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SPIRITUAL AUTOMATA: CRAFT, REPRODUCTION, AND VIOLENCE, 1850-1930

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is about the significance of automatism as a theory and mode of aesthetic production in the British avant-garde. It proposes that the British avant-garde begins with the founding of the Pre-Raphaelites in 1848 and concludes with the multiple interwar movements (vorticism, futurism, dadaism, surrealism) that climaxed and dissipated in the 1930s. The dissertation narrows its focus to the figures of William Morris, Mina Loy, and Wyndham Lewis, whose work across mediums and genres provide a schema for redefining the distinction and qualities of the avant-garde.

The stakes of the dissertation lie in proposing a solution to the riddle of a British avant-garde that alternated between a conservative aesthetics and a radical politics (as in Morris), between a reactionary sexual politics and a radicalized poetic style (as in Loy), and between a radical aesthetics and a conservative politics (as in Lewis). I propose that the alternation between conservatism and radicalism in these three authors can be explained through the lens of automatism, which changes shape, purpose, and import in the work of each author. More than other British authors of this time, Morris, Loy, and Lewis embody the contradictory features of British avant-gardism and automatism.

Automatism is a conceptual term that I develop throughout the dissertation. It will come to signify three different forms of aesthetic performance: an automatism of craft, an automatism of reproduction, and an automatism of violence, which find their correlates, respectively, in the work of Morris, Loy, and Lewis. By automatism, I refer to what Morris calls the "unconscious intelligence" of the skilled artisan who works with great facility in a given medium. In a broader sense, automatism simply refers to moments and patterns of skilled performativity (or "mastery")

standardized by a nearly automatic engrossment in a material situation. In Morris's case, automatic intelligence extends across a range of mediums and forms of craft.

For Mina Loy, automatism came to signify unconscious forms of gender bias, sexism, and racialization that were uncritically accepted and standardized by male-centric avant-garde circles. Despite the negative connotations that these behavioral and gendered automatisms acquired for Loy as she negotiated her involvement in the futurist and surrealist scene, she reversed these cultural habits into counter-techniques of visualization that exposed the gendered rhetoric of the historical avant-garde. If Loy felt herself marginalized as a female poet first and racialized as an "anglo-mongrel" second, she reworked these aspersions into qualities of experimental virtue. Hence, Loy's perspective on masculinist automatisms (in which male perspectives tended to supplant female agency) was inverted into a "spiritual" theory of reproduction, both in the sense of motherhood and in the sense of feminist self-production. Her work as a result utilized automatism as a form of diagnosing and picturing conservative trends in avant-garde biases and radicalizing them within her experimental lyric.

For Wyndham Lewis, automatism constitutes a theory of automated group-thinking and mass-formation that ultimately leads toward fascistic ritualized violence and what Walter Benjamin signaled as the "aestheticization of politics." Lewis co-founded vorticism as a response to continental avant-garde groups like the futurists, but in mimicking the futurist aesthetic of violence, vorticism succeeded in exposing the mimetic qualities of avant-garde group-formations whose doxa more closely resembled the implicit mainstream against which they formulated their positions of exceptionality. Lewis conceived of the human organism as a time-based automaton wound up by political vanguards to strut and posture on the stage of history. Refuting what he calls the "time-cult" of such vanguards that tacitly promised historical or metaphysical liberation,

Lewis proposed an enemy-politics whose "philosophy of the eye" based itself on a materialist theory of visible oppositions rather than on romantic myths of organic solidity. Hence, Lewis came to repurpose automatism as a combative and cynical style of depersonalization, one which exposed the integrity of human thoughtfulness into mechanical fragments and animalized actions. Lewis's sense of impersonality allowed for a paradoxical freedom in "being ruled" by one's own automatisms (accepting that one is an organic machine) rather than by a false belief in Bergsonian ideas of vitalism or romantic individualism.

The dissertation chapters are organized as follows. Chapter One examines the transmedial work of William Morris and its relation to labor, craft, and industrial automatism. The first section looks at Morris's epic poem, *Sigurd the Volsung* (1876), which allegorizes Morris's hostile attitude toward industrial automatism and the hope he placed in the revival of handicrafts. I argue that Morris conceptualizes handicraft as a technical automatism that repairs and strengthens human agency. The second section looks at *Pilgrims of Hope* (1885), which dramatizes the events of the Paris Commune. I argue that *Pilgrims* represents Morris's utopic hope that incorporation into a socialist community might erase troubling notions of bourgeois married life, property fetishism, and domesticity.

Chapter Two examines the work of Mina Loy and its relation to the sexual politics of the avant-garde. The first section looks at Mina Loy's anxieties over aesthetic and biological reproduction, and the problematic relationship she maintained with futurism. I argue that her early poems develop a theory of automatism that regards sexual difference as the key to "spiritual" (as opposed to biological) evolution. In the second section I look at Mina Loy's novel *Insel*, written in the 1930s and unpublished in her lifetime. *Insel* narrates Loy's exploration of surrealist art and its tangled commitment to automatism as a generative technique. I argue that

Loy reframes automatism as a medium for transgressing the politics of sexual difference and creating new forms of life.

Chapter Three examines the work of Wyndham Lewis and its relation to political and aesthetic violence. The first section looks at Lewis's collection of short stories, *The Wild Body* (1927), and his novel, *Tarr* (1918, 1928), and I argue that these works capture the heart of Lewis's painterly style of writing as well as his core ideas regarding the automaton-nature of the human organism. In the second section, I look at *One-Way Song* (1933), Lewis's only major work of poetry. I argue that *One-Way Song* offers a compelling account for automatism as a means of preserving human culture, paradoxically, through satire and mimetic violence.

INTRODUCTION
AUTOMATISM AND THE BRITISH AVANT-GARDE

This dissertation is about the significance of automatism as a theory and mode of aesthetic production in the British avant-garde. It proposes that the British avant-garde begins with the founding of the Pre-Raphaelites in 1848 and concludes with the multiple interwar movements (vorticism, futurism, dadaism, surrealism) that climaxed and dissipated in the 1930s. The dissertation narrows its focus to the figures of William Morris, Mina Loy, and Wyndham Lewis, whose work across mediums and genres provide a schema for redefining the distinction and qualities of an avant-garde that surfaced from what Josephine Guy describes as an "intellectual climate [...] characterised by a deep conservatism which was hostile" to "both a concept of historical rupture and a belief that the individual can act without recourse to traditional models of authority."[1]

The stakes of the dissertation lie in proposing a solution to the riddle of a British avant-garde that alternated between a conservative aesthetics and a radical politics (as in Morris), between a reactionary sexual politics and a radicalized poetic style (as in Loy), and between a radical aesthetics and a conservative politics (as in Lewis). I propose that the alternation between conservatism and radicalism in these three authors can be explained through the lens of automatism, which changes shape, purpose, and import in the work of each author. More than other British authors of this time, Morris, Loy, and Lewis embody the contradictory features of British avant-gardism and automatism.

[1] Josephine M. Guy, *The British Avant-Garde: The Theory and Politics of Tradition* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991) 49.

Automatism is a conceptual term that I develop throughout the dissertation. It will come to signify three different forms of aesthetic performance: an automatism of craft, an automatism of reproduction, and an automatism of violence, which find their correlates, respectively, in the work of Morris, Loy, and Lewis. By automatism, I refer to what Morris calls the "unconscious intelligence" of the skilled artisan who works with great facility in a given medium.[2] In a broader sense, automatism simply refers to moments and patterns of skilled performativity (or "mastery") standardized by a nearly automatic engrossment in a material situation. In Morris's case, automatic intelligence extends across a range of mediums and forms of craft. For example, Morris's reliance on pattern-making allowed him to work across media and genres, so that his facility in one medium (e.g. versification) translated to a facility in another (e.g. wallpaper design). However, I wish to complicate and expand this conventional notion of automatism by examining how automatism as a term and practice was redefined by the encounter with twentieth-century modernism and avant-garde politics. If Morris's version of automatism was established through a response to late nineteenth-century standards of labor and craftsmanship, then automatism in the early twentieth-century came to mean quite different things.

For Mina Loy, automatism came to signify unconscious forms of gender bias, sexism, and racialization that were uncritically accepted and standardized by male-centric avant-garde circles. Despite the negative connotations that these behavioral and gendered automatisms acquired for Loy as she negotiated her involvement in the futurist and surrealist scene, she reversed these cultural habits into counter-techniques of visualization that exposed the gendered

[2] Referring to prehistoric impulses in human beings for creating art, Morris writes that it is "the ancient art, *the art of unconscious intelligence*, as one should call it" which led to "those strange and masterly scratchings on mammoth-bones…" (my emphasis). See William Morris, "The Lesser Arts," in *Hopes and Fears for Art & Signs of Change* (Thoemmes Press, 1994) 12.

rhetoric of the historical avant-garde. If Loy felt herself marginalized as a woman poet first and racialized as an "anglo-mongrel" second, she reworked these aspersions into qualities of experimental virtue. Hence, Loy's perspective on masculinist automatisms (in which male perspectives tended to supplant female agency) was inverted into a "spiritual" theory of reproduction, both in the sense of motherhood and in the sense of feminist self-production. Loy's work, for example, satirizes the masculinist rhetoric of the avant-garde as a concealed desire for female reproductive power, and she goes further than some of her white feminist contemporaries in openly racializing herself as a "mongrel" poet who chooses to work on the margins of avant-garde power rather than in the lure of its aggressive male-centrism.[3] Her work, as a result, utilized automatism as a form of diagnosing and picturing conservative trends in avant-garde biases and radicalizing them within her experimental lyric.

For Wyndham Lewis, automatism constitutes a theory of automated group-thinking and mass formation that ultimately leads toward fascistic ritualized violence and what Walter Benjamin signaled as the "aestheticization of politics."[4] Lewis co-founded vorticism as a response to continental avant-garde groups like the futurists, but in mimicking the futurist aesthetic of violence, vorticism succeeded in exposing the mimetic qualities of avant-garde group-formations whose doxa more closely resembled the implicit mainstream against which they formulated their positions of exceptionality. In conversation with the mechanistic theories of human agency that futurism and surrealism postulated,[5] Lewis conceived of the human

[3] See Rachel Potter, "Obscene Modernism and the Wondering Jew: Mina Loy's 'Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose' in *The Salt Companion to Mina Loy*, eds. Rachel Potter and Suzanne Hobson (Salt Publishing, 2010) 47-70; and Elisabeth Frost, "Mina Loy's 'Mongrel Poetics'" in *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet*, eds. Maeera Shreiber and Keith Tuma (The National Poetry Foundation, 1998) 149-180.

[4] See Martin Jay, "'The Aesthetic Ideology' as Ideology; Or, What Does It Mean to Aestheticize Politics?" *Cultural Critique* No. 21 (Spring, 1992) 41-61; and Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproduction, and Other Writings on Media*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, et al. (Harvard UP, 2008) 41-42.

[5] Futurism fetishized machine culture and praised the First World War as an historical opportunity that would "glorify war" as "the world's only hygiene." Surrealism developed from ideas derived from psychoanalysis that

organism as a time-based automaton wound up by political vanguards to strut and posture on the stage of history in what Antonio Gramsci would call "gladiatorial futility."[6] Refuting what he calls the "time-cult" of such vanguards that tacitly promised historical or metaphysical liberation, Lewis proposed an enemy-politics whose "philosophy of the eye" based itself on a materialist theory of visible oppositions rather than on romantic myths of organic solidity. Hence, Lewis came to repurpose automatism as a combative and cynical style of depersonalization, one which exposed the integrity of human thoughtfulness as mechanical fragments and animalized actions. Lewis's sense of impersonality allowed for a paradoxical freedom in "being ruled" by one's own automatisms (accepting that one is an organic-machine) rather than by a false belief in Bergsonian ideas of vitalism or romantic individualism.

Beyond describing and narrating automatism as a feature of British conservatism which these three authors inherited, I argue that they uniquely retooled automatism to work against its own conservative tendentiousness. In the most basic sense, automatism works as an analogue for conservatism by describing *the repetition and (re)production of the same*. In Morris's case, automatism signified machine culture and the exploitation of the worker, who is made to service

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theorized the human unconscious as an automaton-like receptacle that, when pressured by the uncanny, would unleash phantasmagoric images imprinted by commodity fetishism and the disenchantment of everyday life. In both of these avant-gardes, a theoretical model that accounted for aesthetic autonomy and art's relation to the social classes was constitutive of the works of art they produced, and each mobilized its program for revolution according to a mechanistic model of human desires. See Geert Buelens, et al. *The History of Futurism: the Precursors, Protagonists, and Legacies* (Lexington Books, 2012); Christine Poggi, "Folla/Follia: Futurism and the Crowd" in *Inventing Futurism: The Art and Politics of Artificial Optimism* (Princeton UP, 2009); Gunter Berghaus, ed. *Futurism and the Technological Imagination* (Rodopi, 2009); Richard Humphreys, "'War: Sole Hygiene of the World'" in *Futurism* (Cambridge UP, 1999); Neil Matheson, ed., "The Revolution in Everyday Life: Early Surrealism, 1924-29" in *The Sources of Surrealism* (Lund Humphries, 2006); Richard Leslie, *Surrealism: The Dream of Revolution* (New Line, 2006); Andre Breton, "What Is Surrealism?" in *What Is Surrealism: Selected Writings*, ed. Franklin Rosemont (Pathfinder Press, 1978) 151-187; Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism" in *Reflections*, ed. Peter Demetz (Schocken, 2007) 177-192.

[6] Gramsci's description of "the difference between real action [...] which modifies [...] both man and reality" and "gladiatorial futility which is self-declared action" and "modifies only the word, not things, the external gesture and not the man inside," rhymes with Lewis's own ideas on the inherent emptiness of certain aesthetic and political forms of violence. See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from The Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (International Publishers, 1992) 307.

industrial capitalism at the reduction of their own agency, freedom, and pleasure. Morris managed to redefine automatism as a technique of craft that frees the worker from exploitation by effectively mimicking the "unconscious intelligence" of the machine. This form of mimesis would be qualitatively different from what Marx describes as the alienation of the worker transformed by, and reduced to, the crippling monotony of a highly mechanized division of labor. Morris's concept of automatism internalized the machine's range and efficiency through transmedial empowerment and pattern-recognition. The more crafts and mediums a craftsman learned, the more machinic they would become, in effect sidestepping the Fordist and Taylorist management of labor power that would monopolize industry and the arts at the turn of the century.[7]

Similarly, in the case of Loy's critique of masculinist avant-gardes, the recognition of the automatic drive in male artists to gender and delimit female agency to biological reproduction (as mothers) or aesthetic reproduction (as muses) helped to visualize the inherent automaticities of the avant-garde itself as a group-instinct that propagated sexist behavioral habits. For Lewis, equally, the recognition of mass psychology as a consequence of ideological automatism permitted him to develop a theory of political decentralization that not only served as a critique of violence but also designed styles of individuation that embraced the automatic and the mimetic as under-acknowledged components of organic behavior. Thus, automatism, in the case

[7] If Fordism "reduces, simplifies and cheapens labour inputs through standardising both production operations and products [...] on the basis of the pre-signification of the dimensions of interchangeable parts," then Taylorism "focused on simplification and routinisation of discrete tasks and work roles, irrespective of product characteristics" (Jones 25). That is, Fordism focused on the efficiency of output, or the streamlined, deconstructed product, whereas Taylorism focused on the efficiency of input, or the streamlining of the workers themselves. In both scenarios, the collective worker's agency is fragmented, modified, and rendered to suit a Durkheimian mechanical solidarity. See Bryn Jones, *Forcing the Factory of the Future: Cybernation and Societal Institutions* (Cambridge UP, 1997) 25; and Mel van Elteren, *Managerial Control of American Workers: Methods and Technology from the 1880s to Today* (McFarland & Co., 2017).

of each author, is identified, critiqued, and eventually reversed to suit the particular concerns of each author in their historical situation.

Morris, Loy, and Lewis were all involved in prominent avant-garde circles, and all three critiqued and rebelled in some capacity against these circles. Morris eventually rejected the apolitical aestheticism of the Pre-Raphaelites from which he emerged, in favor of promoting and writing for the cause of socialism. Loy personally knew the Italian futurists in Florence and adopted their literary techniques even as she refuted their misogyny, and she knew and worked with the Dadaists and surrealists in Paris in the 1920s. Lewis co-founded vorticism in response to futurism and produced works of art that responded to the perspectival revolution of cubism. All three were connected to and published in small magazines and journals that were extensions of the avant-garde: Morris in *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (1856), Loy and Lewis in *Rogue*, *transatlantic*, *The Little Review*, *The Dial*, and many others. If Morris had co-founded, edited, and published *The Commonweal* (1885-1890) as the "Official Organ of the Socialist League," Lewis co-founded and published *Blast* (1914-15), *The Tyro* (1921-22), and *The Enemy* (1927) as extensions of his own campaign against what he considered the unproblematized trends of literary modernism.

All three were skilled craftspeople: Morris was an architectural student and a painter before he became a poet, and a craftsman-designer before he became a socialist. Loy was trained in art schools across the continent, produced paintings and drawings that she submitted to major galleries and salons, and actively drew portraits of her friends and subjects. Lewis was as famous a portraitist and painter in his time as he was a novelist and essayist. Morris designed wallpaper patterns, furniture, and books; Loy designed lampshades, corsets, hats, and earrings. Lewis was a member of the Omega Workshops led by Roger Fry, which were modeled on the Arts & Crafts

movement that started under the influence of Morris's example. While Morris was an entrepreneur who co-founded and managed the Morris & Co. design firm, Loy crafted, managed, and sold her own designs for lampshades, earrings, and other objects in a Parisian shop funded by Peggy Guggenheim. In every aspect, these three authors produced literary texts that were fundamentally visual and ahead of their time.

If the ruling idea that binds these authors within this project is automatism, then it is imperative, first, to provide a brief chronology for the historical uses and reception of automatism as a term of critique and, second, to discuss how Morris, Loy, and Lewis individually fit into this chronology. I identify five historical forms of automatism that I briefly outline here: *industrial* or *machinic* automatism; *technical* or *scientific* automatism; *behavioral* or *psychological* automatism; *occult* or *surrealist* automatism; and *optical* or *photographic* automatism.

