realism to fully embrace its uncontainable and nonsensical possibilities.

To return to a figure who certainly wished to embrace the uncontainable, Breton identified a trend in the conventional language of both literature and cinema leading into the Modern era, critiquing, nay vilifying, texts in which everything is so clear and every image so transparent and singular that “the only discretionary power left me is to close the book” (1969:

7). There is certainly no danger of this kind of singular clarity in the symbolic and layered texts of Buñuel and Joyce, in fact as Stevens Heusel so pithily states, but perhaps underplays, “*Ulysses* is a book for active readers” (1983: 143). Thus, beyond considering the images of the avant-garde filmmakers and stream of consciousness writers at the surface level, I would like to wade into their semiotic significance, much as I would suggest these creators wished their responders to do.

1.2. Semiotics

Undank outlines that at its core, *An Andalusian Dog* is a direct semiotic exercise, articulating that in the film, the “signs and rhetoric of dreams” become “symbols served up for discursive and narrative interpretation” (1977: 487). Brivic similarly channels a Lacanian perspective of Joyce to see *Ulysses* as a work which ultimately translates the “dynamism of the twentieth century” and a conception of “the visual as language,” into an expression of “the movement of language beyond particular significations” (1990: 737, 741). Accordingly, I am interested in the fact that both avant-garde films and stream of consciousness texts can be framed by their preoccupation with signs. And more specifically, that in their departure from narrative norms they not only rely only the power of signs to communicate new meanings but moreover lean into a Saussurean acknowledgment of the disjunct between the signifier and the signified of any sign in such a way that embraces new multiplicities and subjectivities.

To widen the scope of my comparative analysis, I would like to turn to Vertov’s revolutionary *Man with a Movie Camera*, a film which rests entirely upon the image, upon the sign. In fact, the only written text in this film is Vertov’s prelude, which announces that the film is “an experimentation in the cinematic communication of visual phenomena without the use of intertitles, without the help of a scenario, and without the help of theatre,” and with the explicit purpose of “the creation of an authentically international absolute language of cinema on the basis of its complete separation from the language of theatre and literature” (1929). As

Scalia succinctly notes, the semiotic possibilities of cinema are typically underestimated because it is analysed in strictly rational terms and relegated to something “fundamentally visual and concrete,” something which lacks the openness, the possibilities of language-mediated representation (2012: 46). However, this kind of reading fundamentally denies cinema, especially avant-garde cinema like Vertov’s, its rich “ambiguity” and ability to construct what Scalia terms “poetic signs,” referring to that same slippage I have foregrounded between signifier and signified, and the way in which “poetic language” has the power to “radically realign the sign” (2012: 47), shifting it from its normative or expected meaning.

It is well established that a distinct component of Vertov’s vision was his desire to “stimulate viewers to participate in the associative construction of the projected images” (Petrić 2012: 70) and embed them fully in the semiotic process of meaning making. As Petrić outlines in his comprehensive study of the film, Vertov uses a number of innovative cinematic devices such as the “disruptive-associative montage,” which pulls images both in and out of context and utilises patterns of synthesis and juxtaposition to make the viewer “search for the metaphoric meaning within the context of the respective sequence” (2012: 106); also, the “negated narrative,” which similarly subverts the film’s possible diegeses by a deliberate suppression of sequential logic and accordingly any “representational” reading of the presented images (2012: 91). It is important to understand that this film is not a chaotic compilation devoid of any potential meaning, but rather that Vertov utilises these new tools of edition to balance a cohesive sense of form with an ideal of free association. He also supports this balance by drawing upon strongly literary principles like anaphoric and cataphoric references to encourage his audience to continuously contextualise, decontextualize and reconceptualise the images he presents, ultimately forcing them to do the semiotic heavy lifting. Vertov’s images, much like Buñuel’s and Joyce’s are images in motion, and our perception of them is constantly evolving.

Conceivably the defining dimension of Vertov’s semiotic exploration is then, what I will term here, a displacement of the sign through sequencing. Given that *Man with a Movie*

Camera contains about 1,775 separate shots or images this is a device which is employed constantly and which emblemises Vertov's ethos of "seeing without limits and distances" and of "decoding" "life as it is" (1984: 41, 49). Although there are many arresting uses of this technique, in order to illustrate this displacement most succinctly I will turn to just one sign to consider its radically different placements and semiotic possibilities. Considering the film's clear self-reflexive element, I have selected the image of a film editor rolling through and splicing film spool. Each time Vertov returns to this motif, the edition process and editor are depicted through various angles as evidenced in row one of *fig. 4*, a feature I will discuss in more depth shortly.



Figure 4 - Displacement through sequencing, *Man with a Movie Camera*

The first time we see this process of edition, it is in the context of a series of frozen images, a sequence which contains classic freeze frames, those same freeze frames shown as pieces of physical film spool and finally the freeze frames reanimated into motion. Primarily these freeze frames are of children captured in moments of joy, and the film spool accordingly functions as

an object of nostalgia here, an object which allows us to freeze and make the ephemeral permanent. Given Vertov's pattern of interplaying smaller episodes and vignettes into broader sequences, much as Joyce does with Molly's mental images in "Penelope," the shots of these children will not be fully contextualised until nearly the end of the film when they are seen again as the audience of a magic show. The second time we are invited to see the image of editing, it has become a tool of human endeavour and labour like any other, sandwiched firstly between nail painting, stitching and sewing and then progressively with a number of scenes of both manual labour and human-machine industry. The final time Vertov returns to this sign is in the film's stunning and rapid closing montage, in which it becomes frenetically cut between images of intense movement and speed, of hordes of people, of ticking clocks, of speeding trains, but most saliently between a new extreme close up shot of the eyes of the editor and scenes within the film's cinema screening. Here, edition functions as a kind of preternatural sight, or the culmination of Vertov's kino eye. It becomes a signifier of an utterly new language, one which allows us to see, understand and synthesise multiple facets of life and of inner experience instantaneously. As Meunier concludes in his writings on the structures of film experience, film operates like a 'gestalt,' something which is not "merely a sum of elementary images," because the signification of the images would be entirely different if perceived in isolation or in a different sequence (2019: 69). Cinema, as with *Man with a Movie Camera*, is instead a complex visual form where the chosen "succession of images" or assemblage "creates a new reality" (2019: 70).

Furthermore, as Vertov revisits these images he often depicts them from different angles or in different frames. He employs what is helpful to describe in light of the above as displacement of the sign through perspective, or, as he himself terms it "the same thing from different angles" (1984: 57). For example, an image, or sign, which was initially depicted in an extreme low angle is later seen at eye level, or one which previously occupied the entire frame is next seen in its place in a wider capture, in a very Joycean parallax. What is particularly

illuminating about Vertov's treatment of images, then, is that not only does he utilise edition and placement in a linear sense to disrupt conventional semiotic relationships as has been outlined above, but that he uses framing to further evolve the possibilities of each image. For instance, Vertov frequently makes use of aerial, Dutch or canted angles and extreme close up shots, in complement with split screen, mirrored images, kaleidoscope images, focus pulling and superimpositions to literally embody the principle of finding new ways of looking and seeing, and to further distort images which could be otherwise seen and understood as



Figure 5 - Displacement through perspective, *Man with a Movie Camera*

normative. A clear example, drawn from just over five minutes into the film's runtime, at the end of what critics ascertain to be the film's prologue and at the beginning of what they define as the film's first part (Petrić 2012: 72)

is pictured in *fig 5*. Ostensibly, this first part of *Man with a Movie Camera* is devoted to the

imagery of a city waking up and coming to life and the interconnected themes of birth and death, and unsurprisingly therefore, its opening iconography is particularly focused on this microcosmic and macro level awakening. This is the context in which *fig 5*. appears. In comparison to many of the film's images it appears to be rather simple, something which is in tune with our conception of a city awakening and performs cohesively with the broader segment in which it appears. A building could easily be seen to signify a city, home, apartment living, routine, order, uniformity, as arguably it also can in Vertov's world. However, what does a building which exists only on this strange Dutch angle represent? If you knew enough about Vertov's politics, you could certainly begin to make some assumptions. However, the only thing we can feasibly be certain of as a viewer is that this canted building doesn't stand for the same thing that a regulation upright building would. In this way, Vertov skews the sign 'building' and undermines the simplicity of any sign by revealing that any objective certainty

of meaning is derailed when it is so much as viewed from a new or different perspective, arriving at a similar conclusion as Delgado who argues that at its most essential *Man with a Movie Camera* is an experiential work which offers a “reconfiguration of perception” (2009: 5).

Much analysis of the film also approaches it from a mimetic perspective studying the way it cultivates a “physical and mental harmony between human being and camera” (Turvey 1999: 49) and I find this an interesting point to turn back to stream of consciousness writing, because it reminds us that although *Man with a Movie Camera* places the camera as its focal narrative and aesthetic point, I believe this mimesis represents a desire to collapse the space between the typical representational limitations of form and the limitlessness potential of non-representational fields of meaning. As Vertov expresses in his own *Kino Eye* writings:

And one day in the spring of 1918... returning from a train station. There lingered in my ears the sighs and rumble of the departing train... someone's swearing... a kiss... someone's exclamation... laughter, a whistle, voices, the ringing of the station bell, the puffing of the locomotive... whispers, cries, farewells... And thoughts while walking: I must get a piece of equipment that won't describe, but will record, photograph these sounds. Otherwise it's impossible to organize, edit them. They rush past, like time... (1984: 40, original ellipses).