It is important to note here that recent work on or about automatism has not managed to provide a truly encompassing theory or historical outline of automatism, and my dissertation proposes unique aspects of automatism that have not been sufficiently theorized. Automatism is frequently divided between its different meanings in art-historical discourse and in literary criticism. For example, Allison Miller Phillips makes original claims about prehistories of automatism that track back to late nineteenth-century ideas about the unconscious, but it goes no further than the established art-historical record concerning the use-value of automatism to the surrealists.[8] On the other hand, Alan Ramon Clinton performs valuable work in categorizing automatism as a species of conservatism that influenced aesthetic trends in the work of poets like T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and W.B. Yeats. Although Clinton's primary thesis that automatism

[8] Allison Miller Phillips, "The Invisible Labor: Nineteenth-Century Art, the Unconscious, and the Origins of Surrealism" (May 2012, Ph.D. University of Iowa), ProQuest.

encourages aesthetic forms of conservatism is shared by my study, his account of the historical applications of automatism tilts toward its mechanistic and occult aspects and stops short of recovering automatism's origins from Enlightenment ideas about human performativity and its extended value as a significant feature of technical mastery.[9] These arguments show how rare a historically rigorous account of automatism is, due in part to the decentralized or discipline-specific historicization of automatism as a term of study. My dissertation attempts to gather up and extend the conceptual uses of automatism to a more practicable degree, even if it cannot pretend to exhaust its numerous applications.

The term *automatism* dates back to the 1790s, when it signified the "theory, belief, or doctrine that living organisms act purely mechanically, like automata, and are motivated by physical causes, rather than consciousness, intelligence, or will."[10] Derived from the earlier usage of *automaton* in the seventeenth-century,[11] automatism describes the range of philosophical and scientific ideas concerning the Cartesian cogito and its related questions over whether humans and animals could be distinguished along the lines of human volition and the self-directed mind. Are humans "organic machines" in the way nonhuman animals were mechanistically presumed to be? Can "nature" be metaphorized effectively as a "machine" that functions according to fixed laws? For Baruch Spinoza, the "spiritual automaton" was a figure of thought that challenged Cartesian dualism by positing that the mind/body split was closer to an integrated self-directed mechanism "spiritualized" by the "affects" (i.e. the free play of the

[9] Alan Ramon Clinton, "High Modernism and the History of Automatism" (2002, Ph.D. University of Florida), ProQuest.
[10] "Automatism, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2018, www.oed.com/view/Entry/13469.
[11] The etymology of *automaton* derives from "classical Latin *automatum* automatic contrivance and its etymon ancient Greek *αὐτόματον* marionette, use as noun of neuter of *αὐτόματος* (adjective) acting of itself, spontaneous, (of plants) growing by themselves, (of events) happening by themselves…" See "Automaton, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2018, www.oed.com/view/Entry/13474.

emotions and imagination upon the body), a position that Gottfried Leibniz and Blaise Pascal would adopt and reframe.[12] Daniel Tiffany notes that several rudimentary automata, such as mechanical birds and robotic chess players, emerged during this period and were contiguous to philosophical debates (by writers like Julien Offray de la Mettrie[13]) about the automaton-mind, in some cases literally externalizing mental functions in the spectacle of mechanical toys that gave the appearance of human thought or animal volition.[14]

If the spiritual automaton became a figure for the Enlightenment debate regarding the organic versus mechanical theories of the human organism, it swiftly acquired greater salience in the nineteenth century when technological advancements produced non-ludic automata that externally performed the labor functions of human capital. Thomas Carlyle's assertion in 1829 that it is "the Age of Machinery, in every outward and inward sense of that word" was a warning that "no individual" could now hope "to accomplish the poorest enterprise single-handed and without mechanical aids."[15] Carlyle's anxiety at the deskilling of the individual in favor of "mak[ing] interest with some existing corporation" was sourced in the technological automatisms that began with inventions like John Kay's flying shuttle (1733), James Hargreaves' spinning jenny (1764), and James Watt's improved steam engine (1765), and culminated with the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1830.[16] These self-regulating machines provoked Marx's critique of the alienation and exploitation of the worker through industrial machinery in the first volume of *Capital* (published in English in 1887), and especially in the

[12] See Eugene Marshall, *The Spiritual Automaton: Spinoza's Science of the Mind* (Oxford UP, 2013) 1-19; Helen Hattab, *Descartes on Forms and Mechanisms* (Cambridge UP, 2009); Gottfried Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays* (Hackett Pub. Co., 1989) 279; Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, trans. A.J. Krailsheimer (Penguin, 1995) 247-8.
[13] See Julien Offray de la Mettrie, *Machine Man and Other Writings* [1747], Ed. Ann Thompson (Cambridge UP, 1996).
[14] Daniel Tiffany, *Toy Medium: Materialism and Modern Lyric* (University of California Press, 2000) 34-62.
[15] Thomas Carlyle, "Signs of the Times." *Works of Thomas Carlyle*, ed. H.D. Traill, vol. 27 (AMS Press, 1979).
[16] See Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Technology: Invention, Innovation, and the Rise of the Machine* (Praeger/ABC-CLIO, 2009) 1-53.

"Fragment on Machines" in the *Grundrisse* (1857-61). Building upon John Stuart Mill's assertion in the *Principles of Political Economy* (1848) that it is "questionable if all the mechanical inventions [...] have lightened the day's toil of any human being," Marx describes the entire factory system as "constitut[ing] in itself a huge automaton"[17] in which:

> Labour appears, rather, merely as a conscious organ, scattered among the individual living workers at numerous points of the mechanical system; subsumed under the total process of the machinery itself, as itself only a link of the system, whose unity exists not in the living workers, but rather in the living (active) machinery, which confronts his individual, insignificant doings as a mighty organism.[18]

Automatism in this lens can be categorized as *industrial* or *machinic automatism*, and its theorization leads from Charles Babbage,[19] Andrew Ure,[20] Henry Mayhew,[21] and Marx to social theorists like Thorstein Veblen,[22] Lewis Mumford,[23] Norbert Wiener,[24] and Marshall McLuhan,

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[17] Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, *Marx-Engels Internet Archive*, Marxists.org, 1995, 1999 <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch15.htm>.

[18] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (Penguin Books, 1993) 693.

[19] Charles Babbage (1791-1871) was a polymath who invented the "difference engine" and the "analytical engine," two of the earliest calculating machines, in 1841 and 1870 respectively. He wrote works that analyzed the widespread benefits of machinery in industrial capitalism. See Doron Swade, *The Difference Engine: Charles Babbage and the Quest to Build the First Computer* (Penguin Books, 2002), and Charles Babbage, *Selected Works of Charles Babbage*, ed. Anthony Hyman (Cambridge UP, 1989).

[20] Samuel Ure (1778-1857) was an apologist for industrial capitalism's systemic use of machine labor. In 1835, Ure published *The Philosophy of Manufactures*, a treatise that attempted to justify the factory system as "a vast automaton" that trains "human beings to renounce their desultory habits of work, and [...] identify themselves with the unvarying regularity of the complex automaton." See Ure, *The Philosophy of Manufactures* [1835] (Routledge, 2006) 15.

[21] Henry Mayhew (1812-1887) chronicled and taxonomized the varieties of London street labor in *London Labour and the London Poor*, a series of news articles published between 1851-1865. Mayhew discusses Ure, Babbage, and the different meanings of "manufacture" in Volume Four, "Those That Will Not Work"; see Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, ed. Victor Neuberg (Penguin Books, 1985) 447-467.

[22] Veblen writes that the "machine process pervades the modern life" and produces a "disciplinary effect which this movement for standardisation and mechanical equivalence has upon the human material" (335). See Thorstein Veblen, "The Discipline of the Machine" in *The Portable Veblen*, ed. Max Lerner (Viking Press, 1950) 335-348.

[23] Anticipating McLuhan's work, Mumford writes that the "first step [...] to reduce a whole human being into a magnified eye, a magnified hand, a magnified finger" is by "breaking the once unified process of work into a series of fractional operations [...] So we have automatic bookkeepers, in the person of human beings, before we have mechanical calculating machines…" See Lewis Mumford, *Art and Technics* (Columbia UP, 1952) 65.

[24] Wiener was pivotal for theorizing "cybernetics" as an extension of earlier machines and "automata" which "possess sense organs" in similar fashion to human communicants. See Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* (Free Association Books, 1989) 15-27.

who echoes Marx's description of the human laborer as a mere organ of a vast automaton.[25] Stitched into the fabric of this machinic discourse are reflections on technological automatism by theorists and philosophers like Walter Benjamin,[26] Martin Heidegger,[27] Gilbert Simondon,[28] and Georges Canguilhem.[29] The riddle of machinic automatism and the machine's relation to the multitude persists today in Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams' discussion of automation[30] and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's recent writings on assemblage and multitude.[31] William Morris enters this discourse as a follower of both Marx and John Ruskin, the latter fiercely railing against "the great mechanical impulses of the age" which "are a mere passing fever, half-speculative, half-childish."[32] Integrating Marx's systemic critique with Ruskin's aesthetic perspective, Morris did not fully reject the use-value of machines as Marx had, nor did he fetishize labor as Ruskin tended to. Instead, Morris returned the dialectic of automatism to that of skill and technical mastery in collaboration with, or extended by, machinic range.

Morris's understanding of automatism provides a transition from industrial automation to the craft-oriented lens of *technical* or *scientific* automatism. The emphasis on individual craftsmanship did not, however, break with the Marxist feeling for communal forms and the

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[25] McLuhan writes that "Man becomes, as it were, the sex organs of the machine world, as the bee of the plant world, enabling it to fecundate and to evolve ever new forms." See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (MIT Press, 1994) 46.
[26] See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (Schocken, 2007).
[27] See Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, William Lovitt, trans. (Harper & Row, 1977) 3-35.
[28] See Gilbert Simondon, *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, trans. Cecile Malaspina (University of Minnesota Press, 2017).
[29] See Georges Canguilhem, "Machine and Organism" in *Knowledge of Life*, trans. Stefanos Geroulanos and Daniela Ginsburg (Fordham UP, 2008) 75-97.
[30] See Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work* (Verso, 2016).
[31] See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Assembly* (Oxford UP, 2017) 107-124; *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (Penguin, 2004) 189-218.
[32] Quoted in Herbert Sussman, *Victorians and the Machine: The Literary Response to Technology* (Harvard UP, 1968) 100.

mass-power of the proletariat; rather, Morris's sense of individual mastery depended upon a realization of this mastery's inheritance from communal forms of transmission and enactment. Morris's aesthetic conservatism, in this sense, saw in automatism a reliable receptacle of traditional, practical knowledge and the place of individual talent within it. The key thinkers in this regard are Marcel Mauss, Norbert Elias, Erwin Panofsky, and Pierre Bourdieu, whose shared ideas on the notion of the *habitus* approximates to what I mean by technical or scientific automatism, that is, an embodied knowledge or "practical mastery, [...] a kind of 'connoisseurship' which can only be communicated through example" and apprenticeship:

> In other words, a twenty-year-old mathematician can have twenty years of mathematics in his mind because formalization makes it possible to acquire accumulated products of non-automatic inventions, in the form of *logical automatisms* that have become *practical automatisms*.[33]

Bourdieu's habitus is famously drawn from Erwin Panofsky's earlier use of the term in *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (1951),[34] in which the Scholastic *modus operandi* is analogized to the development of Gothic architectural forms,[35] a thesis that notably recalls, nearly a hundred years earlier, Ruskin's appreciation of the Gothic laborer in "The Nature of Gothic" (1853) and Morris's approval of Ruskin's integral message that "art is the expression of man's pleasure in labour."[36]

Although Bourdieu extended Panofsky's habitus from its specialized use as the "habits of mind" that typify medieval Scholasticism to a more expansive "structuring structure" in the field

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[33] Pierre Bourdieu, *Science of Science and Reflexivity*, trans. Richard Nice (University of Chicago Press, 2004) 38, 40 (my emphases).
[34] See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, edited and translated by Randal Johnson (Columbia UP, 1993) 5, fn 16; and Bourdieu, "The Genesis of the Concepts of Habitus and Field," *Sociocriticism* 2.2 (December, 1985) 11-24.
[35] See William Hanks, "Pierre Bourdieu and the Practices of Language," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 34 (2005) 67-83; and Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (Meridian Books, 1957).
[36] See John Ruskin, *The Nature of Gothic: A Chapter of* The Stones of Venice, *with a Preface by William Morris* (Kelmscott Press, 1892) https://archive.org/details/natureofgothicch00rusk.

of cultural (or scientific) production, it is important to retain Marcel Mauss's earlier understanding of habitus. In a 1934 lecture, Mauss describes the habitus as comprising "techniques of the body" (*techniques du corps*), in which cultural practices are concretized and eventually ritualized by what Mauss calls "physio-psycho-sociological assemblages of series of actions." Anthropological examples abound from swimming in a French versus a Polynesian style, to gendered differences in how men and women learn to dress and walk in modern societies.[37] The Maussian understanding of habitus as an educative process that inscribes cultural knowledge into the performative functions of the body emerges here as a cognate for technical automatism. If Morris's technical automatism intellectualized a return to the handicrafts as the solution to cultural malaise, then such a program relied on a belief in the intrinsic value of inculcating revolutionary "body techniques" into the human material of the proletariat.

Maussian body-techniques also pave the way toward the third form of automatism: *behavioral* or *psychological* automatism. Here we encounter a critical point about Mauss's concept of the cultural habitus: it hard-wires mental ideas of sexual difference, gender, class, and race *directly into* the gendered/sexed/racialized functions of the body. That modern women, for instance, are taught and encouraged to walk in high-heels (one of Mauss's examples) institutes a physical automatism that psychologically tags their gender, social positioning, and class disposition. Mina Loy's sense of gendered or behavioral automatism links up with Mauss's suggestion that there is a "sexual division of techniques of the body" that produces a "society of men and a society of women."[38] Disputing the essentialism of such biopoliticized body-techniques, Loy perceives these gendered automatisms as modifiable and ultimately amenable to a "psycho-democracy" that utilizes sexual and racial difference as motivation for hybridity and

[37] See Marcel Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," *Economy and Society* 2.1 (1973) 70-88.
[38] Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," 76-77.

"spiritual" evolutionism. If the gendered body can learn its performative functions through a social mimesis of "feminine" practices, then certainly it can also *unlearn* these psychological functions through individualized counter-mimesis. Hence, Loy's reclamation of her own gendered/racialized body is accomplished through body-techniques that are lyricized in her poetic practice, whether in her explicit treatment of love and sexual desire or in her unsentimental gaze at her racialized identity.

Loy's encounter with behavioral or psychological automatism reaches back into late nineteenth-century theories about hysteria, the unconscious, and the pathologized female body, which was often treated as a "medium" or case study for nosography.[39] The awareness of a behavioral or character automatism came to Loy by way of Gertrude Stein's experimental writings, which had a profound influence on Loy. While an undergraduate at Radcliffe College, Stein wrote studies on "cultivated motor automatism" that examined the connection between automatism and hysteria in the attention span of male and female subjects.[40] If Stein's mature literary style drew from her early studies of motor automatism and character analysis, it was William James' writings on automatism that were the critical influence on Stein when she studied under him at the Harvard Annex. James' work lies at the nexus of the occult sciences, materialist philosophy, and psychoanalysis, and his magnum opus, *The Principles of Psychology*,

[39] Prevalent in these discourses was an attempt to circumscribe the female reproductive system under a medical (male) gaze that sought to interpret female character beneath a lens of biological determinism. Sabine Arnaud writes that hysteria was theorized to set in as a form of "uterine neurosis" that developed from varieties of postpartum depression, childlessness, or maternal anxiety. Some of the earliest uses of the term attributed hysteric "vapors" and passions to a "suffocation of the womb, strangulation of the uterus, [and] fits of the mother." These uses were founded on a troubling consensus that a woman's well-being was sourced in the female uterus. Conversely, men were theorized as being immune to hysteria precisely because they have "no uterus," even as similar symptoms like hypochondria were differentiated on the basis that "feminized" men of letters, "'endowed with the most ardent of imaginations,'" were prey to literary passions stemming from anxieties of an aesthetic rather than reproductive nature. See Arnaud, *On Hysteria: The Invention of a Medical Category Between 1670 and 1820* (University of Chicago Press, 2015) pp. 9-27.

[40] See Gertrude Stein, "Cultivated Motor Automatism," *Harvard Psychological Review,* 1898, pp. 295-306. http://wexler.free.fr/library/files/stein%20(1898)%20cultivated%20motor%20automatism%3B%20a%20study%20of%20character%20in%20its%20relation%20to%20attention.pdf.

published in 1890, compounds several strands of thought concerning sensory and motor automatism, the nature of the will, and the metaphor of the "stream of consciousness" that would influence modernist theories of subjectivity and literary technique.[41] In dialogue with Jean-Martin Charcot's studies in hysteria,[42] Pierre Janet's treatise on psychological automatism,[43] and Frederic W. H. Myers's theory of the persistence of human personality after death,[44] James' syncretic ideas on psychology would pave the way for the early writings of Sigmund Freud and the beginnings of psychoanalysis.[45]

But the connection between Loy, Stein, and William James also introduces the fourth type of automatism, *occult* or *surrealist automatism*, whose roots in Charcot's and Janet's neurological studies of hysteria and neurasthenia at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris would lead toward Freud's theorization of the unconscious[46] and its eventual adoption by the surrealist circle of the 1920s. This is perhaps the most well-documented understanding of automatism, which

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[41] See William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (Harvard UP, 1983); and Krister Dylan Knapp, *William James: Psychical Research and the Challenge of Modernity* (University of North Carolina Press, 2017) 211-285; Jacques Barzun, "William James: The Mind as Artist," in *A Century of Psychology as Science*, eds. Sigmund Koch and David E. Leary (American Psychological Association, 1992) 904-910.

[42] See Christopher G. Goetz, et al. *Charcot: Constructing Neurology* (Oxford UP, 1995).

[43] See Pierre Janet, *L'automatisme psychologique: essai sur de psychologie expérimentale sur les formes inférieures de l'activité humaine* [1889] (Paris: Harmattan, 2005); and Elton Mayo, *The Psychology of Pierre Janet* (Greenwood Press, 1972).

[44] See Frederic W.H. Myers, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, 2 vols. (Longmans, Green, 1954) Hathi Trust <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007123831>; and Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible: The Paranormal and the Sacred* (University of Chicago Press, 2011) 37-91.

[45] That is, the milieu in which James trafficked set the conditions for the transition from the scientific discourse of neuroanatomy and neurology, which late nineteenth-century psychology was predicated upon, to the hermeneutic discourse represented by Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), which introduced psychoanalysis as "a new theory of how the central nervous system meshes emotions, ideas, and imagination, and occasionally produces nonorganic or 'functional' diseases like hysteria." See William R. Everdell, *The First Moderns: Profiles in the Origins of Twentieth-Century Thought* (University of Chicago Press, 2009) 128; Adam Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing* (Yale UP, 1993); and Henri Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (Basic Books, 1970).

[46] Pierre Janet was a student of Jean-Martin Charcot, the eminent neurologist and professor of anatomical pathology who was a major influence on the young Freud. Both Janet's and Charcot's pioneering work in the study of hysteria and neurasthenia were pivotal for the development of Freud's theories. See Freud's obituary for Charcot in *The Freud Reader* (Norton, 1989), pp. 48-55; and J. Bogousslavsky, *Following Charcot: A Forgotten History of Neurology and Psychiatry* (Karger, 2011).

ranges from the clinical studies of automatic writing in the 1890s by Théodore Flournoy (which dealt explicitly with occult elements of female mediumship[47]) to the aestheticized automatic writing on which the surrealists would base an entire literary method. André Breton was early in his career a student of Freudian psychoanalysis, and he adopted the "scientific" diagnostic of automatic writing to cultivate a model of literary performance that would open and take charge of a new means of poetic production.[48] Breton's first "Manifesto of Surrealism" of 1924 provides the most famous description of automatism in the early twentieth-century:

> SURREALISM, n. Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express—verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner—the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern.[49]

Breton's insistence on calling surrealist automatism "pure psychic automatism" links this term to its late nineteenth-century origins in Charcot and psychological automatism, but the emphasis on spiritualism and the occult, themes that Breton and other surrealists like Max Ernst, Robert Desnos, and Tristan Tzara would play upon,[50] also hearkens back to F.W.H. Myers and the spiritualist practices of mediumship, trances, and seances. By 1935, in the lecture on the "Political Position of Automatism," Breton reaffirmed surrealism's commitment to automatism

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[47] See Théodore Flournoy, *From India to Planet Mars: A Case of Multiple Personality with Imaginary Languages* [1899], ed. Sonu Shamdasani (Princeton UP, 1994).

[48] Breton and Philippe Soupault's *Les champs magnetiques* (published in 1920) inaugurated the surrealist movement and purported to be the first work of literature produced entirely through automatic writing. See Breton and Soupault, *The Magnetic Fields*, trans. David Gascoyne (Atlas Press, 1985).

[49] Andre Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (University of Michigan Press, 1969) 26.

[50] In an interview with Robert Lebel, Max Ernst claims to have defined "automatism" as a viable method of tapping into the unconscious prior to the publication of Breton's 1924 manifesto. Ernst participated in dream-sessions with Robert Desnos as the principal "medium" in 1923, which Ernst records in "Trois visions de demi-sommeil" in *La Révolution Surréaliste*, nos. 9-10, quoted in Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (MIT Press, 1996) 63-5. Tristan Tzara describes automatism as corresponding to "a desire which often takes the collective and organized form of some kind of magical use" in his essay "D'un certain automatisme du goût" in *Minotaure*, 3-4 (1933). See Tzara, "Concerning a Certain Automatism of Taste" in *The Surrealists Look at Art*, trans. and ed. Pontus Hulten (Lapis Press, 1990) 210.

as not merely a novelty, but as a political tool of wide-ranging application: "I shall never tire of repeating that *automatism* alone is the dispenser of the elements on which the [...] passage from the unconscious to the preconscious can operative effectively" because automatism stores "the immense reservoir from which symbols spring completely armed and spread to collective life through the work of a few men."[51]

And yet, despite the revolutionary desire of Breton and his circle of "a few men" to redirect the social order toward communist praxis, surrealism's network was still predominantly male-centric and paternalist. Katherine Conley writes that the surrealist avant-garde continued the tradition of "aligning Woman with a mechanical, nonhuman, and nonsentient process" that the pathological studies of female hysteria and mediumship, on which the Surrealists based their literary heritage, seemed to legitimate with scientific description.[52]

During the mid-1920s to early 1930s, Loy found herself switching from the masculinist avant-garde of futurism to that of surrealism, and her strategy remained the same as it had been with the futurists in the 1910s: recognize, visualize, and appropriate the gendered automatisms that lay beneath the conceptual or mystical language that paternalist figures like Marinetti and Breton used in their rhetoric. In both the futurist and surrealist avant-gardes, visual culture remained a motive force in the interdisciplinary artworks that these networks produced. Loy was matched in this respect by Wyndham Lewis, who performed an inverse violence through his visual artworks and painterly prose-style by mimicking, subverting, and fracturing the cultural logic of this period.

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[51] Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, 230, 231.

[52] See Conley, *Automatic Woman: The Representation of Woman in Surrealism* (University of Nebraska Press, 1996) 8ff; and Tessel M. Bauduin, et al. *Surrealism, Occultism and Politics: In Search of the Marvelous* (Routledge, 2018) 21-38, 57-72, 171-244. For depictions of female mediumship and the sexual politics of automatism, see Alison Winter, *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain* (University of Chicago, 1998) 212-245.

Loy and Lewis are bound up, in this case, by the fifth type of automatism, an *optical* automatism that Walter Benjamin, in writing of the power of the photographic camera to be mechanically impartial and objective, would label the "optical unconscious." Optical automatism signifies, first, the *mechanical properties* of the photographic camera, which reproduces images automatically without the need for human agency, and, second, it is defined by the *visual qualities* that typify photography, cinema, and even certain forms of modernist painting. Strikingly, Benjamin analogizes the connection between photography and the reality it captures to that of psychoanalysis and the unconscious it deciphers, in that both mediums extract and decode the repressed figures, images, and objects displaced from human sight or memory. Psychoanalysis "visualizes" the concealed automatisms of the unconscious, in the same way that the photographic camera accesses the unseen or unacknowledged aspects of an extrasensory (or "super-real") reality that lies, in William James' words, "'beyond the margin' or 'below the threshold'" of consciousness.[53] Susan McCabe's study on "cinematic modernism" also addresses the sexualization of optical forms of automatism in modernist film culture, and her work not only traces the roots of optical automatism back to Charcot and Freud, but also connects automatism to the less-acknowledged aspects of male hysteria, film montage, and the "dissociation of sensibility" in the modernist poetry of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound.[54]

Rosalind Krauss explores Benjamin's notion in her titular study of the optical unconscious, a text that establishes some finer points of contact with critical features of my dissertation: the automatism that begins with the surrealist notion of "objective chance"

[53] Walter Benjamin, "A Little History of Photography" in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, eds. Michael W. Jennings et al. (Harvard UP, 2008) 274-298; Knapp, *William James*, 213.
[54] Susan McCabe, *Cinematic Modernism: Modernist Poetry and Film* (Cambridge UP, 2005).

culminates with the "automatism" of Jackson Pollock's drip technique in the 1940s-1950s.[55] Krauss, in conversation with Stanley Cavell's earlier considerations on Pollock and automatism in *The World Viewed* (1971), imputes to Pollock's Ab-Ex breakthrough the discovery of a technical automatism within a medium (e.g. the technique of drip painting) which miraculously produces a radically new medium (e.g. "abstract expressionism"). In this respect, Krauss interprets Cavell's understanding of automatism as a condition unique to modernist art which compels the creation of a new medium rather than the extension of a traditional set of conventions.[56] Recently, Diarmuid Costello has called into question Krauss's understanding of Cavell's sense of automatism by arguing that Krauss erroneously conflates the "quasi-automatic" aspects of an artist's highly intuitive working methods with the "*brute automatism of the camera itself*" that Cavell more specifically treats. While Krauss's studies of transmedial artists like William Kentridge and James Coleman seem to develop an altered version of the "medium-specificity" argument posed by Clement Greenberg,[57] Costello is careful to distinguish technical automatism (medium-specific know-how) from photographic and cinematic automatism (the mechanical nature of the camera medium).[58] In this respect, Costello's recent work on optical

[55] Krauss writes that Pollock was in a Girardian "mimetic rivalry" with Picasso, and this "pursuit [led Pollock…] to the whole discourse on automatism beginning in 1939-1940 with the group experiments in automatic drawing with Baziotes and Kamrowski, to the lectures in 1941 on surrealism at the New School by Gordon Onslow-Ford, to the surrealist game sessions at Matta's house organized by Motherwell in 1942, and finally to the den of the surrealists themselves, the gallery of Peggy Guggenheim, in 1943." See Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (MIT Press, 1996) 282.

[56] Besides *The Optical Unconscious*, Krauss pursues this dialectic in her studies of James Coleman in "'...And Then Turn Away?' An Essay on James Coleman," in *October* 81 (Summer 1997) 5-33, and of William Kentridge in "Reinventing the Medium," *Critical Inquiry* 25 (Winter 1999) 289-305; Cavell writes on Pollock and automatism in *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (Harvard UP, 1979) 108-118.

[57] See for instance Clement Greenberg, "Towards a New Laocoon" and "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" in *Art in Theory, 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Blackwell, 1992) 529-541, 554-560.

[58] For the critique of Krauss's use of automatism, see Diarmuid Costello, "Automat, Automatic, Automatism: Rosalind Krauss and Stanley Cavell on Photography and the Photographically Dependent Arts," in *Critical Inquiry* 38 (Summer 2012) 819-854. Costello discusses the history and uses of "medium specificity" in "On the Very Idea of a 'Specific' Medium: Michael Fried and Stanley Cavell on Painting and Photography as Arts," in *Critical Inquiry* 34 (Winter 2008) 274-312.

automatism and the "philosophy of photography" has been instrumental in treating "automatism" and "agency" as interrelated, rather than oppositional, modes of cultural production.[59]

Ultimately, optical automatism brings us full circle to the original meaning of automatism during the Enlightenment: the figure of the "spiritual automaton," or the self-regulated (thinking) machine. Building upon Cavell's philosophical reflections on cinema, Gilles Deleuze uses the spiritual automaton to reference the thought-provoking powers of the cinematic image. If for Cavell, automatism was raised by film to constitute not only the "automatic reproduction of the world" but also the thinking process that remakes the medium of film entirely, for Deleuze automatism was a return to Henri Bergson's formulation of the cinematographic illusion. This illusion of movement is produced by the film machine through the splicing together of multiple photographic instants at twenty-four frames a second.[60] As in Eadweard Muybridge's zoopraxiscope photography, we gain optical access to what N. Katherine Hayles calls the "unthought" aspects and surfaces of organic life, the unseen gaps that irretrievably lie in between the movement of life itself.[61] The cinematographic illusion is thus a metaphor for how human thought works: it is stimulated by contact with *previously unthought and unseen* images outside of us, necessarily external to our own minds, and in doing so, it undergoes the shock of

[59] Costello and Phillips write that "[w]hatever characterisation of the photographic process we provide, we should recognise that, insofar as its 'automatism' depends on mechanical purposive design, it is not independent of human agency." They cite the analogy of a washing machine's automatism to that of coastal erosion: "A washing-machine is exemplary of an automatic process because, although the machine performs its function without the need for human intervention, that function is modelled on a human activity, and designed with human purposes in mind. By contrast, examples of processes that are entirely independent of human agency cannot properly be called 'automatic'. The force of waves on a coastline will erode a cliff-face without any human intervention, but it would be bizarre to call this process 'automatic'." See Diarmuid Costello and Dawn M. Phillips, "Automatism, Causality and Realism: Foundational Problems in the Philosophy of Photography," *Philosophy Compass* 4/1 (2009) 15-16.
[60] See Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (University of Minnesota Press, 2009) 1-11.
[61] Hayles writes that the "unthought [is] a mode of interacting with the world enmeshed in the 'eternal present' that forever eludes the belated grasp of consciousness," a description that could stand in for what I have been arguing about certain varieties of technical and optical automatism. See N. Katherine Hayles, *Unthought: The Power of the Cognitive Nonconscious* (University of Chicago Press, 2017). For Muybridge's photography, see *Muybridge's Complete Human and Animal Locomotion*, vols. 1-3 [1887] (Dover, 1979).

Benjamin's "optical unconscious," in which the startling modernity of the outside world imprints itself on us. Citing the Spinozist understanding of automatism, Deleuze maintains that real thought, whether in the machine, the animal, or the human, occurs not through an anthropocentric inner life or humanistic "soul" but through movement- and time-images that bring us into contact with concepts and actions external to our own minds and bodies:

> *Automatic movement* gives rise to a *spiritual automaton* in us, which reacts in turn on movement. The spiritual automaton no longer designates—as it does in classical philosophy—the logical or abstract possibility of formally deducing thoughts from each other, but the circuit into which they enter with the movement-image, the shared power of what forces thinking and what thinks under the shock [...][62]

Deleuze's insight synthesizes key tenets of the modernist discourse on automatism, namely, Bergson's philosophy of vitalism and Benjamin's concepts of innervation, shock-aesthetics, and the optical unconscious. Although Deleuze's formulation emerges from the medium-specificity of cinema, its metaphorical relation is applicable to Wyndham Lewis's visual anatomization of the automaton as a type of cinematographic illusion. What seems organically alive and unique is actually automatic and mimetic (like a series of stills animated by movement), and human thought functions in the same way a movie camera functions, as a "mimetic shock absorber" that edits out images that the unconscious keeps stored away.[63] The aesthetic shock of realizing the automatisms of one's own mimetic behavior approximates to what Deleuze describes as the shared power of the movement-image that "forces thought" and the startled mind that "thinks under the shock." One is both an automaton, illusorily endowed by the powers of the Cogito, and

[62] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (University of Minnesota Press, 2010) 156-7.

[63] There is extensive criticism on cinema and literary modernism that follows this throughline: see James Donald, et al. *Close Up, 1927-33: Cinema and Modernism* (Cassell, 1998); Susan McCabe, *Cinematic Modernism: Modernist Poetry and Film* (Cambridge UP, 2005); and David Trotter, *Cinema and Modernism* (Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

yet alive to the fact. Such a subject realizes its subordination to what Benjamin would cite as the "*mémoire involontaire*," or that which "has not been experienced explicitly and consciously, what has not happened to the subject as an experience" and yet, with the absolute retention of a film or photograph, produces the sense of having been experienced personally.[64]

Lewis's conviction in the automaton nature of human personality structures three of his core beliefs: that human personality accomplishes its ends either through opposition or mimetic rivalry; that satire and aesthetic violence are the only means of disrupting or terminating mimetic rivalry; and that the automaton-nature of human personality only becomes interesting, indeed accessible, when it accepts its organic limitations and embraces purely *visual* or *optical* states of movement. In all these beliefs, Lewis maintains a vested interest in the organic limitations of the body and a simultaneous contempt for what he terms Bergonian vitalism, romantic idealism, and the avant-garde's predilection for politicized metaphysics. Lewis's conviction that people are spiritual automata (thinking machines) manifests not only in the paintings and portraits of his artistic career, but also in the painterly style of his writing, or what Fredric Jameson describes as an "explosive and window-breaking *praxis* on the level of the words themselves."[65] Lewis's work explores violence as an inevitable reaction to the mimetic automatisms of people and publics, but it also distinguishes between political forms of violence (which are corrosive and manipulative) and aesthetic forms of violence (which are inescapable but liberating).

As such, Lewis's work closes the loop of the dissertation's argument and of the varieties of automatism that it proposes to study: Morris and craft, Loy and reproduction, and Lewis and violence. If craft assembles what was destroyed, reproduction replicates what was assembled, and violence destroys what was replicated: and the feedback loop of automatism begins anew.

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[64] See Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 155-200.

[65] Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (Verso, 2008) 8.

The dissertation proposes that this feedback mechanism serves as a theory of how "avant-garde conservatism" loops itself indefinitely through these paradoxical automatisms.

The dissertation chapters are organized as follows. Chapter One examines the transmedial work of William Morris and its relation to labor, craft, and industrial automatism. The first section looks at Morris's epic poem, *Sigurd the Volsung* (1876), which allegorizes Morris's hostile attitude toward industrial automatism and the hope he placed in the revival of handicrafts. I argue that Morris conceptualizes handicraft as a technical automatism that restores human agency. The second section looks at *Pilgrims of Hope* (1885), which dramatizes the events of the Paris Commune. I argue that *Pilgrims* represents Morris's utopic hope that incorporation into a socialist community might erase troubling notions of bourgeois married life, property fetishism, and domesticity.

Chapter Two examines the work of Mina Loy and its relation to the sexual politics of the avant-garde. The first section looks at Mina Loy's anxieties over aesthetic and biological reproduction, and the problematic relationship she held with futurism. I argue that her early poems develop a theory of automatism that regards sexual difference as the key to "spiritual" (as opposed to biological) evolution. In the second section I look at Mina Loy's novel *Insel*, written in the 1930s and unpublished in her lifetime. *Insel* narrates Loy's exploration of surrealist art and its tangled commitment to automatism as a generative technique. I argue that Loy reframes automatism as a medium for transgressing the politics of sexual difference and creating new forms of life.

Chapter Three examines the work of Wyndham Lewis and its relation to political and aesthetic violence. The first section looks at Lewis's collection of short stories, *The Wild Body* (1927), and his novel, *Tarr* (1918, 1928), and I argue that these works capture the heart of

Lewis's painterly style of writing, but also his core ideas regarding the automaton-nature of the human organism. In the second section, I look at *One-Way Song* (1933), Lewis's only major work of poetry. I argue that *One-Way Song* offers a compelling account for automatism as a means of preserving human culture, paradoxically, through satire and mimetic violence.

CHAPTER 1
WILLIAM MORRIS AND THE AUTOMATISMS OF CRAFT

At the 1888 Conference of the Art Workers' Guild, J.D. Sedding, a proponent of the Arts and Crafts movement that swept British industries at the time, entertained the notion of installing copies of William Morris in every factory in England: "'Fancy what a year of grace it were for England, if our industries were placed under the guidance of 'one vast Morris'! Fancy a Morris installed in every factory.'"[1] By the 1880s, Morris's multi-hyphenate work as a poet, painter, designer, entrepreneur, craftsman, bookmaker, and political activist symbolized the ideal range of application for the all-purpose artisan, and Sedding's suggestion reads Morris's transmedial abilities as the solution to the alienation of nineteenth-century machine culture and the corrosive effects of the division of labor on the aesthetic standards of the day. The Arts and Crafts movement, heralded by men like Sedding, Walter Crane, Lewis F. Day, and C.R. Ashbee[2] (the latter whose Guild and School of Handicrafts was opened in the East End of London in 1888[3]) was in full swing at a time when Morris had notably shifted from the aestheticism of the Pre-Raphaelites to a full-fledged engagement in the socialist cause. As Nikolaus Pevsner's famous 1936 study, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, argues, the Arts and Crafts movement was instrumental in initiating the improbable evolution from medievalist notions of handicraft to the hard-edged

[1] Quoted in Michael T. Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England: Medieval Modernism and the London Underground* (Oxford UP, 1999) 63. See also Gillian Naylor, *The Arts and Crafts Movement: A Study of Its Sources, Ideas and Influence on Design Theory* (MIT Press, 1971) 165.