As we know, Vertov turned to the camera, or more specifically to a new cinematic mode, but even his own writings here embody their own stream of consciousness aesthetic and provide a testament to a desire to record synesthetically, or in such a way that moves beyond a singular language mode, a point I will expand upon in my second chapter. Similarly, John Dos Passos' *The 42nd Parallel*, specifically in its ‘camera eye’ sections - a name which appears to literally be lifted from Vertov's own kino eye - and the novel's other non-narrative or non-linear sections, endeavours to move beyond description into recording (Hock 2005), in such a way that it doesn't ascribe singular meanings but rather further opens the possibilities of its signs. As Edwards neatly summarises: “The Camera Eye segments are interesting in terms of cinematic form because they represent a close-up image of the author himself, and provide a textual counterpart to Dziga Vertov's cinematic theory of the Kino-eye” (1999: 248). Likewise,

as Vertov himself asserted, his methods “spread beyond the realm of cinema” to claim “an indirect influence upon the style of such writers as Dos Passos” (qtd. in Edwards 1999: 248).

Dos Passos’ novel is, if nothing else, immensely similar ideologically to Vertov’s film in its broad critique of the bourgeois and its belief in new Socialist ideologies. And much as Vertov did, Dos Passos views the macrocosmic plane of cities and a nation at large, through the lens of the interior world of a penetrating observer, turning the man with a movie camera into his own narratively disembodied consciousness in these ‘Camera Eye’ sections. It seems fitting that against the thematic tide of political and industrial upheaval the novel similarly upends narrative structure, creating a vision which contains the same overarching unifying qualities as Vertov’s film, but which disperses this narrative into distinct but interwoven strands and episodes. Accordingly, Dos Passos marries the more linear narrative that follows a small host of characters with a stream of conscious segment named ‘Camera Eye,’ a string of soundbites in ‘Newsreel,’ and a number of unique biographies. Critics resoundingly describe Dos Passos’ technique in these sections - in and of themselves, and considering their relation to one another - as the “application of the cinematic technique of montage to narration” (Hock 2005: 20). And, in this collocation of parts which initially and often appear disparate, Dos Passos, again like Vertov, as well as Joyce and Buñuel, constructs an active text, one in which readers must reconcile and reconstitute meaning for themselves.

As Compagnon articulates, at the heart of the Modern age lies a transformation of philosophy and society to such an extent whereby “language ceases to represent, or does so less and less, but instead is conceived as an autonomous game with respect to the reference” (1994: 40). Thus, in line with a growing structuralist sensibility, many stream of consciousness writers, and Modern novelists more broadly, in seeing this “relationship between language and what it referred to as arbitrary” wanted to create texts that “could make this felt” (Bru 2009: 102). This is evidently what Dos Passos does in *The 42nd Parallel*, a text which defies linearity and continually evolves segment to segment, and which transforms even its arguably more objective

segments, like its factual biographies into “interpretative portraits” which reveal the perversion of public images (Edwards 1999: 250). Language and meaning occupy the thematic heart space of the novel and Dos Passos both relishes in this semiotic or linguistic play and narrative openness, while also pointing to the peril of a society beholden to rhetoric and politically manipulated signs.

As established, this is a novel told in discrete but intertwined sections, and despite its own more cogent narrative strand it is still a radically non-teleological text. In this fundamental rejection of causal continuity Dos Passos instead utilises symbolic and thematic connections and juxtapositions, rather than chronology, to weave in his narrative threads (Foster 1986: 186). And, as with the cinematic non-chronological or associational montage, sequencing comes to the fore and thus displacement of the sign through sequencing becomes abundantly evident. Most saliently, the novel’s Newsreel sections showcase “the deterioration of language” (Edwards 1999: 249) which has arisen in the Modernist age, a sentiment which expresses certainly some political anxiety, but which moreover evinces the ability and necessity of texts to crack open signs. Newsreel 1 is a fitting place to commence analysis, given that it introduces this segment’s frenetically shifting stream of banner headlines, snippets of song lyrics, political rhetoric, poems and of course news articles. The central image of this particular Newsreel is arguably the anaphoric repetition of the capitalised “NOISE,” “LABOR,” “CHURCHES,” and “NATION” which “GREET NEW CENTURY,” an image which initially appears to align with the unified sentiment expressed here that “the twentieth century will be American” (Dos Passos 1937: 4-5). However, the array or elision of images which surrounds this focal point - containing everything from “gaiety girls” in “bathing suit(s),” to “territorial expansion,” to the “Chicago river” becoming “a drainage canal,” to men being murdered in “Luzon,” “Mindanao,” “Samoa,” “the Philippines” (1937: 3-5) - ultimately resists and obscures a singular reading of what this new century will entail, and instead comes to emphasise the “irregular, unperspicuous, and ambiguous” quality (Russell qtd. in Quigley 2015: 4) of even a singular word like “noise.”

Here, this word could easily represent the chaos and “vice” of “Atlantic city,” the patriotic chorus of a military “parade” or the protest of disenfranchised dissidents exploited by the new “cheap coal and iron,” or simultaneously all or none of these things (Dos Passos 1937: 3-5). Of course, the sequencing of the novel and the semiotic play it invites is not only evident within sections, but is made apparent between sections, or in what Foster describes as the novel’s layered “two-stage” or “vertical montage” (1986: 190, 192), which prompts constant revision of our reading of the surrounding segments. That is, the collage-driven, fragmentary and juxtaposed nature of the Newsreel functions not only internally, but in broader conjunction with the novel as a whole. For example, as we transition from Newsreel 1 to The Camera Eye (1), a new counter image to that of America’s “illustrious(ness)” is provided through Dos Passos’ own childhood remembrances of an anti-America Europe and postcards of its “pretty hotels and palaces” and “the big moon” (1937: 5-6). Dos Passos’ vision then, is one which enacts Saussure’s idea that “content is really fixed only by the concurrence of everything that exists outside it” (qtd. in Leitch 2001: 969), as his signs must be constantly reinterpreted in light of the novel’s progression.

The 42nd Parallel also exhibits the same Vertovian displacement of the sign through perspective. Many critical responses to the text in fact use the language of angles, specifically camera angles, to describe its different strands. The Camera Eye becomes “close-up shots,” the character narrative imposes a counter “panoramic mode of representation,” and the Newsreel functions as both “documentary shots” (Edwards 1999: 249) and “verbal snapshots” (Marz qtd. in Edwards 1999: 249). Dos Passos himself also speaks to this intention to express “different facets of my subject” (qtd. in Edwards 1999: 250). However, for the purpose of this thesis, the highly subjective, stream of consciousness succession of ‘close ups’ which underpins the Camera Eye depicts most valuably the way Dos Passos experiments with the portrayal of signs, not just in relation to other signs, but in and of themselves. Hock distils the Camera Eye component of the *U.S.A* trilogy to the aphorism which appears in one such section in *Big Money*,

the trilogy's final novel, to "stories told sideways out of the big mouth" (Dos Passos qtd. in Hock 2005: 23). This is a poignant image that evokes the Vertovian canted angle, the idea that just in the act of looking at something sideways its meaning changes, an idea further substantiated by German avant-garde painter and filmmaker Hans Richter who offers that in order to take distance from "conventional perspective" and arrive at "new aspect(s)," "Man Ray shot through mottled glass; Cavalcanti printed through monk's cloth, Chomette-Beaumont used multiple exposure; Germaine Dulac used distorting lenses; I turned the camera sideways" (1949: 37). There is also highly fragmentary quality to the imagery of Dos Passos' stream of consciousness, which Hock describes as picking up "bits of flotsam" (2005: 25) and Foster as images "cut (...) into pieces and realign(ed)" (1986: 187). The Camera Eye (42) for instance appears to transmute the trajectory of the war effort into a tripartite of disjointed new signs; of "day after day the shadows of the poplars point west northwest north northeast east," of "mashed mudguards busted springs old spades and shovels entrenching tools twisted hospital cots" and "no entiendo comprend pas no capisco nyeh panimayoo" (Dos Passos 1937: 454). Dos Passos' characteristically uncharacteristic images and their collocation takes the early twentieth century's most defining image and turns it on its side inducing - as this stream of consciousness segment does throughout *U.S.A* - the "reader-spectator to create his own whole" (Foster 1986: 190).

In his rich commentary on the novel Edwards concludes that Dos Passos was able to "develop the modern novel to incorporate the cubist principles of multiple perspective into a textual form (...) inviting examination from different perspectives," suggesting that experimental new film forms offered what the classic American novels of realism such as those by Edith Wharton no longer could; the ability to represent the complexity of existence in the Modern age (1999: 253). Cubism, as a movement which at its core reflects the paradoxical struggle with and desire to comprehend the nature of reality and meaning is also particularly helpful here, given that it operates on a broadly similar timeline to stream of consciousness

writing and avant-garde cinema and embodies the “march towards non-objectivity” as the “seedbed of pure abstraction” (Leighen 1988: 269). Just as cubism challenged the certainty or fixity of any image and the Compagnonian surface level appearance of realism to instead embrace abstracted forms, so did *Man with a Movie Camera* and *The 42nd Parallel* depart from narrative linearity to move to flowing streams of semiotically open images, images that invited abstract rather than concrete associations. And thus, it is here that I turn to the final phase of this chapter, the world of abstractions.