[2] For more on the Arts and Crafts Movement, see Mary Greensted, ed. *An Anthology of the Arts and Crafts Movement: Writings by Ashbee, Lethaby, Gimson and Their Contemporaries* (Lund Humphries, 2005); and Gillian Naylor, *The Arts and Crafts Movement: A Study of its Sources, Ideals, and Influence on Design Theory* (MIT Press, 1971).

[3] Ashbee explains the motivations for the Guild as stemming from John Ruskin's and William Morris's respective ideas on medieval art and the value of handicrafts in *An Endeavour Towards the Teaching of John Ruskin and William Morris* (Folcroft Library Editions, 1973).

machine aesthetic of modernist design and architecture.[4] At the heart of this paradoxical transition, Morris stood as a figurehead for the revival of handicrafts whose internal contradictions, either in his conservative aesthetic tastes or in his fiercely radical politics, buttressed deeper implications for such a startling change.

The same year that Sedding fantasized about an automaton-like Morris placed in every factory floor, Morris himself published a social critique novel, *A Dream of John Ball* in March 1888, which had been serialized in *The Commonweal* years prior (1886-7). *A Dream of John Ball* is structured as a non-allegorical dream-vision in which the narrator imagines that he has traveled back in time to the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. The first-person narrator, who Morris seems to suggest is himself, encounters the radical cleric John Ball, one of the historical leaders of the revolt, whose mission of motivating the peasants through open-air sermons gratifies Morris's own vocation writing and delivering open-air speeches for the socialist cause. Late in the novel, the narrator describes the future capitalist system to John Ball, who is perplexed at the notion that the future nineteenth-century worker attains his bread and board not directly through his own making but "'with his own body and the body of labour that lieth therein; with the price of his labour shall he buy leave to labour.'"[5] Morris's description of the cash nexus and the abuses of surplus value astounds Ball, but it is the description of machine-assisted labor that reverses the science-fiction element of the novel toward that of a historical perspective astonished to look forward to a unrecognizable future-present:

> 'Thou hast seen the weaver at his loom: think how it should be if he sit no longer before the web and cast the shuttle and draw home the sley, but if the shed open of itself and the shuttle of itself speed through it as swift as the eye can follow, and the sley come home of itself; and the weaver standing by and whistling [...]

[4] See Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (Yale UP, 2005) 13-27; and Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England*, 61-91.
[5] William Morris, *Selected Writings*, ed. G.D.H. Cole (Random House, 1946) 252 (hereon *SW*).

> the while, or looking to half–a–dozen looms and bidding them what to do. *And as with the weaver so with the potter, and the smith, and every worker in metals, and all other crafts, that it shall be for them looking on and tending, as with the man that sitteth in the cart while the horse draws*. Yea, at last so shall it be even with those who are mere husbandmen; and no longer shall the reaper fare afield in the morning with his hook over his shoulder, and smite and bind and smite again till the sun is down and the moon is up; but *he shall draw a thing made by men into the field with one or two horses, and shall say the word and the horses shall go up and down, and the thing shall reap and gather and bind, and do the work of many men*. Imagine all this in thy mind if thou canst, at least as ye may imagine a tale of enchantment told by a minstrel, and then tell me what shouldst thou deem that the life of men would be amidst all this, men such as these men of the township here, or the men of the Canterbury gilds.'[6]

Describing the automatic machines that "open of [themselves]," Morris's passage remarkably echoes Karl Marx's description of industrial automation in the *Grundrisse* (written 1857-61), in which the capitalist "worker's activity [...] is posited in such a way that it merely transmits the machine's work, the machine's action, on to the raw material—supervises it and guards against interruptions."[7] That the worker need not actually use or assist in the machine's functions except watch and supervise its performance signals a science-fiction element in Morris's ironic treatment of machine labor: what has become natural by Morris's time appears otherworldly and inhuman from the perspective of John Ball's time.

Although it is not named directly, what both Morris and Marx are describing is what I call *automatism*, and more specifically, *industrial* or *machinic* automatism, in which labor power is not merely transferred from human handicraft to routinized and piecemealed production, but is appropriated and subjugated to a larger apparatus or system that makes of human labor a rhythmic extension of machinic consciousness:

[6] Morris, *SW*, 258-9 (my emphasis).
[7] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (Penguin Books, 1993) 692.

> The worker's activity, reduced to a mere abstraction of activity, is determined and regulated on all sides by the movement of the machinery. [...] The science which compels the inanimate limbs of the machinery, by their construction, to act purposefully, as an automaton, does not exist in the worker's consciousness, but rather acts upon him through the machine as an alien power, as the power of the machine itself.[8]

At the conclusion of *John Ball*, the dreaming narrator wakes only to be visited by the morning call of the factory alarms, "the frightful noise of the 'hooters,' one after the other, that call the workmen to the factories." Disengaged from the hopeful vistas of the medieval past, the narrator "grinned surlily, and dressed and got ready for my day's 'work' as I call it, but which many a man besides John Ruskin [...] would call 'play.'" The rhythmic chant of the hooters recalls the narrator, along with other workmen, to the grim reality of the present, one in which the worker's activity is "regulated on all sides by the movement of the machinery." But this regulation has saturated the narrator's social reality to the point of suggesting a kind of mechanical responsiveness that Morris's narrator sarcastically calls "'play,'" one in which the "'hooters'" command the workers to respond with Pavlovian automatism and report to the factory floors.[9]

Part of the polemic in Marx's and Morris's respective visions lies in the dueling definitions of what constitutes automatism. On the one hand, as Morris states elsewhere in *John Ball* and in contemporaneous lectures, machines are useful for freeing up time and reducing occupational hazards for the worker, at times even improving the standards of the medium and the quality of the art.[10] On the other hand, as Marx stresses, the capitalist division of labor and

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[8] Marx, *Grundrisse*, 693.

[9] Notably, Humphrey Jennings's "imaginative history of the Industrial Revolution," *Pandaemonium: The Coming of the Machine as Seen by Contemporary Observers*, concludes with this same passage from Morris's *A Dream of John Ball*. Jennings suggests that the Industrial Revolution climaxes with this rhythmic flooding of the workers' reality, now totalized in the calling forth of the workers to the factories, from which revolt seems distant or impossible. See Jennings, *Pandaemonium*, ed. Marie-Louise Jennings and Charles Madge (Icon Books, 2012) 355-6.

[10] In an 1884 lecture, "A Factory As It Might Be," Morris imagines an ideal socialist factory in which "machines of the most ingenious and best-approved kinds will be used when necessary, but will be used simply to save human labour." That is, machines taken out of the capitalist profit-grinding system that produces superfluous goods out of

the systemic use of machines can lead toward more work hours, enforced child labor, and a monotonousness in which simple tasks are accelerated and rendered inhuman. At some level, Marx and Morris lament the loss of a different kind of automatism, a *technical* automatism or medium-specific immersion which Marx calls "virtuosity"[11] and which Morris calls, in a lecture of 1877, the "art of unconscious intelligence."[12] In both outlooks, the technical automatism of craft (i.e. medium-specific know-how, practical knowledge) is replaced by, or subordinated to, an industrial automatism that splits human ingenuity and the handicrafts into an assembly-line production that deadens the value of and responsiveness to material situations.

If Morris and Marx railed against the abuses of machine culture, industrial apologists like Charles Babbage[13] and Samuel Ure argued the opposite. Ure reasoned that machinic automatism had epistemic value in its analogical relation to the human worker because the factory system, "a vast automaton, composed of numerous *mechanical and intellectual organs* operating in concert and without interruption," broke otherwise impossible or superhuman operations down to the relatable scale of the human organism.[14] The factory was theorized as "natural" in that it was an organism composed of workers and machines to the same degree that a human body is composed of subordinate organs. If the nineteenth-century factory gave birth to a new machinic organism,

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scale with local need might be repurposed to fit their original intention: "...there would be no temptation to pile up wares whose apparent value as articles of use [...] does not rest on the necessities or reasonable desires of men for such things…" See William Morris, "A Factory as It Might Be" in *SW*, 649-50.

[11] Marx describes technical or craft-based virtuosity as the kind of specialized knowledge in which "the worker animates and makes into his organ [an instrument, medium, or tool] with his skill and strength, and whose handling therefore depends on his virtuosity" (Marx, *Grundrisse*, 693).

[12] See William Morris, "The Lesser Arts," in *Hopes and Fears for Art & Signs of Change* (Thoemmes Press, 1994) 12; hereafter *HFASC*.

[13] Among the many benefits of industrial automation, Babbage reasons that machines forestall the need and, in some cases, prevent entirely the "combination amongst workers" (e.g. unionization) against their employers; see Charles Babbage, *On the Economy of Machinery and Manufactures* [1832] (Cambridge UP, 2009) 244-257.

[14] See Samuel Ure, *The Philosophy of Manufactures* [1835] (Routledge, 2006) 15. For more on Ure, see Steve Edwards, "Factory and Fantasy in Andrew Ure," *Journal of Design History* 14.1 (2001) 17-33; and W.V. Farrar, "Andrew Ure, F.RS., and the Philosophy of Manufactures," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 27.2 (February 1973) 299-324.

then it also manufactured synthetic forms of labor. Comparing the different connotations of Babbage's and Ure's uses of "manufacture," Henry Mayhew notes in Volume Four of *London Labour and the London Poor* (published in 1862) that "[a]ccording to Mr. Babbage, *manufacturing* differs from mere *making* simply in the quantity produced," whereas "Dr. Ure… appears to consider such articles manufactures as are produced by means of machinery, citing the word… as an instance of those singular verbal corruptions by which terms come to stand for the very opposite to their literal meaning."[15] The irony that *manufacture*, the Latin equivalent for the Saxon *handicraft*, has come to mean the very opposite of its etymological origin does not escape Mayhew's attention, who relates this change in meaning not only to a corruption in the original meaning of the word but also to a fundamental disagreement in how human hand-labor is supposed to relate to machine-craft and whether any such synthesis of the two automatisms (technical and industrial, *hand* and *craft*) could be accomplished in the current factory system.

As this chapter will argue, Morris's response to the split between hand and craft found its solution both in a nostalgia for depictions of labor in the medieval past and in labor's future utopic possibilities in socialist communism. In this regard, *John Ball* adopts a similar feeling for the past as Thomas Carlyle's *Past and Present* (published 1843), in which Carlyle compares an idealized medieval past to the "Mammonism" and "Dilettantism" of the modern capitalist present. As Morris drew from Froissart's *Chronicles* for a pictorial sense of John Ball's time, Carlyle based his study of Gothic life and workmanship on Jocelyn de Brakelond's chronicle of the history of Bury St. Edmunds Abbey, a medieval text that celebrates the period of prosperity that occurred during the tenure of Abbot Samson.[16] If Morris idealizes the valor of men like John

[15] Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, ed. Victor Neuberg (Penguin Books, 1985) 457-8.
[16] See Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* [1843], ed. Chris R. Vanden Bossche, et al. (University of California Press, 2006).

Ball, Carlyle heroicizes the workmanship and ethics of Abbot Samson. Both figures are exemplary of the Gothic workmanship that John Ruskin, in "The Nature of Gothic" (published 1851), would describe as emanating from two initial "mental elements": "savageness" and "changefulness," qualities that the Gothic worker exhibits in architectural endeavor and which work against the "unnatural" love of false symmetries and the "degradation of the operative into a machine."[17]

Equally so, Morris's socialism influenced the outlook he had on labor's relation to automatism. Morris's "medieval modernism"[18] envisioned a socialist practice that would work in what he called "fellowship," a term John Ball makes a theme of during the Peasants' Revolt: "'Forsooth, brothers, [...] fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death: and the deeds that ye do upon the earth, it is for fellowship's sake that ye do them…'"[19] Elsewhere Morris clarifies that *fellowship* is an allegorical catch-all for trade-unionism, medieval guild structure, fraternities, "brotherhoods," and other communal forms that embody the core values of socialist praxis.[20] At the heart of fellowship was the problem of effective syndicalism: how does a

[17] Ruskin writes, "Men were not intended to work with the accuracy of tools, to be precise and perfect in all their actions. If you will have that precision out of them, and make their fingers measure degrees like cog-wheels, and their arms strike curves like compasses, you must unhumanize them. All the energy of their spirits must be given to make cogs and compasses of themselves." Besides "savageness" and "changefulness," Ruskin lists four other "mental elements" in Gothic style: "naturalism," "grotesqueness," "rigidity," and "redundance." See John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin*, Vol. X, ed. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (Longman, Greens, and Co., 1912) 192, 194 http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/depts/ruskinlib/Stones%20of%20Venice.

[18] Michael T. Saler defines "medieval modernism" as a synthesis of medieval ideals of workmanship and modernist ideas of "significant form" and "fitness for purpose," in which "self-expression had to be counterbalanced by self-discipline; [...] Modernism's potential for hedonistic self-expression was to be contained within Protestant parameters of work, service, and self-abnegation." See Saler, *Avant-Garde in Interwar England*, 90-91.

[19] Morris, *SW*, 212.

[20] Morris writes after the French Revolution the issue is no longer choosing between "Absolutism and Democracy," but between "Mastership and Fellowship," mastership taken to be the capitalist exploitation of the worker by the ruling class, and fellowship taken to be socialism, i.e. "working in the harmony of association for the common good, that is, for the greatest happiness and completest development of every human being in the community"; see Morris, *HFASC*, 122-123. In *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome*, Morris and his co-author Ernest Bax write that the early merchant guild, although "commercial in tendency," was "organised like all associations of the Middle Ages on quasi-religious grounds" and included "some survivals of the fellowship of the freemen." See Morris and Bax, *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome* (Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1893) 68. https://archive.org/details/socialismitsgro02baxgoog.

commune function as a single-minded machinic body while remaining heterogeneous and variable, comprised of free-standing individuals who are, as Charles Fourier imagined of the "phalanstery,"[21] free to play as they like and still perform up to their potential? Conversely, how does fellowship utilize the social and practical advantages of machinic organization and efficacy and not become, as Morris describes of the perils of the factory system, an abusive "workman-machine" in which "the complete interdependence of each human being" serves only to limit each person's freedom and "no one… can produce anything by himself"?[22]

At the heart of all this is Morris himself, who exhibited contrary tendencies that this chapter will take into account. Morris emerged from the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, whose avant-garde tendencies eventually succumbed to conservative values and art-for-art's-sake disconnectedness, but Morris ultimately rejected aestheticism for an active life in socialist politics, a radical move that alarmed Victorian poets like Tennyson and disappointed Pre-Raphaelite comrades like Edward Burne-Jones.[23] Although Carlyle and Ruskin were Morris's primary influences, scholars have demonstrated that Morris's socialist activism set him apart in distinct ways. Unlike Carlyle, Morris did not give credence to the belief that an "aristocracy of talent" and "hero-worship" alone could reform society, since they only replicated the hierarchical order of the ruling classes. And "unlike Ruskin, Morris was a craftsman before he became a

[21] Following Friedrich Engels' categories of "utopian" and "scientific" socialism, Morris and Bax ascribe to Fourier and his vision of the phalanstery a "Utopianism [which] led him to the trap of formulating dogmatically an electorate scheme of life in all its details, a scheme which could never be carried out, however good the principles on which it was based might be" (Morris and Bax, *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome*, 215). See also Charles Fourier, *The Theory of the Four Movements*, eds. Gareth Stedman Jones and Ian Patterson, trans. Ian Patterson (Cambridge UP, 2006) vii-xxxii.

[22] Morris and Bax, *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome*, 244-45.

[23] E.P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (PM Press, 2011) 274, 322.

theoretician," and Morris had a practical, realistic knowledge of craftsmanship that transcended Ruskin's elaborates theories of labor and technology.[24]

Sedding's suggestion that Morris install himself like a machine in every factory plays up the paradoxical nature of Morris's various positions: while remaining a fierce opponent of the factory system, Morris still believed that machines, removed from capitalist exploitation, could save labor, since even "mechanical labour is pleasant to some people if it be not too mechanical."[25] Similarly, although Morris's design firm, Morris and Company, eschewed the factory system for a modestly-scaled workshop model, the division of labor and the specialization of mechanical assemblage were still operative in the firm, and they overrode Morris's idealistic expectations of the average worker who could mimic Morris's transmedial capabilities. As a result, Morris's savvy and success as a workplace manager and a semi-wealthy entrepreneur prompted Engels to unfairly dismiss him as a "very rich artist-enthusiast but untalented politician" who at best was a "sentimental Socialist."[26]

These contradictory qualities, I argue, are resolved in Morris's vision of *craft*, which his work redefines as *a bodily feeling for fellowship through the arts and crafts*. If craft is what constitutes the bodily automatisms of a given medium (whether in the rhythmic performance of weaving, marching, versifying, or painting), craft-knowledge is also the source of what Fourier calls "attractive labor" (*attraction industrielle*). For Fourier, attractive labor constitutes the passions and affects that connect people, across mediums and political persuasions, to specific forms of industry that fulfill their potential as an "[organic] machine made of human beings."[27]

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[24] Herbert Sussman, *Victorians and the Machine: The Literary Response to Technology* (Harvard UP, 1968) 110-111.
[25] Quoted in Sussman, *Victorians and the Machine*, 112.
[26] Thompson, *William Morris*, 342, 803.
[27] Walter Benjamin notes that Fourier's "phalanstery can be characterized as human machinery [...] a machine made of human beings." Benjamin's updating of Fourier's concept to fit the modernity of the Paris Arcades resembles

Morris updates Fourier's concept of attractive labor into a less schematic—and less theoretical—idea of fellowship, in which the revival of the handicrafts symbolizes a return to craft-based automatisms that replace the noxious automatisms of industrial capitalism and machine labor. Although there is a long history of scholarship that has noted several of these factors in Morris's works,[28] this chapter examines these same features through the lens of automatism in two of Morris's long works that have not previously been interpreted or studied under such a lens.