1.3 Abstractions

Interestingly, the avant-garde chose silence well after the first talkie appeared in 1927 with *The Jazz Singer*. While this choice to deliberately omit language - even once it became available - might peremptorily seem to widen the divide between cinema and stream of consciousness writing, I would actually suggest the opposite. Although I would not be so bold as to propose that this is a universal or uniform phenomenon - not even within a single sprawling opus of a stream of consciousness novel like *Ulysses* - I am inclined to suggest that stream of consciousness writing can begin to be understood as a form primarily in service of the image rather than the word; or at least in service of a medium of expression which has evolved to eclipse previous linguistic limitations. Much as Joyce himself described, “whenever I am obliged to lie with my eyes closed I see a cinematograph going on and on” (qtd. in Smurthwaite 2006: 79). Again, Bazin’s observations are also of value here, as he discusses the rise of the ‘talkie’ in more conventional cinema of the Modern era and suggests that sync sound literally “sounded the knell of a certain aesthetic of the language of film,” particularly that which was not in the strict “service of realism” (2005: 38). Furthermore, he asserts that sound was incompatible with expressionism, leading conventional cinema to turn “its back on metaphor and symbol in exchange for the illusion of objective presentation” (2005: 39). Beyond any of the more specific parallels drawn here between the imagery and structural approach of these

four seminal texts, it can certainly be inferred that stream of consciousness writing embodies the same desire for expressionism as avant-garde cinema and the same rejection of objective presentation, the same preference for the world of metaphor and symbol, the same preference for arresting imagery over traditional dictates of continuity, plot and character; in essence, the same rejection of conventional modes of representation. And consequentially, the same desire to open up new pluralities of meaning through new mechanisms of expression.

As Apollinaire suggested, in his discussion of the images of Modern art, their mode of expression “borrowed not from visual but from conceptual reality” (qtd. in Compagnon 1994: 50). Thus, I would maintain that the most critical, unifying dimension of the aesthetic of both the novel and cinema modes discussed in this thesis is the shift away from meaning making on objective to subjective terms, and from the literal plane to the figurative plane. Aiken, in reference back to Man Ray and the dada collage film movement to which he belonged, speaks of the avant-garde’s focus on this world of abstraction, their desire to “draw poetic analogies” between images, and to “manipulat(e) focus” in such a way that creates “continuities between real and abstract forms” (1983: 240). Richter testifies to this same “fascination with abstract” and the “distortion” and “dissection” of familiar objects that was a requisite of the movement (1949: 36-7). Under this framework it is evident that all four of the principal authors discussed in this chapter have breathed in the same air of abstractions as Ray and Richter. All of the texts discussed here consistently feature images that are intended to be read both openly and beyond the literal level, focusing intensely on the subjective frame and the abstract or figurative plane as the main level on which they attempt to understand and communicate meaning, particularly in light of the complexities and instabilities of their time.

Likewise, to return to the unforgettable figurative quality of *Rose Hobart* that began this discussion, Cornell’s images are also seen to be so layered with allusion and so inundated with “meaning within meaning” that their real, or standard representational qualities have been completely eroded, to the point where only the abstract remains (Lawson 1980: 60).

Particularly, Rose “is not herself, but a symbol, a carrier of a message outside of herself” (Lawson 1980: 57) because she has become nothing less than the abstraction of Cornell’s own unconscious intermingled erotic and artistic desires. Thus, it becomes clear that these abstractions, at the heart of the aesthetic of both the stream and the avant-garde serve an even more layered importance to this dissertation. As Lodge writes, in his influential work on consciousness in literature, “one of the primary means by which literature renders qualia” - qualia being, most simply put, our subjective, phenomenal perceptions - is through figurative language like similes and metaphors (2002: 286). And, through these figurative devices, authors - and of course filmmakers - can “vividly stimulate” not only the object but more importantly the subjective experience of it, can verbalise the non-verbal, and enter the non-representational realm to construct new understandings of our inner experiences (Lodge 2002: 286). Or, in short, they can capture consciousness.

2. The Concepts: Capturing Consciousness

The self is not an immaterial essence but an epiphenomenon of brain activity...

(Lodge 2002: 180)

When Dorothy Richardson’s *Pointed Roofs* was published in 1915, it became the first stream of consciousness novel published in English. In essence a *roman à clef*, it formed the first - as she termed - chapter in her *Pilgrimage* series, which would ultimately come to span thirteen semi-autobiographical novels. From the novel’s outset, Richardson appropriates the bildungsroman form but shifts away from a focus on exterior circumstances, occurrences and changes, and instead places the locus of the novel squarely within her surrogate protagonist Miriam’s mind. In the opening pages Miriam, in her own constant stream of thought, articulates

this focus on inner life as something far removed from the objective world:

It was away somewhere in the house; far away and unreal and unfelt as her parents somewhere downstairs, and the servants away in the basement getting breakfast and Sarah and Eve always incredible, getting quietly up in the next room. Nothing was real but getting up with old Harriett in this old room (...) (Richardson 2018: 172)

From here it becomes increasingly clear that the central focus of the novel is the notion of perception, and there are a number of strikingly lyrical passages which develop the fullness of Miriam's consciousness, its warmth, its coolness, its vulnerabilities, its strengths, its limitlessness, its limits, its chaos and its order, its ability to span space and time. Everything in the novel is perceived through her and Richardson constantly reminds us, or seeks to inquire, what that means - what Lodge's "epiphenomenon of brain activity" actually looks like (2002: 180) - giving us moments where, for example, the present and past become so intertwined that Miriam can only see a "vague radiance" and "dim forms" in the room around her and "could not remember which was which" (2018: 492). Richardson plays with the same liminality in much the same way that Joyce and Buñuel did, and she often points to this space where consciousness overlaps with reality. In particular the stark image, which appears towards the end of the novel as Miriam begins to become more self-actualised, reflects a perceptual change through her sense of sight as "she seemed to see all of them at once. The circle of her vision seemed huge (...) and she saw equally from eyes that seemed to fill her face" (2018: 2581). Here we simultaneously see not only how Miriam sees, but how she perceives herself to be seen in a phenomenon which would be ontologically impossible beyond the frontiers of our consciousness, and we see character transformation translated from didacticized outer experience to an ephemeral perceptual glimmer.

When the novel was released critics remarked that it was "as if the reader did not exist" (Fromm qtd. in Podnieks 1994: 69) and that in her abandonment of "drama," "situation" and "set scene," and in its place an embracement of consciousness, Richardson "gets closer to reality than any of our novelists who are trying so desperately to get close" (Sinclair qtd. in

Podnieks 1994: 70). Podnieks herself articulates that at the heart of *Pointed Roofs* and Richardson's entire *Pilgrimage* series is simply the action of 'being,' of existing (1994). Lamentably, while I can source no anecdote that documents Virginia Woolf immolating a copy of Richardson's novel whilst shrieking that this was the exact novel that she was going to write, *Pointed Roofs* nevertheless gives scope to this chapter as an originary text and a kind of litmus of the presentation of consciousness in stream of consciousness writing. And although the aesthetics of her stream are a little more nascent than that of her successors, her novel illuminates the conceptual focus that I believe most closely unifies the stream of consciousness novel and avant-garde cinema, the - as I have previously termed - new realities of consciousness and distinctly subjective, interior worlds. Or, as I will address in this chapter, their focus on interiority, ephemerality and authenticity. Sotirova in her novel about consciousness in Modernist fiction, describes Modernism as a movement which witnessed "the philosophical collapsing of the relation that predicate(d) the independent existence of external reality outside the self" (2013: 23). Although she contends that "the existence of the external world" was not totally "destroyed nor subsumed into an individual consciousness" in a traditionally solipsistic sense, she still suggests that "the subjectivity of the human being" became seen as the primary factor "in construing reality" (2013: 23-24). Accordingly, that the essential goal of the Modern novelist was to express this new way of understanding the self, and reality, as mediated through the self (Sotirova 2013). Of course, this new subjective self which occupied both Modern novels and cinema, was by and large a distinctly Freudian one; one, as we will see, with not only conscious, but unconscious thoughts, feelings, desires, memories and dreams.

In my efforts to continually enrich and broaden my scope of study in this chapter I will focus upon two key stream of consciousness novels, William Faulkner's gothic American Modernist novel *As I Lay Dying* (1930) and Virginia Woolf's critically acclaimed *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). In complement, I will be considering the representation of consciousness in *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (1920, *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*) by Robert Wiene, as the

quintessential work of German Expressionism, and a later entry in the United States' Modern avant-garde cinema canon, Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943).

2.1. Interiority

Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* provides a sterling starting point for this discussion because it epitomises that the sense of interiority cultivated in stream of consciousness writing is much more than a preference for the subjective over the objective, and similarly much more than a strictly academic rejection of the conventional norms of the eighteenth and nineteenth century novels of realism; but something possibly more visceral. Even Faulkner's creative process in writing this novel in the dark shadows of night "between 12 and 4," in only "six weeks" where he "didn't change a word" (qtd. in Fagnoli et al. 2008: 44) has a certain Freudian energy to it, not to mention the novel's obvious mother issues. With a narrative focus on the moment of matriarch Addie Bundren's death, and her family's subsequent journey through flame and flood to inter her body in the nearby town of Jefferson, Faulkner establishes a complex chorus of inner voices in *As I Lay Dying* which reveal the mindscapes of both the Bundren family and those whose lives intersect with theirs. Broken down into fifty-nine separate stream of consciousness monologues, including one narrated by Addie herself some five days after her own death, this is a text which thrives on complexity, the complexities of the inner self, of relationships, of time and of the tragi-comic nature of existence. As Brooks comments, the hallmark of Faulkner's tone is complexity given the novel "daringly mingle(s) the grotesque and the heroic, the comic and the pathetic, pity and terror" (qtd. in Fagnoli et al. 2008: 46).

As with the texts that I grappled with in my first chapter, I must by necessity narrow the otherwise endless latitudes of comparison and concentrate my analysis to only a few key dimensions of the text's exploration of interiority. In this light, the first field I would like to focus upon is the novel as an exploration of sense and perception, of phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty's influential writings on phenomenology and 'the new psychology' are predicated on a

dissolution of old “distinction(s) between mind and body” (1991: 53) and similarly, antiquated binary divisions between the senses. Thus, opening the dialogue for a new understanding of the interrelationship between the physical world, senses, thoughts and consciousness. In particular, his assertion that “I do not think the world in the act of perception: it organizes itself in front of me” (1991: 51), speaks to the Modernist preoccupation with those “inchoate” (Humphrey 1958: 2), nascent, unconscious and preter-thoughts which flow freely in stream of consciousness writing. In essence therefore, in *As I Lay Dying* “what is most important is not the event itself” but the “actuality” that the character “experiences in it,” in the moment of experience (Handy 1959: 444), including the way their sensory or physical reality is manifest in interiority. Faulkner’s characters exist and perceive primarily in these kind of ‘inchoate,’ sensory ways, especially as they grapple with the trauma of Addie’s imminent death. Thus, when Cora looks upon Addie, she instead sees Cash sawing her coffin through Addie’s own eyes: “if we were deaf we could almost watch her face and hear him, see him” (Faulkner 2017: 11). Likewise, Peabody “feels her eyes” “shoving him” and sees in them “that furious desire to hide that abject nakedness which we bring here” and “carry stubbornly and furiously with us into the earth again” (2017: 31). Vardaman of course cannot face the scene at all, conflating the “cut up (...) pieces of not-fish” and the “not-blood” on his hands with his mother, the trauma ultimately leading him to a total abnegation of the self; where “I cannot see” and where “I am not anything” (2017: 36-7). These scenes not only emphasise the nature of the phenomenological self, but identify the senses and our perception of them as something much more than their literal or separate component parts, painting a Joyce-Buñuelean portrait of this logic defying liminal space between the inner self and the outer world. Merleau-Ponty is again of use as he articulates that people synesthetically “speak of hot, cold, shrill, or hard colours, of sounds that are clear, sharp, brilliant, rough, or mellow” because our perception is “not a sum of visual, tactile, and audible givens” but rather, that “we perceive in a total way” with our “whole being,” with all “senses at once” (1991: 50). There is certainly a legacy of Sterne’s “exuberant physicality”

(Dussinger 1982: 6) here in Faulkner's focus on the senses and in the recognition of the physiological self, or, an interiority which encompasses the physicality of being. And similarly, there are traces of Richardson's symbolic image of Miriam's "unseeing eyes" as a representation of her ability to experience with this complete totality of her being (2018: 690). Furthermore, beyond seeing interiority simply as this space of holistic sense perception, I find that Meunier's writings illuminate more comprehensively the unique qualities of this pre-thought experiential self when he describes that:

phenomenology is above all a method aimed at describing our immediate experience. Renouncing, at least provisionally, the theoretical explanations that reason or scientific intelligence have been able to construct, it represents a return to the lived experience of phenomena, an effort to recover a direct contact with the world such as it is, before any analysis that we can make of it, and any explanation that we can give of it (...) (2019: 40-1)

This definition also serves as a reminder of how drastically the stream of consciousness mode differs from the kind of pre-Modernist fiction which was devoted to the most highly articulated and developed forms of self-awareness. Instead, *As I Lay Dying* as a phenomenologically centred novel - as other stream of consciousness texts are - not only challenges theocentric notions of the self as this 'immaterial essence' but also any kind of Neo-platonic conflation of the mind with reason and rationality, or any Enlightenment-esque faith in epistemological certainty. Alternately, it reveals our consciousness as a limitless space, concretely unknowable and paradoxically both us and not us, both within and beyond both our control, grasp and understanding.

Another key dimension of the Modernist interiority emblemised by Faulkner is then the presentation of a Freudian unmediated, unconscious or subconscious self. If there is a Sternian legacy in *As I Lay Dying*, there is also a bridge from the eighteenth century's dominant form; the epistolary novel, a mode which introduced immediacy and which evolved in accordance with the values of formal realism (Watt 2000) in its desire to "impersonate" orality and accordingly develop a more authentic sense of character (Adams Day 1980: 193). Faulkner

however, attempts to collapse the spatial and temporal divide between his readers and his characters even more so, by not only bridging the point of narration with the point of action and shifting to present tense, but in effect, by expunging the narrator. Thus, as Franklin observes, in this deliberate narratorial dearth:

Each of the minds is its own persona telling its part of the story through unconscious, involuntary narration. The reader sees the functioning mind, but it is not exhibiting experience for the reader; it is simply experiencing. External reality is immediate to the mind, and the recording of that reality along with other mental processes is immediate to the reader (...) (1967: 58)

The result then is - as is established above - a phenomenological vision of immediate interiority, but also an unmediated, unfettered and unselfconscious interior experience; a true experience of the self without rationalisation or explanation, or at least an attempt at one. As Handy writes, *As I Lay Dying* attests to a “conviction that what is most real in human experience is the kind of inner world man inhabits - a world wherein is determined man's feelings, hopes, desires, aspirations, compulsions and obsessions (...)” and accordingly, that Faulkner tries to capture “the reality” of “felt experience” (1959: 451, 438). Of course, a critical dimension of this ‘felt experience’ in a Freudian or psychoanalytic light, is the experiences of the unconscious or secreted self, and much as Freud himself did, Faulkner appears to not only expose but accept the “split, hidden or contradictory desires and intentions” (Leitch 2001: 917), of the layered self in the novel. This is perhaps best exemplified in Darl, the novel’s central protagonist (if there is one). In turns, Darl is the sensitive model of “natural affection,” the poetic but isolated muser who observes the “implacable, patient, portentous” buzzards against “the quick thick sky,” and the rash barn burner who “can’t see eye to eye with other folks” (Faulker 2017: 18, 60, 142). This is such a paradoxical jumble of incongruent traits - including most critically, his descent into plausible insanity - that his character would seem untenable, had Faulkner not inhabited both Darl and all those who surround him so candidly. Much as Joyce’s Buck Mulligan quotes Whitman with zest - “contradict myself? Very well then, I contradict myself” (Joyce 2008: 247) - Faulkner appears to similarly relish the mercurial nature of the self, plunging the full depths

of the psyche. The stream of consciousness writers then, were not interested in the interior world of characters as a unified or coherent entity, but rather in the instability epitomised by this subjective space: the fluxes, the foibles, the inconsistencies of the consciousness as it flows, gurgles, swirls back on itself, floods and even runs stagnant. If the Modern citizen was not even sure “whether the human world (wa)s possible” (Merleau-Ponty 1991: 5), then it is unlikely that the self as a less objective and rational space, would verify any sense of certainty or meaning.

Thus, extending on Faulkner’s uncensored and uncensored portrait of the ‘felt experience’ of the Bundren’s arises the final key dimension of *As I Lay Dying* that I will explore here: the novel’s existential preoccupation. It seems simple enough to propose that in the wake of global tragedy, the increasing abandonment of Christian monomyths and the rise of Freudian psychoanalytic theory that the nature of the self as an existential entity comes to the fore. Particularly, as Faulkner - like Joyce, Dos Passos, Richardson and his cinema contemporaries - turns away from the objective world and its concrete certainties, it seems similarly natural that the world of interiority also becomes one of metaphysical doubt. This existential angst plagues a host of Faulkner’s characters, but perhaps most of all Darl, as his ruminations on sleep elucidate:

In a strange room you must empty yourself for sleep. And before you are emptied for sleep, what are you. And when you are emptied for sleep, you are not. And when you are filled with sleep, you never were. I dont know what I am. I dont know if I am or not. Jewel knows he is, because he does not know that he does not know whether he is or not. He cannot empty himself for sleep because he is not what he is and he is what he is not. Beyond the unlamped wall I can hear the rain shaping the wagon that is ours, the load that is no longer theirs that felled and sawed it nor yet theirs that bought it and which is not ours either, lie on our wagon though it does, since only the wind and the rain shape it only to Jewel and me, that are not asleep. And since sleep is is-not and rain and wind are was, it is not. Yet the wagon is, because when the wagon is was, Addie Bundren will not be. And Jewel is, so Addie Bundren must be. And then I must be, or I could not empty myself for sleep in a strange room. And so if I am not emptied yet, I am is (...) (Faulkner 2017: 51-2, original spelling)

This is not a mere question of identity, not a typical ‘who am I?’ narrative moment, but rather a ‘what is *is*?’ moment; not only in relation to the self, but in relation to all that the self

perceives. As Hemenway encapsulates, Darl is “primarily struggling with the abstraction of existence and the epistemological dilemma inherent in the idea. How does one know this human ‘state of being’? How does one know whether he ‘is’ or not?” (1970: 136). This existential line of questioning does not only belong to Darl however, and is mirrored frequently by other characters like Dewey Dell, who, as she reflects on a nightmare similarly panics that “I couldn’t think what I was” (Faulkner 2017: 76). If what *is*, is so hard to define, then - much as Darl frets - what *was* is called into equal question, and likewise, what Addie is or was. Despite Faulkner’s ensemble cast, which allows us to grasp a sense of the characters in light of event and exterior action, not only in their own conscious and subconscious minds, the objective world remains uncertain. In fact, it is ultimately rendered even more inseparable from the subjective frame to the extent which the text embodies “the major paradox of being” and forces us to ask the unanswerable questions of how “one reconcile(s) subjective and objective reality? Mind and body? Existence and Essence?” (Hemenway 1970: 137).