In the first section, I begin with a contextual background for Morris's formation of the "The Firm," later rebranded as Morris and Co., which I argue signifies the critical transition from the aestheticism of Pre-Raphaelitism to the pragmatic realities of the workshop space, human resources, machine labor, and bookkeeping. It is this transition from the idealism of an avant-garde "brotherhood" to the realism of a craft-based fellowship that ultimately leads him toward socialism. I then shift to a reading of Morris's long-form poem, *Sigurd the Volsung* (1876), Morris's verse epic adapted from the Volsunga Saga. My reading of *Sigurd* suggests that Morris's use of mythic narrative allegorizes the contemporary problems of the rise of labor-

what Morris was setting out to accomplish through his idea of fellowship. See Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Harvard UP, 2002) 626-7

[28] Beginning with E.P. Thompson's and Raymond Williams' respective studies of Morris's pivot from aestheticism to socialism, and continuing with Herbert Sussman's work on Victorian ideology and technology, and most recently featuring Elizabeth Helsinger's examination of strategies of "attention," "repetition," and "translation" in Pre-Raphaelite poetry and Julie Carr's studies in the "surface tension" of Victorian poetry, Morris criticism has ranged from finessing his socialist politics to square with his romantic medievalism and conservative aesthetic, to reigniting interest in the under-acknowledged modernist aspects of Morris's poetry and its contributions to Victorian poetics. In the former case, Morris's poetry, as Thompson believed, was inferior to the prose and artworks, while in the latter case, a recuperation of the poetry takes precedence over the novels and prose. The common thread in Morris studies, however, is the visual nature intrinsic to his literary works and the relevance of the visual arts to Morris's roles as poet, polemicist, novelist, and socialist. Morris's fame in contemporary contexts rests on his role as a modernist pioneer in the revival of handicraft and the inception of early graphic design, whether in his wallpaper designs or book making. See Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* (Columbia UP, 1983) 148-161; Jeffrey Skoblow, *Paradise Dislocated: Morris, Politics, Art* (University Press of Virginia, 1993); Ruth Kinna, *William Morris: The Art of Socialism* (University of Wales Press, 2000); Elizabeth Helsinger, *Poetry and the Pre-Raphaelite Arts: Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Morris* (Yale UP, 2008); Julie Carr, *Surface Tension: Ruptural Time and the Poetics of Desire in Late Victorian Poetry* (Dalkey Archive Press, 2013); Elizabeth Carolyn Miller, *Slow Print: Literary Radicalism and Late Victorian Print Culture* (Stanford UP, 2013); Michelle Weinroth and Paul Leduc Browne, eds. *To Build a Shadowy Isle of Bliss: William Morris's Radicalism and the Embodiment of Dreams* (McGill-Queen's UP, 2015)

division and the decline of handicraft, and it opens up the possibility of reading *Sigurd* as a proto-socialist work that subtly interweaves the substrate of Morris's romantic medievalism with his destined projection into socialist activism. Narrowing my focus to Book II of *Sigurd*, titled "Regin," I argue that its drama and verse techniques offer a compelling critique of the division of labor disguised as the mythic tragedy of the dwarf Regin, a master craftsman who endures a coded version of industrial-capitalist subjugation and disenchantment.

In the second section, I look at William Morris's *The Pilgrims of Hope*, a long narrative poem Morris serialized in *The Commonweal* during 1885-6. I offer an analysis of *The Pilgrims of Hope* that historically and thematically connects the poem to *Sigurd the Volsung*. *The Pilgrims of Hope* offers a resolution to the problems laid out in *Sigurd*: how does the worker, first, reclaim the joy of labor if the "lesser arts" of handicraft are severed by industrial capitalism from everyday life? Second, how is a synthesis of individual autonomy and communal activism possible if the detrimental effects of industrial capitalism on the cultural imaginary do not allow for the conditions of such an incorporation?

Pilgrims resolves these questions in the image of the Paris Commune (March-May 1871), whose historical event both haunted and motivated Morris's socialist consciousness. The brief but resonant existence of the Commune offered Morris a historical basis for a "polytechnic" reintegration of the decorative arts into everyday life, as well as a utopic space for a communal existence that would be equally "machinic" and organically plural. Lastly, I read in Morris's depiction of the Commune a sublimation of his conflicted feelings on bourgeois individuality, married life, and domestic space. Morris perceives in the Commune a way of individuating himself through an incorporation into the multitude that does not sacrifice his individuality but integrates it into a craft-based fellowship that erases distinctions of personal injury or false

notions of private property. The transition from a depersonalized self to communal activity reflects the two senses of automatism which I develop in this chapter at large: the virtuous and pleasurable loss of self-consciousness through an immersion in craft-labor, and the self-regulating form which communal activity achieves in a machine-like heterogeneity that includes others.

I. Hand and Craft: From "The Firm" to *Sigurd the Volsung*

A. The Firm as Work of Art

William Morris's early career began when he first met Edward Burne-Jones, the great Pre-Raphaelite painter with whom he would form a lifelong artistic and personal friendship. Both were students at Exeter College, Oxford, and it was in 1854 when Morris (here I quote Burne-Jones), "ran in one morning bringing the newly published book [Ruskin's *Edinburgh Lectures*] with him: so everything was put aside until he read it all through to me."[29] It was through Ruskin's lecture-essay, "Pre-Raphaelitism,"[30] that the two artists came across the work of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who seemed to them "the chief figure in the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood" because he paired a literary background to visual artistry, drawing pictures of Dante and Beatrice even as he wrote poems like "The Blessed Damozel."[31] It was Rossetti's transmediality and precision across literary and visual works which excited them.[32]

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[29] See Tim Barringer, et al., "Victorian Avant-Garde" in *Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Art and Design* (Yale UP, 2012) 178.
[30] See John Ruskin, *Complete Works*, Vol. XII, 134-164 http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/depts/ruskinlib/Edinburgh%20Lectures.
[31] See Jerome McGann, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Game That Must Be Lost* (Yale UP, 2000); and McGann, ed. *The Complete Writings and Pictures of Dante Gabriel Rossetti: A Hypermedia Archive* (2008) RossettiArchive.org http://www.rossettiarchive.org//.
[32] See Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (Alfred Knopf, 1995); and MacCarthy, *The Last Pre-Raphaelite: Edward Burne-Jones and the Victorian Imagination* (Faber & Faber, 2011).

After college, Morris undertook a brief apprenticeship at G.E. Street's architecture firm at Oxford in 1856. It was during this period that Morris, through Burne-Jones's agency, finally came into contact with Rossetti, and it was under Rossetti's and Burne-Jones's dual influence that Morris switched out of architectural pursuits to the study and practice of painting. Morris's brief period as a painter climaxed when Morris and the PRB cadre were commissioned to paint mural frescoes at the debating hall of the Oxford Union. Morris and Burne-Jones had by this point moved into Rossetti's former apartments at 17 Red Lion Square in London, which they decorated and furnished with wallpaper, furniture, and paintings they themselves designed and produced. We can track Morris's earliest beginnings as a poet during this period as well. William Morris's courtship of and marriage to Jane Burden, a painting model "discovered" by Rossetti during the Oxford Union mural project, transitioned Morris out of Red Lion artistic bachelordom to the more professional conjugal life of Red House at Bexley Heath in Kent. Designed by another of Morris's post-college friends, Philip Webb, Red House was a neo-medievalist manor that Morris treated as an art project no different than a painting. Red House was richly decorated and furnished with furniture and objects that he and his colleagues designed. The move to Red House occurred in 1858, a significant year in which Morris published his first book of poems, *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems*.[33]

Morris's Pre-Raphaelite phase culminated, in April 1861, with the foundation of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner, and Company, known more simply as "the Firm." Morris was the Firm's primary investor and director of operations, and Burne-Jones, Rossetti, Philip Webb, C.J. Walker, Arthur Hughes, Ford Madox Brown, and P.P. Marshall were, at the beginning, the Firm's partners and chief designers. The Firm grew organically out of an already functioning

[33] Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris*, 110-153

artistic relationship shared by Morris, Burne-Jones, Webb, and Rossetti, a relationship that stemmed from the remains of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and which was semi-professionalized during the Oxford Union mural project.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood had begun in 1848 with Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt, and Thomas Woolner as the original members, when Millais and Hunt were students at the Royal Academy. Dissatisfied with the Academy's adherence to the "grand style" and neoclassical models that were championed by Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses on Art*, the PRB conceived of an avant-garde position that would reject classicism in favor of a return to "an entire adherence to the simplicity of art," which they identified as any naturalist, unrefined style occurring prior to the peak of Raphael's innovations in the painting medium.[34] This stance was intellectualized by the publication of *The Germ: Thoughts Towards Nature in Poetry, Literature, and Art*, a journal which ran for four issues in 1850.[35] As Jerome McGann has argued, Rossetti's short story, "Hand and Soul" (1849), represents the finest articulation of the PRB's philosophy, and I contend that the story's theme is one that Morris would take up and modernize in the polemic of *hand* and *craft*.[36]

Although the PRB had disbanded by the time Morris and Burne-Jones gathered around Rossetti and his circle, much of the transmedial work Morris, Burne-Jones, and Rossetti produced during this brief period furthered the principles of the former PRB to include not only

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[34] See Cecil B. Lang, ed. "Introduction" to *The Pre-Raphaelites and Their Circle* (University of Chicago Press, 1975) xi-xxix.

[35] See Paola Spinozzi and Elisa Bizzotto, *The Germ: Origins and Progenies of Pre-Raphaelite Interart Aesthetics* (Peter Lang, 2012).

[36] McGann writes that in the conclusion to "Hand and Soul," Rossetti "defines the artistic program. [The story's conclusion] argues that the artist must practise a devotional art, and that the object of this devotion must be 'God', that is to say, something beyond what DGR's contemporary related poem, 'St. Luke the Painter', calls 'soulless self-reflections of man's skill'." Morris would complicate this polemic between absolute devotion to art (i.e. "God") and an absolute devotion to skill (or technical automatism, "self-reflections of man's skill") by bringing in the question of the machine and its relation to the hand/soul binary. See McGann, "Scholarly Commentary to 'Hand and Soul,'" RossettiArchive.org, http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/46p-1849.sa76.raw.html.

painting and sculpture but also literary experimentation and handicrafts. As some critics have noted, the formation of the Firm translated the remains of the PRB into a modernist enterprise that would influence not only the Arts and Crafts movement but also Roger Fry's Omega Workshops.[37] The advertisement for the Firm's appearance in 1861 (written up by D. G. Rossetti) promised to respond to "the growth of Decorative Art in this country":

> Up to this time, the want of that artistic supervision, which can alone bring about harmony between the various parts of a successful work, has been increased by the necessarily excessive outlay, consequent on taking one individual artist from his pictorial labours. The Artists whose names appear above hope by association to do away with this difficulty. […] These Artists having for many years been deeply attached to the study of the Decorative Arts of all times and countries, have felt more than most people the want of some one place, where they could either obtain or get produced work of a genuine and beautiful character. They have therefore now established themselves as a firm, for the production, by themselves and under their supervision, of—
>
> I. Mural Decoration, either in Pictures or Pattern Work, or merely in the arrangements of Colours, as applied to dwelling-houses, churches, or public buildings.
> II. Carving generally, as applied to Architecture.
> III. Stained Glass, especially with reference to its harmony with Mural Decoration.
> IV. Metal Work in all its branches, including Jewellery.
> V. Furniture, either depending for its beauty on its own design, on the application of materials hitherto overlooked, or on its conjunction with Figure and Pattern Painting.[38]

The language used to advertise the Firm signals a critical but subtle shift from the fraternal model of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood to a more corporatized model that blurs the boundaries between capitalist venture and artistic experimentation. Although a feature of the avant-garde is evident in the dissolution of the artwork's traditional unity into a montaging of distinct elements

[37] See Judith Collins, *The Omega Workshops* (University of Chicago Press, 1984) 152-153.
[38] See William Morris, *William Morris on Art & Design*, Christine Poulson ed. (Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) 22-23.

and even genres, the emphasis on the firm as the vehicle for such a montage was ahead of its time.[39]

But the theoretical move from the fine arts (architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry, etc.) to what Morris termed the "lesser arts" or "decorative arts" belied an interest in the reframing of the value of the work of art as a matter of process, method, and technicity than that of finish or objecthood. This was a subtle update of the PRB's rejection of academicism in favor of natural form, to what Morris called an "eventfulness of form," in which "forms and intricacies [...] do not necessarily imitate nature, but in which the hand of the craftsman is guided to work in the way that she does, till the web, the cup, or the knife, look as natural [...] as the green field, the river bank, or the mountain flint."[40] Here it is the production of the craftsman's hand, rather than the reproduction of nature, which assumes the purposiveness of the work of art.

The lesser arts, in a sense, reversed the order of craft to lead from the work of art backward to the medium of the worker's hand, which articulates itself through specific disciplines, automatisms, and an "eventfulness" of craft. Contemporaneous accounts of the ingenuity of the human hand, such as Charles Bell's *The Hand* (published 1865), maintained that the human hand's craftiness demonstrated its adaptability to "instinct" and that "the hand corresponds to the superior mental capacities with which man is endowed."[41] In other words, the hand was the index of not merely the artwork's origin but that of "the art of unconscious intelligence" as such. If Morris's eventfulness of craft depended on a recognition of the value of automatism to the training of the hand, then it was through a workshop space like The Firm that

[39] Peter Burgher, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011) 55-82.
[40] William Morris, *HFASC*, 4-5.
[41] Charles Bell, *The Hand: Its Mechanism and Vital Endowments as Evincing Design* (Bell & Daldy, 1865) 160-161.

craft and labor would be broadened to accommodate new understandings of manual ethic and transmedial capability.

Morris's understanding of craft was likely irradiated with a growing dissatisfaction with his own high standards in architectural design, painting, and (at a later stage) poetry as well, the one craft he could claim to have mastered completely. Morris scholarship frequently remarks on the incessant transitioning he would make between art mediums and works, but it was the Firm, I contend, that stands out as Morris's longest-running work of art, one in which the medium assumes the purposiveness of the artwork, and a sense of fellowship, aside from beautiful objects, produces an ethics of labor and distinct forms of craftsmanship. Morris's vision of fellowship in *John Ball* describes the image that The Firm likely held for him: "...like as one sees the oars of a galley when the rowers are hidden, that rise and fall as it were with one will."[42] Although this image presages the fearsome role that machinery would acquire in the exploitation of human labor, Morris perceives that the corporate automatism which unites the actions of the many into a single will conceals a hidden intelligence that might be of use to John Ball (in the past) and to Morris (in the present) in their efforts to mobilize the collective body of the peasantry/proletariat.

Indeed, Morris's direction of The Firm (especially after 1875, when Morris became the sole owner of the Firm and rebranded it "Morris and Company"[43]) did not disavow the use of machinery. By 1881, when Morris had entered his socialist phase and had moved most of the central design and production of the Firm from London to Merton Abbey in Surrey, he gave up his directorship and thrust most of the business and design responsibilities to other hands.[44] By

[42] William Morris, *SW*, 256.
[43] Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris*, 341-44.
[44] Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris*, 344ff.

this time, as Paul Thompson notes, "most of the firm's work after its early years was produced by serial methods rather than individual craftsmanship" and "machinery took a large part in most processes," while many of Morris's designs were "produced by outside manufacturers than the firm itself."[45] This move analogized to some extent the technologic transition from human productivity to machinic consistency, an abstraction from localized handicraft to outsourced production. Moreover, it is a transition whose repercussion for handicrafts Morris would confront in his longest poem, *Sigurd the Volsung*.

B. Allegory and Automatism in Sigurd the Volsung

Sigurd the Volsung, which Morris considered his greatest achievement in poetry, is significant for several reasons. From a formal standpoint, *Sigurd* arguably captures Morris's verse-craft at its most fluid and virtuosic. A massive epic of over 10,000 lines, *Sigurd* was composed in rapid mechanical flourishes within a short space of time, and Morris worked on it while also managing and attending to Firm activities, which involved dye-making and pattern-designing, and more self-directed activities like learning and translating from the Icelandic. *Sigurd*, as such, is a poem-narrative mediated by a prolific period in Morris's life when he was quite actively apprenticing and working across a range of aesthetic mediums that had an impact on its composition.

From a historical standpoint, *Sigurd* would be Morris's last major work in poetry before his full "conversion" to socialist activism and his concomitant entanglement with an arduous schedule of prose-writing, public speaking, and social organizing. Though Morris would afterward publish other works of poetry (*Chants For Socialists* between 1883-86, *The Pilgrims*

[45] Paul Thompson, *The Work of William Morris* (Quartet Books, 1967) 62-63.

of Hope in 1885, and *Poems By the Way* in 1891), all of these latter works would be quite explicitly about (or influenced by) socialist politics. *Sigurd* thus predates Morris's conversion and it is significant in this respect because the work manages to bridge together the two sides of what E.P. Thompson calls Morris's medieval romanticism and his "scientific utopianism."[46]

Sigurd, as I argue, is a threshold work which stands at the brink of Morris's socialist awakening into activism and helps define the conditions for it. I suggest that *Sigurd*'s slippages between Morris's romantic medievalism and his pragmatic attitude toward labor, craft, and machinery essentialize the inner core of Morris's socialism.[47] Not quite the medieval ornamental space of *The Defence of Guenevere* nor yet the prosey utopian-socialist world of *News from Nowhere*, *Sigurd* represents for Morris the bridge from his early PRB aestheticism to an Icelandic ideal of plainness, unadorned heroism, and the will to action. John Goode observes that in *Sigurd* Morris's "awareness of alienation comprehends a sense of the radical dislocation of consciousness from historical reality," but I go further and examine how this dislocation occurs at the lower level of handicraft, in which the artisan's hand shows itself to be disastrously dislocated from craft.[48]

The sparsity that Morris encountered in Iceland motivated him, as E.P. Thompson

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[46] By "scientific utopia," Thompson means to push back on Engels' condemnatory view of Morris's involvement in socialism as a species of "utopian socialism" which is inherently impractical and the obverse of the more effective and programmatic "scientific socialism." See E.P. Thompson, *William Morris*, 692-97, 768ff.

[47] Generally speaking, *Sigurd* has long been considered a "threshold" work to Morris's socialism, if only because of its place in his chronology. However, none of the critical literature on *Sigurd* that I have encountered has gone as far as I do in pressing a reading of Book II, "Regin," as particularly encoded with what Morris himself admits is 'modern amplification and sentiment' in *Sigurd*. See Margaret R. Grennan, *William Morris: Medievalist and Revolutionary* (King's Crown Press, 1945) 24-50; Karl Litzenberg, "The Social Philosophy of William Morris and the Doom of the Gods," in *Essays and Studies in English and Comparative Literature* (University of Michigan Press, 1933); and John Goode, "William Morris and the Dream of Revolution," in John Lucas, ed. *Literature and Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Methuen, 1977) 221-80.

[48] See John Goode, "William Morris and the Dream of Revolution" in John Lucas, ed. *Literature and Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Methuen, 1977) 238. Goode's article is one of the few to seriously consider *Sigurd* as an allegory for the socialist vision which Morris could only address in imaginative terms. See also E.P. Thompson's response to Goode's critique in E.P. Thompson, *William Morris*, 793-797.

suggests, to seek in socialist praxis an unadorned and pragmatic approach to social reality. This is especially true if we take seriously Thompson's conviction that Morris's work after *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-70) and *Love Is Enough* (1873), or what Thompson calls the period of a "poetry of escape" and "despair," took a vitalistic swerve toward socialist awakening. "[It] was in the early 1870s, the years of his despair, that [...] new strength came to him not from his work, nor from Kelmscott, nor from new friendships, nor from contact with the industrial proletariat, nor from any experience in his everyday life." Instead, Morris "drew this strength, it seemed, from the energies and aspirations of a poor people in a barren northern island in the twelfth century."[49] In an 1883 letter to Andreas Scheu, Morris recalls that when he first "went to Iceland with Mr. Magnusson [...] I learned one lesson there, thoroughly I hope, that the most grinding poverty is a trifling evil compared with the inequality of classes."[50] If the figurality of Iceland was greatly responsible for Morris's shift toward socialist praxis, then it is *Sigurd* which most saliently captures this figuration.[51]

The chronology leading to the composition of *Sigurd* begins in August 1868, when Morris met Eirikr Magnusson, an Icelandic linguist and theologian, with whom Morris learns to read and translate from the Icelandic. In May 1869, Morris and Magnusson published their translation of *The Grettis Saga*; in May 1870, Morris and Magnusson published their prose translation of *The Volsunga Saga*: The Story of the Volsungs & Niblungs; from March to April

[49] E.P. Thompson, *William Morris*, 176.

[50] William Morris, *The Letters of William Morris,* ed. Philip Henderson (AMS Press, 1978) 187.

[51] Notably, in a letter to Louis MacNeice from Iceland, W.H. Auden draws upon the austerity of Iceland's landscape and its historical influence on Morris:

> "I will set forth
> The obscure but powerful ethics of Going North.
> Morris did it before, dropping the frills and fuss,
> Harps and arbours, Tristram and Theseus,
> For a land of rocks and sagas [...]"

See W.H. Auden and Louis MacNeice, *Letters from Iceland* (Random House, 1969).

1871, they published their translation of *The Story of Frithiof the Bold* in the *Dark Blue* magazine, and that same month Morris, inexhaustible, completed a manuscript of *The Eyrbyggia Saga*. This flurry of activity would be capped by Morris's first trip to Iceland, a three-month journey in the summer of 1871, the same year as the Paris Commune. By the time Morris returned to Iceland for a second brief trip in 1873, his immersion in Icelandic studies and Norse mythology was total.[52]

Even as Morris dived headlong into Icelandic studies, his business and technical activities at Morris & Co. did not abate. Indeed, his self-appointed apprenticeship into dye-making and pattern-design would have a considerable impact on the themes of *Sigurd*. Shortly before he began work on *Sigurd*, Morris made his first trip to Leek in Staffordshire, a small industrial town, for the purpose of studying and practicing the art of dye-making. Between 1875 and 1878, Morris would frequent Leek, sometimes staying there for two or three weeks at a time.[53] His contact at Leek was Thomas Wardle—brother-in-law to George Wardle, Morris and Co.'s then managing director—who owned and managed Hencroft Dye Works. Leek was renowned for its tradition of dye-making, and Wardle was an authority on traditional techniques of dyeing silk and cotton. The multiple trips to Leek are important for various reasons. Morris's exploration of dye-making results from his recent consolidation of the restructured Firm and his interest in improving the quality of its chintz, carpet, and wallpaper designs.

The research in dyes also enriched Morris's already formidable knowledge of color palettes and chromatic mixtures, and his enhanced education in color design bled into much of his lyrical work. The sojourns in Leek exposed Morris to a revivified sense of a "factory as it should be." Morris gained insights into man-management and machine work at a local up-close

[52] Nicholas Salmon and Derek Baker, eds. *The William Morris Chronology* (Thoemmes Press, 1996) 41-82.
[53] Paul Thompson, *The Work of William Morris*, 110-131; and Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris*, 348-390.

level that rewarded the mechanical redesign and expansion of his firm.[54] This technical immersion in dye-making and pattern-design was not only chronologically simultaneous with both the restructuration of Morris & Co. and the composition of *Sigurd*, but I suggest it also deepened and influenced specific characterizations within his adaptation of the Norse saga that resonated with contemporaneous concerns for labor and handicraft.

Several significant wallpaper and chintz designs emerged from this prolific period as well: in July 1875, the *Acanthus* wallpaper design was registered, and in January and February 1876, the *Tulip & Rose* textile design, the *Anemone* silk and wool fabric design, the *Honeymoon* 3-ply carpeting and fabric design, and the *Pimpernel* wallpaper design were all registered. In fact, less than a month after the restructuring of Morris & Co., there was an explosion of new patterns that Morris swiftly designed in the freedom of the freshly redesigned Firm: the *Marigold* wallpaper design, plus the *Tulip* and *Larkspur* printed cotton designs, were swiftly drawn up and registered in April 1875.[55] This was a period of intense pattern-designing and color experimentation that spilled over into the composition of *Sigurd*, which began in earnest in March 1876. The ease with which Morris switched from medium to medium, artwork to artwork, astonished George Wardle, who worked alongside Morris at the Firm:

> 'His faculty for work was enormous and wonderfully versatile. He could turn his mind at once to the new matter brought before him and leave the poetry or the design without a murmur. How rapidly and accurately he wrote you know, almost without correction, page after page, but I may say that I always admired the easy

[54] In a letter dated July 30, 1875, Morris writes that in Leek "I have been learning several interesting things here, and love art and manufactures, & hate commerce and money-making more than ever" (Salmon and Baker, *William Morris Chronology*, 77). In a subsequent trip to Leek the following year, Morris threw himself completely into the process of dye-making: "I am working in Mr Wardle's dye-house in sabots and blouse pretty much all day long: I am dyeing yellows and reds: the yellows are very easy to get, and so are a lot of shades of salmon & buff and orange […] There were 4 dyers & Mr Wardle at work, and myself as dyer's mate: the men were encouraged with beer & to it they went, and pretty it was to see the silk coming green out of the vat & gradually turning blue: we succeeded very well as far as we can tell at present: the oldest of the workmen, an old fellow of 70, remembers silk being dyed so long ago" (Morris, *The Letters of William Morris*, 76-77).

[55] Salmon and Baker, *William Morris Chronology*, 75-78.

> way in which he turned from this ordinarily engrossing pursuit to attend to any other and resume his favourite work without apparently the loss of a single thread, as calmly as a workman goes to the bench after dinner.'[56]

I suggest that Morris became prolific through a steady and incessant technical automatism at this point, working across mediums and disciplines with great dexterity and automatic drive. Morris famously believed that "if a chap can't compose an epic poem while he's weaving tapestry he had better shut up, he'll never do any good at all."[57] Following through on his own maxim, Morris simultaneously worked on the *Rose* wallpaper design as he started the first books of *Sigurd*, all the while keeping track of the business end of The Firm. On his "off time" Morris would capriciously begin translations of epic works.[58] Poetry, weaving, designing, dye-making, translating, etc. were all one activity for Morris, each an outgrowth of a singular impulse to push his body to limits accessible only through a systematic, yet versatile, automatism of activity.[59]

Jane Ennis argues that Morris's pattern-making during this period transferred over into the compositional style and method of *Sigurd*,[60] and his experiments in dye-making at Leek bolstered the forms of "lyric color" that Elizabeth Helsinger theorizes made Morris's prosody glisten and stand out like pictures on a page.[61] MacCarthy notes that "Morris's technique had changed since *Guenevere*. […] There are times when Morris seems to be merely pattern-making

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[56] Quoted in MacCarthy, *William Morris*, 262.
[57] J.W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris*, vol. 1 (2 vols., London: 1901) 186.
[58] Abandoning a planned design for an illuminated manuscript of Virgil's *Aeneid*, for example, Morris opted instead to try his hand at his own translation of Virgil, rigorously keeping track of his progress in notebooks similar to those in which he would record business transactions or draft pattern prototypes: "'Sunday, 34 lines, Monday 138, Tuesday 20, Wednesday 34…Thursday 92, Friday 58, Saturday 112.' According to one entry in his records he translated 488 lines in just one week" (Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris*, 361).
[59] Fiona MacCarthy notes that sometimes "even [Morris] seems to have diagnosed an overload, describing himself jokingly as being 'in the thick of poetry blue-vats and business,' and confessing to Janey, 'I set myself too much work to do, that's a fact'" (MacCarthy, *William Morris*, 361-62).
[60] See Jane Ennis, "The Role of Grimhild in *Sigurd the Volsung*," *Journal of William Morris Studies* 8.3 (Autumn 1989) 13-23; and Ennis, "Introduction" to *Sigurd the Volsung* (Thoemmes, 1998) v-xxxix.
[61] See Elizabeth Helsinger, "Lyric Color: Pre-Raphaelite Art and Morris's *The Defence of Guenevere*," *Journal of William Morris Studies* 15.4 (Summer 2004) 16-40; and Helsinger, *Poetry and the Pre-Raphaelite Arts*, 55-143.

as the heroic couplets, broken into, overlapping, wend on and on and on. […] Morris acknowledged his dependence on his subject in making his verse flow."[62] John Goode adds that "the language [of *Sigurd*] is opaque and frequently inept—a combination of pseudo-anachronism trying to escape from the realities of modern English and an inert obedience to the demands of metre, as though all that keeps it communicating is a reflex response to the machine."[63] In spite of Goode's censorious language, the blend of the machinic with the anachronistic is fitting here considering how resistant Morris was to plain English, even as he infused the themes of *Sigurd* with contemporary concerns.

A brief look at the journals Morris kept with Magnusson while translating from the Icelandic demonstrates the great lengths Morris went to preserve an antiquated vernacular, if only to add to the "ornamental" value of *Sigurd* as a surface mat of patterns, using anachronistic words in the same manner, it might be said, that he used rustic forms of cotton in neo-medieval tapestries which were otherwise modern in manufacture. In her study of Magnusson and Morris's manuscript translations of *St. Olaf the Holy,* Linda Gallasch provides a useful breakdown of Magnusson's translation from the original Icelandic and Morris's alterations of Magnusson's versions. On the left side are Magnusson's straightforward modern phrasings, while on the right (in italics) are Morris's changes:

> I give no orders : *I have no biddings*
> men and women : *carles and queans*
> men could not endure him : *men tholed him*
> band together in an enterprise : *we be all in one rede together*
> both in prose and poetry : *in speech both loose and knitted up*[64]

[62] MacCarthy, *William Morris*, 204-5.
[63] Goode, "William Morris and the Dream of Revolution," 239.
[64] See Linda Gallasch, *The Use of Compounds and Archaic Diction in the Works of William Morris* (Peter Lang, 1979) 31-2.

Morris's alteration of Magnusson's "prose and poetry" into "speech both loose and knitted up" demonstrates just how far Morris considered poetry a form of weaving or technical exercise, a craft like any other. In *Sigurd*, the word "craft" appears more than forty times in the text, each time connoting specific meanings and contexts. In her study of "The Role of Grimhild in *Sigurd the Volsung*," Jane Ennis reduces the meanings of *craft* used by Morris to few major ones, citing the OED:

> I. Strength, power, might, force. (Obsolete).
> II. Intellectual power, skill, art.
> 2. Skill, skillfulness, art, ability in planning or performing, ingenuity in constructing dexterity.
> [3(a).] Occult art, magic. (obsolete)
> 3(b). A magical device, a spell or enchantment.
> 4. In a bad sense, skill or art applied to deceive or overreach; deceit, guile, fraud, cunning. IV. A branch of skilled work.[65]

I can simplify the above OED citations to the following four valences of craft, as I believe Morris uses them in *Sigurd*: 1. *craft as magic or sorcery*; 2. *craft as technical skill or technique*; 3. *craft as cunning or guile*; and 4. *craft as artwork, vehicle or medium*. Throughout the poem, these four tropisms blend at certain points. Craft as magic can also be craft as skill (skill in magic), or craft as guile or deceit can also refer to the witchcraft of shape-shifting, and so forth. "Warcraft" can mean knowledge of war, the use of a weapon or instrument in battle, or the necessary guile needed to survive a battle, with or without a weapon. "Shipcraft" can mean the art of ship-making, the art of ship-sailing, or the ship itself.

Craft then is an exceptionally pliant term for a variety of meanings and uses, and as such, it is a lexical instrument for precision as well as vagueness. Morris, aware of this, frequently blends the denotational uses of craft to ken other words. Tracking how craft is used in the

[65] Ennis, "The Role of Grimhild in *Sigurd the Volsung*," 13-23.

narrative thus gives us an insight into Morris's poetic technique and his positions regarding handicraft and the division of labor. In this respect, the literature on the theory and usage of craft is comparatively extensive.[66] Most recently, Alexander Langlands has written that being "*craefty* was about more than just being good with one's hands" but had also to do with the notion that "making has a spiritual element to it."[67] Glenn Adamson follows this line of thinking in arguing that "craft is not a defined practice but a way of thinking through practices of all kinds" because "craft has always been an idea that transcends discipline…"[68]

On the other hand, Paul Greenhalgh pushes back on framing craft as a loose and broadly applicable synonym for "practice" or "discipline." Greenhalgh argues that "there are grave disadvantages [...] in a signifier that has no stable significance," since the "fractionalised confusion of craft prevents those practices placed within its boundaries from forming a cohesive lobby." Instead, Greenhalgh holds that craft "is an empire. It is a constituency within the late-modern system of the arts, a naming-word and a major class in a professional world that is underpinned by a rigorous classificatory structure." Discussing Morris in particular, Greenhalgh writes that Morris introduced a "*politics of craft*" that insisted it could "lead to an equitable system of the distribution of wealth and generate psychologically fulfilled peoples."[69] If, as Greenhalgh argues, Morris's politics of craft broadened craft to include both manual and cognitive labor,[70] then I argue that the comparable, yet under-acknowledged, blending of

[66] See, for example, Glenn Adamson, ed. *The Craft Reader* (Berg Publishers, 2010); Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (Yale UP, 2009); and David Pye, *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* [1968], Ezra Shales, ed. (Herbert Press, 2008).
[67] Alexander Langlands, *Cræft: An Inquiry Into the Origins and True Meaning of Traditional Crafts* (W.W. Norton, 2018) 21.
[68] Glenn Adamson, *Thinking Through Craft* (Berg, 2007) 6-7.
[69] Paul Greenhalgh, "The History of Craft" in Peter Dormer, ed. *The Culture of Craft* (Manchester UP, 1997) 20-52.
[70] Greenhalgh writes, "In short, craft was premised [by the Arts and Crafts pioneers leading up to Roger Fry] on the understanding that *cognitive* and *manual* activity were effectively the same. Indeed the politics of craft were premised on their congruence. However, after 1918, [...] the two were wholly separate realms" ("The History of Craft," 41).

industrial and technical forms of automatism blurred the lines between making and thinking, and between machine and human labor. If craft is an empire, then automatism is an optic through which craft becomes communicable to the varieties of human labor.

The multiple valences of craft are compounded in the figure of Regin, the dwarf whose name titles the second book of *Sigurd the Volsung*. If, as we have seen, craft is divided into four major tropisms, it is this lexical and grammatical splitting of craft that comes to shape, in Morris's system, a concealed analogue for the division of labor. Regin, the "Master of Masters," embodies this dissection of craft, and it is his role in the shaping of Sigurd, the epic hero, which epitomizes the complicated relationship between craft and labor.

Regin's entrance into the epic narrative is handled in fourteen hexameter couplets dictated (as John Goode had remarked) more by the mechanical drive of their content than by lyrical stylization. The entirety of *Sigurd* is basically composed in this mode:

> Again, in the house of the Helper there dwelt a certain man
> Beardless and low of stature, of visage pinched and wan:
> So exceeding old was Regin, that no son of man could tell
> In what year of the days passed over he came to that land to dwell:
> But the youth of King Elf had he fostered, and the Helper's youth thereto,
> Yea and his father's father's: the lore of all men he knew,
> And was deft in every cunning, save the dealings of the sword:
> So sweet was his tongue-speech fashioned, that men trowed his every word;
> His hand with the harp-strings blended was the mingler of delight
> With the latter days of sorrow; all tales he told aright;
> The Master of the Masters in the smithying craft was he;
> And he dealt with the wind and the weather and the stilling of the sea;
> Nor might any learn him leech-craft, for before that race was made,
> And that man-folk's generation, all their life-days had he weighed.[71]

[71] Morris, *Sigurd the Volsung*, ed. Jane Ennis (Thoemmes Press, 1994) 62 (lines 1957-70). Henceforth *SV*.

Regin is a contradiction. He is "beardless" yet he is "exceeding old"; he is a "Master of the Masters in the smithying craft," yet "the dealings of the sword" are unknown to him; he had "weighed" all the "life-days" of men, yet he (as we learn later) remains heedless of how his own life will end; though he "fostered" the King and the generations before him, Regin remains in thrall to them. Regin's power, and his status as the last of the "cunning" dwarves, reinforce, bizarrely, his helplessness. Having mastered nearly all the arts (save that of the sword), Regin's surplus of experience is transmuted into a servitude to the King and to the humans whose knowledge he surpasses in every way. Regin, it appears, is an artisan whose mastery has been perplexed by a division of its applicability. His lack of knowledge of the sword later reveals an inhibitory attitude toward firmness of action.