Given that a text’s manner of construction and its conceptual focus are ultimately inseparable, I return briefly to both aesthetics and Franklin, who astutely observed that in the case of *As I lay Dying* “the book itself is an impalpable medium that fits nowhere into the fictional world it creates” because “the verbal plane is not a part of the fictional world but merely the medium which we as readers must use to gain access to that world and which we ignore as we use it” (1967: 58). That is, that the verbal reality of the text is secondary to the non-verbal reality which it represents. In this way, Faulkner moves beyond the binary paradigm of words against images, both as it pertains to consciousness, as previously posited by psychologists like Galton, and to the supposed ontological opposition between literary and filmic representations. Hence, he arguably arrives at a new ‘language’ of interior expression, much as Vertov, for instance, similarly sought to dismantle the limitations of form and pioneer new mechanisms of expression, particularly non-representational expression.

Here then, I turn to Wiene’s expressionist triumph, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*.

Utilising aesthetics that we have become familiar with such as the Buñuel matte and the Vertov canted angle, coupled with Wiene's own dreamlike and expressionistic backgrounds, lighting and shadow play he constructs a cinematically tortured world of confusion, superstition and murder, an atmosphere not dissimilar to that of Faulkner's gothic and brooding novel. Although of all the films I have touched upon this is the most narratively reliant, in the context of this dissertation it is also important to examine the way in which Wiene - and other filmmakers of a similar Expressionist ilk like Murnau and Lang - balanced representational and non-representational elements in their films, particularly given that this blend is arguably even closer to the model utilised in much stream of consciousness writing. Thus, like the journey of the Bundren family to bury Addie that backgrounds their inner explorations and unravellings - which Humphrey identified as a new fusion of plot with the stream of consciousness mode, one which only served to make "the sacred waters of that stream (...) more potent" (1958: 121) - the compelling murder mystery of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* underscores and coexists with its striking subliminal and dreamlike dimensions.

Analogous to Faulkner's novel, Wiene's film can be interpreted primarily as a study in phenomenology, in the workings of the mind, particularly the nature of perception as a sensory and physiological phenomenon. Merleau-Ponty again provides a lens into the film with his remark that "the mingling of consciousness with the world, its involvement in a body, and its coexistence with others" is "movie material par excellence," because at its most basic films can "manifest the union of mind and body, mind and world, and the expression of one in the other" (1991: 59, 58). Given that perception "does not involve intelligently interpreting the world in order to reconstitute its meaning" but rather "has a presence alongside the objects of the world," as Meunier suggests, film is primarily an object of perception - like the stream of consciousness mode - because of its "immediacy" and the ability of the filmic consciousness to "coexist with things," much as perceptual consciousness does in reality (2019: 70-1). At its most basic then, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* invokes the world of the self which exists beyond verifiable thought

and understanding. Through the sustained use of eye-shaped mattes which both physically and symbolically limit the cinematic field of view, the flattened perspective and deliberate absence of a spatial middle ground in the film's staging and the prevalence of cinematic night Wiene captures this 'intermingling' of consciousness in both the physical body and physical world. Thereby, he constructs a vision in which nothing can be concretely observed or understood. Thus, like Faulkner he both proves the "fallibility of external reality" (Ketchiff 1984: 9) and moves away from the realm of rational thought to immediate experience. As Woolf commented, the "monstrous quivering tadpole" of a shadow "seemed to be fear itself, and not the statement: I am afraid" (1954: 216), reflecting her recognition of the film's ability to manifest the space of pre and preter-thought, of immediate sense and feeling. Furthermore, as is the case for Faulkner's expunged narratorial voice, Ketchiff suggest that Wiene's characters are equally "part of the art of the film and part of the narrative" (1984: 9) and the film frequently collapses the structural space between experience and representation in its pursuit of phenomenological authenticity. This is captured most vividly at the height of Caligari's transformation, as seen in *fig. 6*, where Wiene breaks with the already heavily suspended internal logic of the screen space to superimpose in various places the commandment "you must become Caligari" (Wiene 1920) and whereby "the printed word seems synesthetically to create screaming sound" (Ketchiff 1984: 10). This example is remarkable for the way it emulates the same synesthetic perceptions of *As I Lay Dying* and likewise enacts Machpherson's principle that in avant-garde cinema "'See' is inaccurate.



Figure 6 - Phenomenology, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*

'Hear' is inaccurate. 'See and hear' is inaccurate" because these films instead create expressions of "I sense," which is "*subject to almost no restriction*" (qtd. in Donald 1998: 31, original italics). This example is also noteworthy because, in a microcosmic allegory for the entirety of

the film, it plays with the interrelationship of perception and belief, speaking to Meunier's Sartrean interpretation of film phenomenology, that "in perception, we do not have to believe what we see. The perceived world initially gives itself as real" (2019: 92). Particularly given the narrative subversion at the ending, the film becomes an even more pointed representation of the way in which the world appears to us pre-consciously, inviting a new openness to expression and meaning. One which upholds the value of the nascent, subjective frame, even in its obscurity, changeability and inability to ever be objective. And thus, despite some obvious aesthetic differences in their unique approaches, Wiene's film, like Vertov's, also speaks to the preoccupation of the avant-garde with exploring how cinema can not only represent but reconfigure and extend our "perceptual horizons" (Delgado 2009: 12).

As Walker succinctly states, "that the film engages a Freudian model of the self is irrefutable" (2006: 617), and as with *As I Lay Dying*, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* utilises the gothic and macabre, as well as the world of dreams and nightmares to bring this Freudian subconscious self to light. Through his carefully orchestrated *mise-en-scène*: the chiaroscuro lighting, the expressionistic backdrops and sets, the heavy-handed mannequin-esque makeup and the afore mentioned mattes which constantly obstruct the audience's full vision, Wiene plunges deeply into a world which has no line between the conscious and unconscious, or subconscious self; a world both familiar and deeply unsettling and strange. To revisit a figure we know well, Luis Buñuel:

Cinema is a magnificent and dangerous weapon if it is wielded by a free spirit. It is the best instrument for expressing the world of dreams, emotions, and instinct. By the very nature of the way it functions, the mechanism that creates cinematic images is the one that, of all means of human expression, recalls best the work of the mind during sleep. Film seems to be an involuntary imitation of dream (...) (qtd. in Thiher 1977:46)

That the film exudes a dream aesthetic and thus exposes the hidden self of the dream world is similarly irrefutable. Capitalising then on the obvious dreamlike, or nightmarish aura that permeates the film, Wiene constructs two central character dyads - that of Caligari and Cesare, and Caligari and Francis - in order to more fully suspend the notion of identity and self as

certain and to plunder the dark depths of the conscious mind, exploiting both its instability and unknowability, even to ourselves. Particularly, these three central performers and their mirrored Delsartean gestures evoke “convulsive,” “execrative” and primordial states of physical being (Walker 2006: 624), and symbolically come to “represent the relation of psychoanalysis to matter, mediated through rhetoric and figuration” (Elsaesser qtd. in Richardson 2006: 12); represent the fractured nature of the self and the conscious. Employing an increasingly disordered vision and aesthetic as the film progresses, the dramatic climax of the film arrives with the doubling and juxtaposition of the two straight jacket scenes as seen in *fig. 7*. The fissure between this central dyad, which cannot be resolved conclusively, seems to embody the



Figure 7 - Subconscious Self, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*

“frustrated desire to know the unconscious and thereby unify the divided self” and speaks to Wiene’s

pattern of an “endless displacement of certainty” (Walker 2006: 618, 621). This narrative shift, which also calls into question Francis’ sanity, upheaves our perception of all of the preceding moments of the film in a way that narratively mirrors Darl’s possible descent into insanity in *As I Lay Dying*. However, given that both texts relish ambiguity and contradiction in their treatment of their protagonists, Wiene also thematically arrives at a Faulknerian conclusion in this upheaval, suggesting that in a world that seems increasingly unknowable, the self and the consciousness may be the most unknowable of all. Budd similarly posits that the film is intended to be an “uneasy amalgam” rather than “an organic unity,” and functions as a “homeostatic system” predicated on “disunities,” contradictions and disturbances (1979: 36). Budd gives testament to this plurality of the subconscious self and plurality of the text that exists in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, and which are inextricably intertwined, by the “various readings” of the film (1979: 36) signifying that meaning may reside only in the way it resonates

subjectively with both the creator and the individual consumer of a text.

Wiene's vision therefore, is similarly also interwoven with an existential preoccupation, one which I would offer is not only underlined by the film's central dyads and dream logic, as discussed above, but by the character of Cesare. Cesare seems to embody Faulkner's very question of *is* and *wasness* given that he is introduced to us as a Freudian somnambulist who has slept continuously for twenty-three years and yet he is also, dichotomously, a figure who "knows every secret (...) knows the past and sees the future" (Wiene 1920). The sustained, unbroken shot of Cesare's face as he slowly opens his eyes for the first time, as seen in *fig. 8*, certainly operates as one of Baláz's physiognomic close up shots which are able to "photograph the subconscious" (qtd. in Marcus 1998: 242) and the look of fear present in his eyes seems to say it all.



Figure 8 - Existential preoccupation, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*

This arresting visual also functions as one of Baláz's "picture metaphors" (qtd. in Marcus 1998: 242), working synechdochically to reveal the shared terror of a human culture which is simultaneously more aware and less aware of what it means to exist than ever. De Felipe and Gómez describe the brain as something which is immeasurably larger on the inside than it is on the outside, and accordingly examine the attempts of film to manifest the physiological self by spatializing it, by turning consciousness and mental images into a kind of cinematic map that we can move around at will; a process, they articulate, which continues to this day and possibly leads us towards mapping out consciousness more concretely (2016: 303). In this light, the nightmarish, abstract and obfuscating cinematic geography of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* can be seen as a map that emphasises the central tenant of doubt that Cesare personifies, highlighting not a known or mappable consciousness, but a terrifyingly unknown one, and Wiene uses the physicality of the screen to reflect the confusion which resides within us, the existential doubts and fears. In doing so he airs, perhaps the most critical paradox of modernism,

the quest for meaning in a world that seems entirely devoid of it.

It may seem unnecessary to reassert at this juncture that “the film's narrative and expressionistic designs” are “integrally” not “merely, incidentally related” (Walker 2006: 618). However, I think it warrants returning to this notion that although one composer here is dealing - at least ontologically speaking - with the image, and the other with the word, the fact that both composers are so keenly aware of how they manipulate the language of their own medium to develop a similar exploration of interiority is no small parallel. And the terrifying and elusive enigma of being, which underscores both Faulkner and Wiene's texts is certainly no small parallel either. And while things may currently look existentially bleak for the Modernists, Hemenway contends that in the face of this inability to separate ‘is’ from ‘is not,’ which plagues the Bundren family in *As I Lay Dying*, at least one “boundary for *isness* can be identified,” suggesting that “the boundary of existence is time, that tense serves as the only certain functionary of being” (1970: 139, original italics). Perhaps meaning is insolvably unstable and perhaps in shifting from objective conditions to inner life Modern composers only further revealed the impossibility of concrete, confineable meaning. Nevertheless, in plunging into these deep, perceptual, pre and subconscious depths of the human psyche, they unarguably come to therefore inhabit the now, the now of both the text itself and the now in which it is experienced, and thus it is here that I would like to explore ephemerality.

2.2. Ephemerality

Stephen Dedalus counsels himself in *Ulysses* to “hold to the now, the here, through which all future plunges to the past” (2008: 2827), a sentiment which seems to encapsulate the shared realisation of stream of consciousness writers and avant-garde filmmakers: that any meaning, and any semblance of a unified self, if it exists at all, only exists in constantly fleeting, ephemeral parcels of now. As such, they attuned their artistic sensibilities to this nowness, this ‘isness.’ Tymoczko similarly identifies this preoccupation, not only of Stephen as a character,

but Joyce as an author with the “fluid succession of presents” (Joyce qtd. in Tymockzo 1998: 48) and perceives that *Ulysses*’ thematic preoccupation with metempsychosis becomes, not only a metaphysical inquest, but a broader acknowledgment of identity and the self as an “ever-changing form” (1998: 48). Hence, Stephen and Darl and Francis - and Caligari, Cesare, Dewey Dell, Addie and the rest all the same - alter constantly across their ‘fluid succession of presents,’ not only in terms of their consciousness, their self, but in relation to one another, to their world and to us as exterior perceivers of the text, being similarly changeable in their narrative function. And moreover, this changeability is deliberate, critical to the affect and structure of the text. Therefore, beyond ephemerality as an aesthetic, which, as has been established, is a key marker of both stream of consciousness writing and avant-garde films I would like to move here into examining ephemerality as a core construct of both modes of expression. Thus, as I have done in my preceding chapter, here I would like to shift to two new texts, Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* and Deren’s *Meshes of the Afternoon*.

Woolf as both author and essayist has certainly been vocal about the importance of the now, stressing that “every feeling, every thought” and “perception” is “the proper stuff of fiction” (2015: 7), and accordingly her works cherish the “trivial, fantastic” and most importantly here, the “evanescent” (2015: 4). Much like *Ulysses*, *Mrs Dalloway* is set in the clearly demarcated and finite window of just one day, and the novel thus focuses acutely on temporality, on the present moment. However, by utilising a lyrical fusion of stream of consciousness narration with indirect interior monologue, London and the tangible physical reality of the novel becomes not “a monolithic, fixed realm” (Snaith 1996: 138) but a constantly transmuting place hinged only upon the perception of Woolf’s host of characters. In doing so Woolf’s stream aesthetic offers up places in which against the dark, ‘monolithic’ tides of the catastrophe of World War I individual nuances, paradoxical moments of joy, sadness, fullness, emptiness, meaning, absurdity - these rich, changeable, complexities which give meaning to life - rise to the fore. And in the novel’s narrative “ensemble of spatial and mental volumes”

which constructs a vision, or rather a series of quickly moving visions “quite unlike a scene perceived by ‘ordinary’ sight” (Quick 1985: 557), Woolf embeds the way in which the metronome of the outer world intersects with our inner temporal ebb and flow. It is perhaps unsurprising that a text, which had working title of *The Hours*, is devoted to time, and *Mrs Dalloway* reminds us that if a central tenant of Modernism is uncertainty, then a preoccupation with the tangible moment of the present is logical, given that it is all we can truly hold to.

Ephemerality becomes interwoven into the fabric of the novel firstly as a physical manifestation. In a scene which strikingly recalls Vertov’s symphonic city awakening, from the opening pages of the novel London is characterised by its ceaseless motion and sprawling geography. Yet, it is framed precisely by Big Ben’s symbolic “irrevocable” strike of “the hour” (Woolf 2001: 103), much as Woolf later personifies the “shredding and slicing, dividing and subdividing” clocks which “nibbled at the June day” (2000: 248), evoking time as the mechanical, epistemological agent that gives finite and measured scope to these moments, creates these parcels of ‘now.’ Thus, as Clarissa Dalloway savours the frenetic hum of “the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs,” the “triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead” of “London” Woolf emphasises the vision of constantly shifting, changing and intersecting lives, of a world of acute ephemerality. While the tragedy that lingers although “the war was over” will inevitably come to dominate the dramatic epicentre of the novel, and the age and infirmity that has not yet, but will eventually come steal the “light, vivacious” “touch of the bird” about Clarissa are present from these opening pages, the existential trauma they evoke is undercut by Clarissa’s own temporary whim in this fleeting “moment of June” to “love life” and to metaphorically “kindle and illuminate” (Woolf 2000: 103-5). From the novel’s outset then, Woolf not only clings to this now, and acknowledges how quickly it moves, but bridges the past and present to further emphasise that evanescence is life’s only constant. Thus, in these opening passages, Woolf slips masterfully between the hum of

inner city London and the halcyon, seaside world of Bourton because to Clarissa Dalloway, both evoke the same “fresh(ness)” of early morning, the same sense of possibility. And though, yes, both are underscored by the reality that “something awful was about to happen,” or that something awful has just happened, Clarissa’s ability to appreciate both the personified “kiss of a wave,” and the “soft mesh of the grey-blue morning air” of London (2000: 102-4) and to hold them in internal equivalence speaks to the fact that every present moment will soon enough be the past - regardless of its affect or gravitas - and likewise that all of Clarissa’s past is also “contained in the present moment” (Richter 1982: 239).

The way in which *Mrs Dalloway* straddles the past and present, as well as future; collapsing any distance between these normally opposed phenomena because they coexist, intermingle and change so quickly in Clarissa’s waking consciousness also speaks to the fact that the nowness of the novel is much more than the present moments experienced in physical form. Despite the narrow parameter of time in which *Mrs Dalloway* is set, its reach spills and spreads far beyond this. And, I propose that as we return to this inner world of consciousness, Woolf not only reveals but revels in ephemerality in its interior manifestation. If time is both the “leaden circles” that press down upon us and confine us, and the paradoxically esoteric nothingness that “dissolve(s) in the air” (Woolf 2000: 103), then ephemerality can be cast in our inward gaze as a tool of liberation that allows us to experience everything at once. Hasler espouses that the metronomic chime of *Mrs Dalloway*’s clocks “constantly reminds us of the contrast between the external, quantitative time and the inner, qualitative time” (qtd. in Wood 2003: 22) and Richter thus stresses in contrast, the fluidness of the qualitative “psychological duration of the moment-of-being” (1982: 239) represented by Woolf’s narrative stream. Similarly, Wood calls Woolf’s “clear incongruity” of temporality - including that of the novel’s ‘external, quantitative time’ - a deliberate reflection of the fact that “place and time, matter and memory are all abstractions” (2003: 27). Woolf herself describes Clarissa as having a “look,” capable of “passing through all that time and that emotion” (2000: 161) and the novel is

predicated on the sentiment that meaning and experience exist only in the now, because in the now the mind is capable of carrying a kernel of the entirety; of experience past, present and future. Correspondingly, “the most exquisite moment of (Clarissa’s) whole life” for instance, is churned through in its entirety in little over a page and a half of narrative space and in a narrative moment that already encompasses a rambling meditation on her relationship with Sally Seton, Peter Walsh, herself, her future and aging, and in which she stares at her own reflection in order to “catch the falling drop,” and “plunge(d) into the very heart of the moment, transfix(ed) it, there—the moment of this June morning” (Woolf 2000: 149-51).