Regin is among the first to recognize the special qualities of the child Sigurd, whose Volsung parentage leaves him a stranger in the "land of the Helper and the house of Elf" that foster him. When Regin asks permission to take the boy under his wing, King Elf permits this apprenticeship of Sigurd to Regin, with the caveat that "thy guile from him withhold; / For this craft of thine hath shown me that thy heart is grim and cold." The third valence of craft emerges here: craft as guile and cunning, with the pejorative sense of deceptive artifice. Regin, an artisan who makes "dwarf-wrought" (i.e. qualitatively excellent) things, has mastered all artforms to the point of impersonal precision, an excellence bordering on the efficient and mechanical. In this, there is an implication that Regin's "mastery" elicits suspicion from his human patrons.

The rest of the narrative of "Regin" is essentially that of an apprenticeship tale. Sigurd learns all of the craft-arts from Regin, and grows to master each one:

> So is Sigurd now with Regin, and he learns him many things;
> Yea, all save the craft of battle, that men learned the sons of kings:
> The smithying sword and war-coat; the carving runes aright;
> The tongues of many countries, and soft speech for men's delight;

> The dealing with the harp-strings, and the winding ways of song.
> So wise of heart waxed Sigurd, and of body wondrous strong[72]

The learning of different crafts allegorizes what Morris had undertaken to teach himself: the "smithying sword and war-coat," or what might be taken to be the design and patterning of furniture, stained glass, and textiles; the "carving runes aright," or what would, with Morris's Kelmscott Press, become book printing and illumination; the "tongues of many countries," or, in Morris's case, the translation of Icelandic into English, and fittingly, the translation of the *Volsunga Saga* into a Victorian epic poem. The "soft speech for men's delight," as well as the "winding ways of song," remark on Morris's vocation as poet, the lyric composer of sinuous winding meters.

With the learning of these "crafts," Sigurd—like Morris at the Firm—gains a transmedial ability to perform in multiple capacities and to insert himself in multiple contexts, whether in the forests, the mountains, the "desert dales," or among the "sea-wights." But a dramatic kernel remains concealed in the partitioning of these talents: "Yea, all save the craft of battle…" There is an implicit division of craft from action. Morris plays upon the metonymy of the sword for action and utilizes it to foreground Regin's contradictory "mastery of masteries." Regin is a master of everything except action itself; that is, Regin knows how to assemble a machine (e.g. smithy a sword), but not how to operate it, nor what its underlying power constitutes. Regin seems to produce things unfeelingly, almost automatically, and does not retain a sense of their ultimate use.

Regin has a purpose in training and "learning" Sigurd, it turns out. He tells Sigurd that "Thou too shalt one day ride / As the Volsung Kings went faring through the noble world and

[72] *SV* 68, lines 2127-32.

wide / For this land is nought and narrow, and Kings of the carles are these, / And their earls are acre-biders, and their hearts are dull with peace." Regin's low estimation of the "men-folk" he fostered, and whom he nonetheless serves, is founded on his view of their labor and production habits. The kings are mere "carles" (peasants) who work the land, while the earls are property-owners ("acre-biders"), in what might be coded the bourgeois class. None of them, moreover, knows what struggle or battle means, nor what collective action entails.

It is significant to note here that Regin persuades and inspires Sigurd through the medium of songcraft, as they sit, symbolically, "amidst the unfashioned gold, / And the silver grey from the furnace; and Regin spake and told / Sweet tales of the days that have been, and the Kings of the bold and wise; / Till the lad's heart swelled with longing and lit his sunbright eyes." When Sigurd angers at the contempt Regin shows for their hosts, Regin appeases and soothes him with lyrical craft:

> [Regin] spake and his harp was with him, and he smote the strings full sweet,
> And sang of the host of the Valkyrs, how they ride the battle to meet,
> And the tree-boughs open to meet it when the wind of the dawning is done:
> And the deep dales drink its sweetness and spring into blossoming grass,
> And the earth groweth fruitful of men, and bringeth their glory to pass.[73]

The anaphora is typical of Morris's epic narrative form. The sequential *and*s enframe Regin's song even as the song opens up to the larger frame of Morris's epic. Morris's instinct for the motive powers of song to encourage action and activism, as we see here in Regin's education of Sigurd, is distinct from Morris's earlier scaffolding of lyric craft (such as in previous works like *The Earthly Paradise*) as a thing apart from the social reality of the world.[74] We glimpse here, in

[73] *SV* 69, lines 2161-66.

[74] E.P. Thompson writes, for example, that *The Earthly Paradise* was welcomed by the Victorian public, and by aestheticist circles, because it was a "poetry of escape. For one thing...it was 'safe'. By retreating to a world of 'Beauty' it did not ask that kind of question about the capitalist ethic which was so pronounced in the writings of Carlyle and Ruskin...Since it was safe, it had clearly found the proper place for poetry in the scheme of social

the figure of Regin, the beginnings of a socialist enframing of lyric as utopic desire and world-legislation. Regin's recounting of the glory of the Valkyries opens up the phenomenal world in such a way that the phenomena of the world spill out, anaphorically, into a pure imaging of sensorial experience that substitutes for narratorial content. The "tree-boughs open," and the earth, literally, "groweth" for the ripe and impressionable Sigurd. We receive no narratorial detail of the Valkyries because, first, it is incumbent on Sigurd to actually inhabit the world they reside in rather than to merely hear of them (as he will when he slays Fafnir the dragon and encounters Brynhild); and, second, the storytelling function, if successful to the point of simulation, only deadens the need for action and makes impossible the sensorial experience of such a world.

Morris's belief in the motive powers of songcraft becomes even more prevalent during his socialist period, as for instance in *Chants for Socialists* (1885), in which the coming revolution (or the desire for it) is prefaced by the musical atmospherics of marching workers:

> What is this, the sound and rumour? What is this that all men hear,
> Like the wind in hollow valleys when the storm is drawing near,
> Like the rolling on of ocean in the eventide of fear?
> 'Tis the people marching on.[75]

As Elizabeth Helsinger points out, such a rhythm, whether "changed or sung [...] is designed to mobilize a potent physical and political power to move men" expressly by collectivizing them in a harmonics of presence.[76] Elsewhere, the acoustic power of words precedes, and engineers, the instrumentation of action: "Hear a word, a word in season, for the day is drawing nigh, / When

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advance. It could be read--and read publicly--by men of action and men of business as a mark of culture." See Thompson, *William Morris*, 145ff.

[75] "The March of the Workers," *Chants for Socialists*, Marxists.org https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1894/chants.htm#chap-5.

[76] See Elizabeth Helsinger, "Telling Time: Song's Rhythms in Morris's Late Work" in *To Build a Shadowy Isle of Bliss: Williams Morris's Radicalism and the Embodiment of Dreams*, Michelle Weinroth & Paul Leduc Browne, eds. (McGill-Queen's UP, 2015) 110.

the Cause shall call upon us, some to live, and some to die!"[77]

In Sigurd's case, "the Cause" is explicitly the search for great deeds and heroic action; implicitly, it is the inculcation of an activism that ruptures the standing world order and transcends the "acre-biding" of inherited wealth. When Sigurd asks of Regin what he expects him to accomplish ('Tell me, thou Master of Masters, what deed is the deed I shall do?'), Regin, the "Master of Sleight," responds: 'The deed is the righting of wrong, / And the quelling a bale and a sorrow that the world hath endured o'erlong, / And the winning a treasure untold, that shall make thee more than the kings..." Sigurd openly questions Regin's assurance that the treasure 'that thou seemest to give as thine own' is actually Regin's to give, to which the dwarf replies that 'it is mine, yet none of mine, / Since my heart herein avails not, and my hand is frail and fine.' Here we receive an ample instance of the separation of hand from craft, in what serves as an analogue for the division of labor. Regin's hand, "frail and fine," has been softened, rather than hardened, by the displacement of his multiple artisanal masteries from any unifying force. Regin's despondency is evidenced by a lack of desire or ambition for action or activism ("my heart...avails not"), and it is the dwarf's dependency on the activism of others which dilutes his mastery into a mere aesthetic production of wares and objects that he himself cannot implement. A "deedless man," Regin crafts the sword which only Sigurd can put to use.

Propelled by Regin's account of an ancient hoard of gold guarded by Fafnir the dragon (who also happens to be Regin's brother), Sigurd undertakes a hero's journey to kill Fafnir and recover the hoard, which includes the cursed, yet coveted, Ring of Andvari, rumored to turn anything it touches to gold. Regin accompanies Sigurd on the journey, but after Sigurd vanquishes the dragon, drinks its blood, and eats its heart, Sigurd gains the power to understand

[77] "All for the Cause," *Chants for Socialists*, Marxists.org https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1894/chants.htm#chap-4.

"the speech of fowl" and the "ways of the beast-kind." Through his heightened senses he learns that Regin secretly plans to kill him and take the Ring of Andvari. Sigurd promptly responds by killing Regin in his sleep. Voyaging onward, Sigurd eventually encounters and rescues Brynhild, a daughter of Odin, from a column of fire on the slopes of Hindfell. After giving her the Ring of Andvari, Sigurd and Brynhild pledge themselves to each other and Book II ends.

In reading Book II of *Sigurd* as a buried allegory for the effects of industrial capitalism on the handicrafts, it is important to recall here that Morris's approach to the Volsunga Saga is one tinctured by, first, an enlarged technical sense of what it means to run a workshop and small business, as well as what it means to acquire new skill-sets and craft knowledge (dye-making, pattern-designing, etc.). And, second, as a work on the threshold of Morris's eventual embrace of outright political activism, *Sigurd* evinces subterranean currents of a gestating political outrage for the damage industrial capitalism continues to wreak on Victorian culture. During Regin's account of the arrival of the Asgardian gods and their subjugation of the dwarves, Morris allegorizes the Asgardian gods as the wealthy industrialist class, and the dwarves are the proletariat who no longer labor at leisure but are forced by the factory system to toil at crafting endless wares. Regin's father, Reidmar, is seduced by the boundless gold he earns through the Asgardians' capitalist scheme, and he in effect becomes what Morris calls the on-site "sleeping partner," or complicit middle manager, of industrial-capitalist structuration. Reidmar's "golden glorious house," moreover, resembles Morris's "true palace of industry" in the lecture-essay, "A Factory As It Might Be" (1884), in which "every factory… sustain[s] a palace… stuffed… with all sorts of costly things" and seems to exist "for one member of the factory only, the sleeping partner—useful creature!"[78]

[78] William Morris, *SW*, 648-9.

Rather than give his sons a healthy diversity of work, Reidmar limits them to technical specializations, and Regin is reduced to the monotony of joyless craft, given no "gift for the slaying of ease" save that of "the toil that each dawning quickens and the task that is never done; / And the heart that longeth ever, nor will look to the deed that is won."[79] In Asgard's new world order, the division of labor is allegorized by the assembling of the different "crafts" (leech-craft, weapon-craft, ship-craft, etc.), and the split between hand and craft results in what Morris elsewhere calls "toil," the ruinous monotony of unnecessary or "worthless" work, the "mere toiling to live, that we may live to toil."[80] Regin "toils and toils," gaining nothing but "writhen and foul hands," while his father's palace-factory grows in size and wealth:

> 'So dwelt we, brethren and father; and Fafnir my brother fared
> As the scourge and compeller of all things, and left no wrong undared;
> But for me, I toiled and toiled; and fair grew my father's house;
> But writhen and foul were the hands that had made it glorious;
> And the love of women left me, and the fame of sword and shield:
> And the sun and the winds of heaven, and the fowl and the grass of the field
> Were grown as the tools of my smithy; and all the world I knew,
> And the glories that lie beyond it, and whitherward all things drew;
> And myself a little fragment admidst it all I saw,
> Grim, cold-heart, and unmighty as the tempest-driven straw.'[81]

Hand is severed from craft in a direct, non-allegorical way. What Regin makes with his hands bears little positive relation to the craft they employ, much less to the products they make; his hands worsen while the fruits of their craft grow, lining his father's house with wealth in a nonreciprocity. Regin's toil is essentially what Morris would designate useless (or unintelligent, unconscious) labor, one in which craft-automatism (or what I'm calling an internalized mastery of craft and medium) is made impossible by a destructive disjunction between hand and craft,

[79] *SV* 76, lines 2368-69.
[80] William Morris, "Useful Work versus Useless Toil," *HFASC,* 100.
[81] *SV* 76, lines 2378-87.

producing technical aphasia rather than an intuitive technical mentality.[82] In the 1884 lecture-essay, "Art and Socialism," Morris writes: "Grievous indeed it was, *that we could not keep both our hands full, that we were forced to spill from one while we gathered with the other*: yet to my mind it is more grievous still to be unconscious of the loss; or being dimly conscious of it to have to force ourselves to forget it and to cry out that all is well." This leads to the iniquitous belief that "creation is no longer a need of man's soul, *his right hand may forget its cunning*, and he be none the worse for it."[83] Here Morris recuperates the original understanding of craft as not merely technical ingenuity, but mental guile and cunning, except without the negative connotations of deceit or dishonesty.

The result of Reidmar's imposed division of labor brings about a division of (sentient, withered) hands from (unfeeling and ageless) craft. Regin is so degraded by constant toil that desire for love or fame leaves him, and his relation to the world is fundamentally alienated, in the Marxist sense, by a reduction of his social role to mere labor. Indeed, this lesson is almost directly taken by Morris from Ruskin's multiple injunctions against industrial factory-driven labor, as for instance in the oft-quoted descriptive passage from *The Nature of Gothic*: "The men who chop up the [glass] rods sit at their work all day, their hands vibrating with a perpetual and exquisitely timed palsy, and the beads dropping beneath their vibration like hail." The mechanical palsy that ruins the hands of these craftsmen is not, as Ruskin makes clear, the result

[82] Interestingly, William Blake dramatizes a similar tragedy in the splitting of hand from craft in the epic poem *Milton* (1804-1810). W.J.T. Mitchell writes, "An art which tried to eliminate 'Hand' and treat the material, historical world as an insubstantial vapor would, in Blake's view, be both impossible and irrelevant. He depicts Hand, therefore, as a figure of terrible beauty; the artist in this world, like the creator of the Tyger, must have a 'hand' that dares to 'seize the fire' and mold it into prophetic forms." See Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art: A Study of the Illuminated Poetry* (Princeton UP, 1978) 202-4.
[83] *SW*, 634-5 (emphases mine).

of a "labour that is divided" but of the men divided "into mere segments of men—broken into small fragments and crumbs of life…"[84]

In the next section I will explore how Morris resolves Regin's allegorical tragedy by conceiving of an individuation that occurs within the socio-cultural sphere as part of the socialist machine. In *The Pilgrims of Hope*, Morris confronts the dilemma of individuation by using the example of the Paris Commune as a "socialist machine" that allows for workers, craftspeople, and manufacturers to come together as incorporated beings who practice an automatism of craft that replenishes rather than exhausts.

II. Individuation and Incorporation in *The Pilgrims of Hope*

The composition of *The Pilgrims of Hope* is deeply imbricated with that of *Sigurd the Volsung*, since both are grounded in William Morris's first voyage to Iceland in the summer of 1871. At what might be considered the peak of the illicit affair between Jane Morris, his wife, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, his former mentor, Morris escaped from a ruptured domesticity into a recent obsession of his: the first-hand experience of Icelandic culture. His poem "Iceland First Seen" conveys the momentousness of this event and his longing for a fresh template of possibility, asking in apostrophe "what came we forth to see that our hearts are so hot with desire?" Morris sees in "the sight of this desolate strand, / And the mountain-waste voiceless as death" a paradoxical opportunity for rebirth and "the undying glory of dreams," a theme he would capture with relish in *Sigurd the Volsung*.

When Morris left for Iceland on July 9, 1871, boarding the *Diana*, an ex-gunboat, at

[84] John Ruskin, *Complete Works*, Vol. 10, 196-7; quoted in Elizabeth Helsinger, "Song's Rhythms in Morris's Late Work" in *To Build a Shadowy Isle of Bliss*, 114.

Edinburgh, the Paris Commune had been crushed only a few weeks earlier on May 18. Though E.P. Thompson remarks that Morris was strangely silent on this event while in Iceland, Jack Lindsay and J.M.S. Tompkins both observe that Morris did in fact remark on the Commune in two instances. The first is in an August 27, 1871 letter to Jane Morris, in which Morris writes that "the loose stones on the edge of a lava-field is like my idea of a half-ruined Paris barricade." The second refers to gunshots heard in the desolate craggy spaces of Iceland (some of Morris's travel companions were out hunting) as "a noise like the bombardment of a town." May Morris later clarifies that Morris had added "'of Paris'" in his notebook of the period. Tompkins writes that "it is plain from the readiness of the comparisons that he [Morris] had not put Paris out of his mind, while following in the tracks of Gunnar and Njal and Grettir."[85]

The incongruence of pursuing an ancient Norse saga with the Paris Commune as present-day background characterizes the peculiar anachronic nature of Morris's medieval modernism. Looking at *Sigurd the Volsung* and *The Pilgrims Of Hope* side-by-side brings out this tendency to great effect. This may be why G.D.H. Cole comments that Morris "could [not] have written *The Pilgrims of Hope* unless he had written *Sigurd the Volsung*." If *Sigurd* allegorizes the ruinous effects of the division of labor on the practice of handicraft, then *Pilgrims* restages the domestic drama of infidelity and the contradictions of small-business ownership as events absorbed and sublimated by the Paris Commune.

The alienation from labor depicted in *Sigurd* is reproduced but ultimately circumvented in the figuration of the Commune as a working model for an automatism of craft. I suggest that the image of the Commune affords Morris a way of transcending the frame of bourgeois individuality and it helps him reconfigure labor as a communal activity that extends personhood

[85] See J.M.S. Tompkins, *William Morris: An Approach to the Poetry* (C. Woolf, 1988) 235; and Jack Lindsay, *William Morris: His Life and Work* (Taplinger Pub. Co., 1979) xx

to the collective. Morris's retreat from the domestic into the austerity of Iceland represents to a great extent the sublimation of the bourgeois self in a ritualized communal existence. Such a scenario does not limn an escape from private history. Instead, Morris reconfigures the apparatus of social engagement by extending it from the private sector to the public sphere, and from the presumed frivolity of domestic space to the austere commons of labor-space.