Mrs Dalloway then not only embodies ephemerality in the constant motion of its physical world, and the constant motion of its protagonist’s inner mindscapes - much as I established in my discussion of *Ulysses* - but reveals that the ephemeral collisions and collocations that occur internally are the tools by which we can, if we can at all, reconcile and forge ourselves and our subjective frame of meaning. Woolf accomplishes this in such a way that reminds me of Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse 5*, where time is not linearly limited like “beads on a string,” but rather all moments of experience exist in the “way we can look at a stretch of the Rocky Mountains” (1972: 13), a distinctly postmodern but nevertheless provocative and resonant image. And, in embracing an aesthetic that balances the inevitability of ephemerality with the limitless of this inner view, I believe Woolf also opens spaces in her discourse for her readers to have and infuse their own ephemeral experiences.

Akin to *Mrs Dalloway*, Deren’s *Meshes of the Afternoon*, the latest and the last text I will introduce in this dissertation, intersects the tight and finite timeframe of one afternoon, with the ephemeral and oneiric glimpses of the unnamed protagonist, played by Deren. The film, which to this day remains one of the United States’ most lauded works of avant-garde cinema inhabits a fabric of ephemerality through its patterns of incompleteness, which become both its central theme and its “structuring principal” (Keller 2013: 76). Keller perceives that the way the film focuses upon “highlighting fragments and joining incongruous spaces and times”

allows it to “expand the notions of space and time within the parameters of its diegesis” (2013: 81). Millsapps similarly sees the film, at its essence, as an exercise in “expanding and changing the boundaries of time and space” (1986: 27). Even the word ‘meshes,’ resonates with a focus on that which is incomplete and fleeting, evoking the incipient, the inchoate, the partially formed. Likewise, the title constructs a sense that any kind of unity or coherence, any meaning can only be discerned in the collocation of these fleeting moments and incipient parts, in this meshing together which occurs only in our consciousness.

While Deren elects a predominantly private setting, her world, like Woolf’s, is a thing in motion: waves crash, records spin, diaphanous curtains blow in the breeze and the unnamed woman she plays moves constantly, as does the camera which appears to float alongside her. Thus, ephemerality appears to us first, as in *Mrs Dalloway*, as a physical manifestation. Perhaps owing to the technical innovation which occurred in the interceding period between this film and some of the earlier works I have cited in this thesis, Deren’s camera is emphatically mobile as it whip-pans, rocks off-kilter, spirals and at times hovers more languidly. In doing so, the more narrowed physical parameters of film are opened and come to resemble more closely Woolf’s spatial volumes. In combination with the film’s restless and rapid editing, Deren’s key images are oft represented at the edge of frame, or in an array of alternate forms that obscure a complete or full perception of them before they are quickly superseded by the next image; a stream-like mechanism that emphasises the world, and our interactions with it, as perennially fleeting and incomplete. Again, much as Woolf’s narration fuses past and present, Deren’s editing also fuses the temporal plane, with the film operating like a series of oscillating and intersecting loops. Millsapps identifies a distinct legacy of the Modernist poets, predominantly Eliot, in Deren’s filmic structure, as it rests “on a series of events which recur with variations, and on the repetitive treatment of visually potent objects” (1986: 23). In *Meshes of the Afternoon*, Deren “reorders experience” (Geller 2006: 147) by shimmying back and forth in extremely close succession through the already distorted timeline of the film, and using

dramatic visuals that flutter and flash through linear time. This is evident in the series of jump cuts in *fig. 9*, which play not only in staccato but immediately thereafter in reverse, and, in



Figure 9 - Physical Manifestation, *Meshes of the Afternoon*

doing so, speak to the logic of dream - as I will discuss below - but moreover emphasise both the intensely fleeting quality of the physical now, and the way this nowness can be revisited, reassembled and even remodelled when it intersects with the interior frame. Durant adroitly summarises

Deren's relationship to time as a creator when he articulates that:

Deren often spoke of the concept of time not being a fixed phenomenon, but something essentially subjective and unstable. She adopted Einstein's notion of the 'relativistic universe' to describe the idea of constant metamorphosis - of becoming as opposed to being. For Deren the spatial and temporal plasticity of moving images was perfectly suited to conjure this phenomenon (...) (2009: 44)

Hence, Deren's film appears to embody the same Modern truth: that the only constant is ephemerality, and it utilises the same depiction of a world and a self in motion, that all of the preceding texts of this dissertation have.

As Woolf does, Deren also channels a Modernist sensibility in her consideration of the liminal space in which the outer world meets with the interior one. And, beyond the physical sense of ephemerality which propels the film through its already brief runtime, she similarly considers ephemerality as an interior manifestation. Much as the objects of Deren's vision have "no permanence" (Geller 2006: 145) Deren's alter-ego persona is equally a figure of flux. She is initially depicted in fragments as a mannequin, a string of abstract shadows - which by their very connection to light and perspective seem to be the perfect symbol of the ultimate ephemerality - and in a series of close ups of parts of her own body. As the film progresses she alternately begins to be seen in literal multiplication, or perhaps more accurately in more of a

bifurcation of the self. These various forms of disembodiment, although different, form a constantly changeable self and essence, and mirror the fact that all of the protagonist's experiences: grace, angst, rage, reflection, control and confusion elide, before they are even concretely established. As the film becomes increasingly layered in its own dream space, it more and more offers "a newly calibrated form of experiential reality" where "space and time are furnished with flexible dimensions that expand or condense places and moments accordingly" (Keller 2013: 86). In this dream space, where all of this perhaps occurs within one blink, Deren most clearly evokes the paradox of time, which can both be a second and eternity. Also, by placing her protagonist as both the filmic subject and object - as evident in *fig 10*, which represents the film's central Clarissa Dalloway before the mirror moment of reflection - Deren channels the openness of dream form to construct an elusive but interconnected mesh of moments, both observed and experienced. This constantly flowing mesh brings together and evolves a number of possibilities of her protagonist's selfhood, in much the same way that Woolf's expansive stream does for Clarissa.



Figure 10 - Interior Manifestation, *Mesches of the Afternoon*

Further, by refusing to "restore equilibrium" (Bruss qtd. in Geller 2006: 143) by resolving the disjunct between dream and reality or by registering a tangible metronome of time, the film seems to speak to the possibilities of a new kind of textual expression which can capture time, without having to confine it.

Above all, Deren's patterns of ephemerality and incompleteness then invoke a "frustration of climaxes" (Keller 2013: 77), rejecting the stultifying tendency towards singular narrative resolution and the fallacy of certainty that kind of resolution represents. Instead, she constructs a vision which continues beyond its final frame, in the same continual motion, or in what Keller terms a filmic "circuit," that "builds meaning through resonances rather than

resolutions” (2013: 77). This incompleteness, or unending ‘circuit’ - analogous to Vertov and Dos Passos’ semiotic openness - reawakens “viewer’s perceptive capacity” by enmeshing them more deeply in the space of the screen - or page - consciousness as an active participant (Keller 2013: 77) and affirms that meaning is as ephemeral as it is subjective. Especially then, considering the deliberate ephemerality and open ended or dreamlike quality of *Mesher of the Afternoon*, I am encouraged to briefly probe into the expansive depth of the cinematic daydream, as an aesthetic, thematic and in fact ultra-cinematic phenomenon.

In his writings on the topic Hanich suggests that experimental filmmakers often deliberately manipulate the aesthetic possibilities of film and its “attenuated power” so that instead of “chain(ing) us to its narrative and style” they “grant us more freedom to drift off into daydreaming” because in this act of daydreaming “the perception of the film is extended and enriched by the viewer’s drifting mind (2019: 346, 349). In this light, it can be said that Deren not only evokes the ephemeral images and subconscious state of a daydream, but that she creates a flowing aesthetic which invites her audience into their own cinematic daydream, where they are simultaneously attuned to her vision and free to traverse, in passing, their own inner image-scape. This is a phenomenon I would posit also occurs in Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*, in her elision of images, states, timelines and expansive flowing tracts of inner life. Ergo, not only in their construction do stream of consciousness writing and avant-garde cinema endeavour to emulate the nature of the ephemeral conscious experience, but they can also actively encourage the consciousness of its responders to stream. And in this way, I believe the composers of these mediums seek to attain an expression of true authenticity.

2.3. Authenticity

For this writer, beyond all of these parallels and beyond these specific aesthetic and conceptual devices stands this desire - in a time of uncertainty, upheaval, intense scrutiny and dismantling of established norms, patterns and philosophies; of everything in essence that had

preceded Modernism - not only to create meaning, but to create authentic meaning. Or, if you will, meaning that really meant something. I propose then, at the culmination of this chapter, that a desire for authenticity resides at the core of all of the texts discussed in this dissertation, and that, in its simplest terms, the way both of these mediums reached for authenticity was by rejecting stifling and antiquated paradigms about what story was or should be and by creating distinctly subjective works which connected with the true nature of the human consciousness.

Because I intend to conclude this chapter on a more positive and affirming note, firstly I would like to point to some of the obvious limitations of both of these artistic modes in attaining any true kind of authenticity. While, as with all fictional texts they implicitly contain a certain level of artifice, it can be suggested, as many critics have, that there is in fact an even more profound level of artifice to be found in these texts than in more conventional narrative representations. Bowling hits the proverbial nail on the head when he articulates that “although we are supposed to be inside the character's mind, sharing his most spontaneous, unpolished thoughts, just as they are born, we find that this paragraph is a highly-polished, ‘literary’ sentence” (1950: 336). Sotirova addresses the same issue with the aesthetic or structure of stream of consciousness writing, but finds it problematic in another sense, stating that “the mimeticism of life, however, does not result in easy processing, but rather obstructs automatic comprehension and this is, in fact, one of the paradoxes of Modernist form” (Sotirova 2013: 2). And thus, while it is easy enough to plunge into aesthetic and conceptual analysis of these texts with academic blinkers on, it is important to pull back and consider their ability to resonate authentically with their audience, to make this meaning that actually meant something. Perhaps these composers were all breathing the same air, but were their societies at large? It is a question which is perhaps impossible to verify. As are even more esoteric ones, like is this really how our consciousness looks and feels? Even as a self-confessed Faulkner fan there is something almost cloying and performative about Vardaman’s “my mother is a fish” and Cash’s chapter long numerical justification of why he made Addie’s coffin “on the bevel” (2017: 54, 53). A

quick internet search will also reveal that Goodreads voters placed, in order, *Ulysses*, *Finnegans Wake* and *The Sound and the Fury* (2008, online) as the three most difficult novels of all time, much as ‘The Millions’ three year research project into difficult books upheld *Finnegans Wake* while adding Woolf’s *To The Lighthouse* into the mix (2012, online) and the repository of all critical knowledge ‘BuzzFeed’ again put Joyce and Faulkner in first and second place (2013, online), suggesting a not unsubstantial dissonance between these modes of expression and the audiences they intended to communicate authentic meaning to.

While I include this caveat because it is a worthy point of critique, I however consider this dissertation, and critical literature more broadly, to uphold the authenticity of stream of consciousness writing, early avant-garde cinema and the new forms of expression which they pioneered. Specifically, it is important to recognise that this focus on representation, and the belief that non-representational expression was the mechanism by which to construct authentic meaning, is one which was also replicated across other forms of artistic production during the Modernist era. For example, as Compagnon tracks, “the progression from realism to impressionism, neo-impressionism and cubism” in painting, “is most commonly described as a movement towards authenticity, through the suppression of artifice” and a rejection of the tyranny of “geometrical perspective” (1994: 49). Perhaps then, the difficulty of the stream of consciousness novel is not due to its inauthenticity in representing the depths of our subjective consciousness, but rather it stems from, as Breton proposes, the fact that the traditional preference for artistic realism and rationalism has led to experience itself being “increasingly circumscribed” (1965: 10). Thus, although the vocabulary of the stream and of the avant-garde may ultimately be our truest own, much about the pre-Modernist milieu - and I would argue, this is a phenomenon in continuation - leads us to often discount and disassociate from, even “cage” these irrational, subconscious, imaginative, dream parts of ourselves (Breton 1965: 10) and so they can appear uncomfortable and unfamiliar when we see them presented in an unfettered manner in art. Furthermore, there is an inherent risk or gamble in any art making,

particularly in any avant-garde or new forms, that you might strive for new meaning and miss it entirely, and as such all artists are inevitably destined to wonder “whether what came from his hands had any meaning and would be understood” (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 5), and all critics are destined to question the same in their analysis of that art.

Conclusions

To commence, a substantial proportion of my conclusion must necessarily go to dismantling my own suppositions and acceding to the limitations of my approach. In particular, I return to Kellman who I prefaced in my introduction, and his pithy and undoubtedly accurate supposition that the cases made in favour of the crosspollination between cinema and novels can oft be reduced to generalised remarks, and although “such remarks” he says, “could be multiplied at great length (...) remarks are not analysis” (Kellman 1987: 471). Furthermore, even Eisenstein, who I similarly foregrounded in my introduction - and who broadly believes that there is a strong correlation between the two mediums - issues a similar caveat that “analogies and resemblances cannot be pursued too far-they lose conviction and charm” (Eisenstein 1977: 213). Beyond this major ontological problem, which persists despite mine and other critics desire to see novel and cinema form as comparable, also lay other more tangible ones. For instance, despite my desire to study these works in tandem, I must acknowledge that the timeline is slightly offset, with the major stream of consciousness novels generally appearing earlier than the avant-garde, and moreover, the key American texts for both novels and cinema, generally appearing later than the European. On top of this, is the question of text selection more generally, in which any number of my own biases can be discerned. And moreover, the brevity with which I have tackled many of these texts - texts which are worthy of and have been the exclusive study of any number of critical tomes - is a valid concern because most pointedly, the conclusions which I have drawn in this brevity cannot feasibly represent all

of these text in their full, rich complexity; in their wholeness. Of course, there is also always the problem with labels, which can be both too diffuse and too specific, too overused and too misunderstood. Dorothy Richardson for example, rejected both the label and the phenomenon of the stream of consciousness, despite her work being considered in this light, stating that her perception of the consciousness was of something not at all stream like, but rather “stable and expansive” (qtd in. Rose 1969: 368). Similarly, Buñuel shunned his contemporaries in the montage movement like Vertov for their aestheticism and “display of a perfectly conventional and reasonable mood” (qtd. in Thiher 1977: 39), just as Deren denounced Freudian or Structuralist readings of her films (Millsapps 1986).

What then, was I thinking? Had I perhaps been metaphorically breathing too much of Malcolm Gladwell’s so potent air? I would like to think not. The specific aesthetic and thematic similarities I have highlighted in this dissertation - which exist not only between the couplets which I linked, but amongst all of the texts I have discussed, and in these two movements more generally - have been proved plausibly. And moreover, as I drilled further into these texts’ aesthetic and interior experiences I increasingly arrived at the conclusion that they are most critically bound together by their ability to eclipse the word-image dichotomy. As Boyum in *Double Exposure: Fiction Into Film* (1985) asks, “if thought externalized into the concrete images of film” is “no longer thought, why should thought encased in the medium of language be any different?” so, “do we really (...) think in words?” (195). While this is something that she, like I, can only surmise, she is not alone. Merleau-Ponty proposes that a harmony developed between philosophy, psychology and cinema in the Modern era, whereby “modes of thought correspond to technical methods,” just as he articulates that the core purpose of novels was also the “creation of a machine of language” (1991: 59, 57) capable of expressing and sharing meaning. This is an idea which moves me back to Bazin’s interpretation of the shared new modes of expression which arose in accordance with the sociological and psychological changes of the epoch, or as Merleau-Ponty again phrases it, the director “handles

cinematographic language as a man manipulates syntax” (1991: 55). Similarly, I am encouraged by Donald who, in his discussion of the different strands of avant-garde cinema, is able to unify them as works which all “pushed at the edges of the medium,” and which as a collective, existed as “a dynamic and fractious sphere of production and exhibition in which the ontology of cinema could be investigated and expanded” (1998: 30). Likewise, Shlovksy’s influential *Theory of Prose* (1933) calls the ontology of texts into question as it proposes a certain type of fluidity between modes of art, because ultimately a text is not the physical object, but can be better understood as the entity that results from “our mode of perception,” or our subjective experience of it (2). While individual nuance and authorial voice should always be celebrated, and in the case of such audacious works, certainly cannot be denied, these texts undoubtedly share the striking similarity of reaching beyond the ontological frame of their medium and reaching beyond the conventional modes of expression of their medium. I also am encouraged by the work of Brooker and Thacker in *Geographies of Modernism* (2005) whose collation of essays necessarily expands the “spatial distribution of Modernist formations not only in the West but also in the Indian subcontinent, Africa, Latin America and Asia” (3), serving as a strong reminder of just how far our shared air circulates, much further than I have dared to propose here in this limited dissertation.

I also began this dissertation with a premise, of a crisis of meaning, and this is perhaps the most difficult part of my discussion to resolve. While great tracts of my work have emphasised the instability and subjectivity of meaning I do not take this to mean that that the Modernists, and more specifically stream of consciousness writers and avant-garde filmmakers didn’t find ways to express meaning, because I believe they did. By meeting the upheaval of society and the self with texts that embraced new self-reflexive and non-representational forms of expression, I would contend they succeeded in creating works that were like palimpsests, exuding pluralistic “layers of ‘meanings’ and ‘realities’” (Ketchiff 1984: 13). That is, they succeeded in creating texts that moved society towards entirely new understandings of meaning.

The famed closing image of Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*, seems to me to symbolise the way in which the stream of consciousness and avant-garde most fully engaged with this crisis. This image, which superimposes an eye over a camera shutter certainly represents a new language, one which as I have proposed above, moves beyond the binary of image and word, and attempts to collapse the divide between form and representational possibilities; as all of the works mentioned in this dissertation have. However, most notably, while the camera shutter closes at the culmination of the film, the eye remains open, speaking to the way these composers took ownership of the core paradox of representation, its simultaneously limitless and limited nature. And in doing so, they not only accepted but thrived in this paradox, drawing attention to the construction of aesthetic form in such a way that also drew critical attention to the nature of our subjective, subconscious and phenomenological experience of the world, seeking truths beyond epistemology that they knew would always be out of reach, but reaching anyway. Thus, while the crisis would appear to deepen as it catapulted us ultimately towards Postmodernism and an even greater abnegation of certainty and representational forms of artmaking, in looking back in time to Modernism, I see instead that new meanings and new authenticities of expression could be, and were, found and constructed. Finally, to turn to the endlessly influential Nietzsche who "simply denies that we can ever know anything except through the lens of human perception" (Leitch 2001: 871) we arrive at my ultimate conclusion, which was that in making something that subjectively meant something to the artist and in so fully embracing subjectivity, the Modernists, both in stream of consciousness writing and avant-garde cinema alike solved the crisis, at least to an extent, by freeing themselves from the false shackles of objectivity. And, in taking Nietzsche's perceptions to heart luckily means that I too can assert that since all of this meant something to me, it can be upheld, at least within my own subjective frame.

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