The origin of *Pilgrims* is directly tied to the founding of *The Commonweal*, for which Morris served as editor and to which he contributed the first part of *Pilgrims*, "The Message of the March Wind," in the second issue in March 1885. The issue also contained contributions by Paul Lafargue (a surviving communard and son-in-law to Karl Marx), Friedrich Engels, Eleanor Marx-Aveling, and E. Belfort Bax.[86] "The Message of the March Wind" likely started life as a stand-alone poem.[87] It is written in the lyric mode of the seasonal interludes of *The Earthly Paradise*, an auspicious return to the autobiographical aspects of that earlier masterwork.[88] "March Wind" reignites the narrative desire for the utopic landscapes encountered in *The Earthly Paradise*, but this time we are thrust directly into the present state of things rather than some phantasmal medievalized past. Instead of asking the reader to "Forget six counties overhung with smoke" and "dream of London, small, and white, and clean" (as he did in the prologue to *The Earthly Paradise*[89]), Morris asks his reader to focus on the sprawling, "haggard and grim" reality of present-day London:

> Hark, the wind in the elm-boughs! From London it bloweth,
> And telling of gold, and of hope and unrest;
> Of power that helps not; of wisdom that knoweth,
> But teacheth not aught of the worst and the best.

[86] See Michael Holzman, "Propaganda, Passion, and Literary Art in William Morris's *The Pilgrims of Hope*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 24.4 (Winter 1982) 378.
[87] See Florence Boos, "Narrative Design in *The Pilgrims of Hope*" in *Socialism and the Literary Artistry of William Morris*, Florence S. Boos and Carole G. Silver, eds. (University of Missouri Press, 1990) 149-50.
[88] Michael Holzman, "Propaganda, Passion, and Literary Art," 377-8.
[89] William Morris, *SW*, 284.

[...]
Hark! the March wind again of a people is telling;
Of the life that they live there, so haggard and grim,
That if we and our love admidst them had been dwelling
My fondness had faltered, thy beauty grown dim.[90]

It is fitting to note here the poem's thematic link to my analysis of Book II of *Sigurd*: the cursed "gold" of industrial capitalism and the technical "wisdom that knoweth / But teacheth not" greatly resembles what Regin had practiced but never quite shared or enjoyed the fruits of. Beyond the theme, *Sigurd* and *Pilgrims* share similar metrical structures that Elizabeth Helsinger notes are "written for the most part in hexameter couplets whose unsounded extra beats install English popular ballad narrative as a ghostly echo within its epic narratives."[91] Though the couplet form is not appreciable in the quatrains quoted above, the hexameter couplet becomes operative starting in Part III of *Pilgrims*, published in the May 1885 issue of *The Commonweal*, by which time Morris had settled upon expanding the narrative vaguely alluded to in "March Wind" and in Part II, "The Bridge and the Street" (published April 1885). The "ghostly echo" of *Sigurd* (and Regin's failure) runs through *Pilgrims*, but there is a renewal of hope that the March Wind brings, not merely in terms of seasonal promise and fresh love, but in the promise of heroic action extracted from the mythic realm of *Sigurd* into everyday life and politics.

In opposition to the metropolitan practice of hoarding technocratic "wisdom," Morris makes a case for an ecological vision that incorporates the congested reality of faraway London laborers with the pastoral reality of the (in his eyes) more fortunate farmers, field workers, and country lovers, with whom the poem opens. This idealized contrast is in line with Raymond Williams's description of a "structure of feeling" predicated upon "the suppression of work in

[90] Wiliam Morris, *SW*, 356.
[91] Elizabeth Helsinger, "Song's Rhythms in Morris's Late Work," 117-8.

the countryside, and of the property relations through which this work is organised," in which "the means of agricultural production—the fields, the woods, the growing crops, the animals—are attractive to the observer," against which the contrasting image of "the exchanges and counting-houses of mercantilism, or… the mines, quarries, mills and manufactories of industrial production" are set in relief.[92]

Morris does not stray from the country/city trope, but he does build up an early appeal for what H.G. Wells would call "human ecology" and what Williams summarizes as "a new collective consciousness, scientific and social, which is capable of taking control of an environment in a total way and directing it to human achievement."[93] Morris's version of human ecology is one that finds reciprocity in the relations between city and country, between hand and craft, so that the overabundance of one is automatically linked to the impoverishment of the other.[94] Morris's entreaty is not so detailed or scientific, but the landscape offered by "March Wind" does not demonize London life only to valorize pastoral existence. Rather, Morris sees in the deplorable conditions of London life the dubious source for the amorous liberties of pastoral form. What is enjoyed in the country seems to be at the expense of what is endured in the city. Reciprocally, what is drawn up in the city detracts from the purity of country-life. There is no split in the relation of the city to the country when Morris wonders "that if we and our love admidst them had been dwelling / My fondness had faltered, thy beauty grown dim."

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[92] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford UP, 1975) 46.

[93] See H.G. Wells, *An Experiment in Autobiography: Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain* (J.B. Lippincott, 1967) 552-4; and Williams, *The Country and the City*, 274.

[94] This is in line with what Paul Leduc Browne argues about the utopic space Morris builds in *News from Nowhere*, in which "individuals are still bound by obligations to each other" in "a system of generalized reciprocity…" See Paul Leduc Browne, "Work, Freedom, and Reciprocity in William Morris's *News from Nowhere*," *Socialist Studies/Études socialistes* 13.1 (Spring 2018) 5-22.

The narrative of *Pilgrims of Hope* is fairly simple: two country lovers (of whom we learn only the name of the male half, Richard) are thrust into London urban life. This move to London is made possible by a sizable inheritance left by Richard's wealthy (it is insinuated, illegitimate) father. Richard and his wife are, however, left penniless when the lawyer in charge of Richard's inheritance unexpectedly dies, and the couple learn that he had embezzled all that remained of the inheritance. Richard and his wife, with an infant son to support, eventually take up hard labor. Richard grows dissatisfied with wage-labor, and he becomes alienated from the craftwork he had enjoyed as an amateur. Disenchanted with industrial capitalism, he is drawn into socialism, and becomes active in proselytizing the socialist message.

Richard's activities as a speaker at socialist meetings brings him into contact with Arthur, the third major character, an apparently well-off young man drawn to socialism. Richard, his wife, and Arthur become close-knit friends, but some friction arises in the spontaneous attraction that emerges between Arthur and Richard's wife. News of the Paris Commune arrives at the right time to defuse the tension growing between the three. Leaving their child with a caretaker, Richard and his wife travel to Paris with Arthur to join the communards. Arthur and Richard's wife do not survive the destruction of the Commune, but Richard manages to return safely to London to raise his son, with the hope that "the present" will now offer "the building of the man to be strong in me." In short, Richard returns from the Commune individuated as a newer, stronger man. But this individuation comes at great cost—the destruction of the Commune—and it seems to depend on a preliminary incorporation into the metropolitan public sphere.

In Part II, "The Bridge and the Street," for example, Morris describes flows, bodies, and faces in a confusing London scene:

> Like a flood flowed the faces, and faster and faster
> Went the drift of the feet of the hurrying throng.

> Till all these seemed but one thing, and we twain another,
> A thing frail and feeble and young and unknown;
> What sign mid all these to tell foeman from brother?
> What sign of the hope in our hearts that had grown?[95]

The "twain" are the lovers featured in "March Wind" (and who will be identified as Richard and his wife), and it is their isolation from the London throng that occasions an image of disjunction. We glimpse a London machine made of similar, even identical, parts, racing and blending without rhyme or reason, offering no solace to the lovers of a life made unique by hope and love. The dyad of the lovers is burdened by an internal crack, as of yet not visible, that threatens to split the lovers from each other, a split aggravated by their feeling of isolation from London life. Morris plays on the two senses of "twain" to capture the image, first, of the two lovers as one thing united and, second, of the lovers as two divisible units. The "twainhood" of the lovers is re-echoed in part III of Pilgrims, "Sending to the War," where the meter calls for an elongation of the already apparent ("we stood") to an extra foot ("we two we stood") that forecasts their individuation as an eventual separation:

> We two we stood in the street in the midst of a mighty crowd,
> The sound of its mingled murmur in the heavens above was loud,
> And earth was foul with its squalor--that stream of every day,
> The hurrying feet of labour, the faces worn and grey[96]

Labor's hurrying feet effaces the resonance of actual labor. London laborers perform labor hurriedly, making only "toys of rich men's folly, by blinded labour made," but with no visible or spiritual effect lasting to themselves or to the world encountered by the observant lovers. So, London is alienated, the lovers are alienated from London while in its midst, and the lovers are

[95] William Morris, *SW*, 358.
[96] William Morris, *SW*, 361.

potentially at risk of becoming alienated from their own twainhood. This dilemma forms the essential crux of the poem: how does the private life of two lovers reconcile itself to the public life of the community, or more generally, how do the two (lovers, citizens) become one (union, commune)?

For Morris, the politics of socialism brought these problems to a satisfying resolution within the recontextualization of labor as what Kristin Ross defines (borrowing a phrase from the Communards themselves) as "communal luxury."[97] Ross quotes Morris to this effect, who writes in "The Hopes of Civilization" (written in 1885, the same year as *Pilgrims of Hope*), that the Commune of Paris of 1871 was "an attempt to establish society on the basis of the freedom of labour," and that despite the failure of the Commune to survive its moment, "we may be sure that the results of the Commune will not stop there."[98] Morris's *Pilgrims* is an open effort to lyricize the "hope and ardour" which the "heroic attempt" of the Communards brought to the present out of a past no longer mythic and unreachable but pragmatic and working-class. To this effect, the very recent occurrence of the Paris Commune gives Morris some historical iterability in the selection of heroic subjects and action. He no longer has to look backward toward Norse saga or a medieval past to balladize heroic action because heroic action has been brought down to the scale of labor, handicraft, and the practice of everyday life.[99] As E.P. Thompson observes of *Pilgrims*, "Morris discloses the heroic in the everyday events of the revolutionary propaganda, and in the Commune."[100]

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[97] Kristin Ross, *Communal Luxury* (Verso, 2015) 7.
[98] William Morris, *HFASC*, 74.
[99] This would be as much a spatial practice of "walking in the city" (or in the case of the Commune, walking along the barricade) as it is redirecting the restrictive task-oriented time of the office or factory space through the technique of "*la perruque*," that is, "diverting time from the factory to work that is free, creative, and precisely not directed toward profit." See Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall (University of California Press, 1988) 29-42, 91-110.
[100] E.P. Thompson, *William Morris*, 672.

Ross explains that the Paris Commune was emblematic for Morris and many socialist thinkers as an experiment in "a kind of polytechnic formation designed to overcome the division between manual and intellectual labor… regardless of class and gender."[101] This equally organic and machinic formation reintegrated practices taken from Fourier's *phalanstères,* which not only blended classes and genders together but also organic processes with machinic efficiency, with some of the emphasis Morris placed on a technical mentality that connected lesser to higher arts. As Walter Benjamin, describing Fourier's *phalanstères*, would theorize, the "highly complicated organization of the phalanstery appears as machinery" in which the "meshing of the passions, the intricate collaboration of *passions mécanistes* with the *passion cabaliste*" is a "primeval wish symbol that Fourier's utopia has filled with new life." Benjamin's theory of the "wish image" approximates closely to Morris's own medieval utopianism in that "the collective seeks [through the wish image] to both overcome and to transfigure the immaturity of the social product and the inadequacies in the social organization of production. [...] These tendencies deflect the imagination...back upon the primal past."[102]

For Morris's socialist narratives, such as in *A Dream of John Ball* and *News from Nowhere*, the distant past and the distant future come to cyclically represent each other as dual wish images of a collectivized "land of milk and honey" where human actors are in sync with labor and leisure as a single self-regenerating activity because "the phalanstery is designed to restore human beings to relationships in which morality becomes superfluous" and a series of (Fourierist) automatisms stand in for emotional content. Elizabeth Helsinger makes a similar argument of Morris's uses of prosodic rhythm to mobilize bodies in a communal form. She

[101] Ross, *Communal Luxury*, 42.
[102] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2002) 4-5.

argues that rhythm in poems like *Pilgrims* "becomes not just the power to unite minds with bodies in the fullness of presence" but it "can set the self in ordered motion with others—can carry us across the boundaries of individual consciousness to create a third entity, as yet not fully imaginable…"[103]

In Morris's eyes, such a form of communal synchronicity represented a combination of the organic with the machinic, insofar as pastoral desire, intrinsic to the country-born lovers, comes to the aid of the crude earth-and-stone barricades of the Commune. The Commune was an almost entirely spontaneous structure which had to, paradoxically, function with the precision and durability of machinic heterogeneity to withstand the greater "war machine" of the Parisian bureaucratic apparatus. Morris, writing on "How We Live and How We Might Live" (1884), stresses this very point:

> I have said war was the life-breath of the profit-makers; in like manner, *combination is the life of the workers*. The working-classes or proletariat cannot even exist as a class without combination of some sort. The necessity which forced the profit-grinders to collect their men first into workshops working by the division of labor, and next into great factories worked by machinery, and so gradually to draw them into the great towns and centres of civilization, gave birth to a distinct working-class or proletariat: and this it was which gave them their *mechanical* existence, so to say. But note, that they are indeed combined into social groups for the production of wares, but only as yet mechanically.[104]

Morris's remembrance of the Paris Commune through lyrical monumentalization, evidenced in the balladic metre employed by *Pilgrims*, assigns to the Commune a narratorial richness previously enjoyed by mythic tales like *Sigurd* and the *Volsunga Saga*. But Morris's celebration of the Commune also encloses the insertion of his autobiography. We do not realize how much

[103] Elizabeth Helsinger, *Poetry and the Thought of Song in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (University of Virginia Press, 2015) 118.
[104] William Morris, *HFASC*, 11.

of Morris is prismed in the narrative of *Pilgrims* until much later. The poem progresses, as it were, in a development that stages an awakening to form and self-realization. Indeed, Morris keeps building upon his narrative, eventually giving names to his characters as if he were in the process of realizing them in the act of writing. The experimental quasi-autobiographical nature of *Pilgrims* may have been what led Morris to hesitate in publishing it in book form outside its first run in *The Commonweal*, since he considered the work as a whole imperfect and had tentatively planned to revise it at some point.[105]

On some level, *Pilgrims* is a poem about individuation.[106] The narrative's tentative development and late but climactic discharge in the figure of the Commune tracks the footsteps of Morris's own path into socialism. More significantly, the splitting and doubling of Morris's socialist and aestheticist modes are reflected in the strange disjunctive temporalities of the narrative and in the othering of Morris's own life. If Morris's earliest and most straightforward involvement in the political forum was his October 24, 1876 letter to the *Daily News* that cast aspersions on the imperialist role of England in the massacre of the Bulgarians by the Turks,[107] then it is this moment in his biography that informs the atmospherics of Part III of *Pilgrims*, "Sending to the War." Richard and his wife are confronted with a jingoistic military parade that

[105] See E.P. Thompson, *William Morris*, 670-1; Holzman, "Propaganda, Passion, and Literary Art"; and Florence Boos, "Narrative Design in *The Pilgrims of Hope*," 149ff.

[106] Interestingly, John Goode says much the same about Book II of *Sigurd the Volsung*: "…we move from the saga of the heroic community to the romance hero, and thus the second book is chiefly concerned with the dynamics of individuation." *Pilgrims*, I suggest, is a similar passage, but in reverse: from the (failed) romantic hero to the (successful) heroic community, this time in the figure of the Commune. See preceding section, and Goode, "William Morris and the Dream of Revolution," *Literature and Politics in the Nineteenth Century*, John Lucas ed. (Methuen & Co., 1971) 241.

[107] William Morris, *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, Vol. 1, ed. Norman Kelvin (Princeton UP, 1984) 323-6.

exacerbates and highlights the poverty, unemployment, and general dissatisfaction of the London people it courses by.[108]

Morris's coded self-appearance in Part V of *Pilgrims*, "New Birth," has even more intentional design. The character of Richard borrows some biographical detail from Morris's own life. Like Morris, Richard's father was "a rich man" who was prudent enough to bequeath his family a sizable inheritance as well as his share in stocks upon his premature death, enabling Morris to go to Oxford: "Then a lawyer paid me money, and I lived awhile at a school, / And learned the lore of the ancients, and how the knave and the fool / Have been mostly the masters of earth…"[109] Morris's subsequent belittlement of his Oxford education, and his praise of a technical education in the lesser arts, resonate in these lines. But not all of Morris's biography maps neatly onto Richard's childhood. Morris was not, like Richard, born out of wedlock, and though Morris's childhood home at Walthamstow had some rural linings, he was by no means a farmhand or country lad.

The refraction of Morris into different selves intensifies when Richard, already carrying some biographical appurtenance from Morris's life, meets what seems to be Morris himself, a "grizzled man...dressed in shabby blue" who speaks Richard's language because, verily, they are reflections of the same man: "But his words were my very thoughts." Morris knowingly doubles himself here with some communal design in mind: he is reproducible as a figure that imparts a socializing idea which is to be heard by "many a million of men." As a depersonalized vehicle of thought, Morris seems both to diminish and extend his persona by displacing his own figurality

[108] Morris describes the scene as one in which workmen and their tools and wares are the only recognizably civilized element in an ostentatious display of "our country's might": "But why are they gathered together? What is this crowd in the street? / This is a holiday morning, though here and there we meet / The hurrying tradesman's broadcloth, or the workman's basket of tools" (*SW* 362).
[109] William Morris, *SW*, 369-70.

among the poem's characters.[110] The Commune is already presaged in this doubling of figure and activism. Such a refraction speaks to the virtues of individuation as a transmedial enactment of multiple agencies (poet, designer, activist, etc.) that seek an extended autonomy through labor and craft techniques which can be communally learned and imparted.

In this respect, Morris's socialist instinct is to streamline the interpersonal by dispersing his own recognizable distinct qualities among "many a million of men," or into what Paolo Virno describes as the *multitude*. Virno's notion of the multitude is that of a mass that does not flow, centripetally, into one from the many, but rather centrifugally, from a notion of individual autonomy driven into machinic heterogeneity, or what might be described as the sensation of "finding a fit" within an apparatus that preserves the dynamism of the many.[111] Joel Nickels, writing on the work of Laura Riding, utilizes Virno's concept of the multitude to imagine "a social utopia in which political order would be 'spontaneously generated within the social substance' of 'civically located' groups. One of the new roles of artists in this society would be to serve as guarantors of this collective spontaneity, fostering an 'instantaneous sympathy of communication' between different social elements."[112] Morris's cameo in the scene above serves this role precisely, but also paradoxically, through techniques of de/re-personalization and narratorial distancing. Morris recognizes himself in the eyes of others (who in turn recognize themselves in him) and they each share his hopes and fears for a new social order.

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[110] Morris seemed to be well aware of how he was perceived by others. Rossetti, for instance, enjoyed parodying Morris's "thickset and short" figure in a series of private caricatures. Morris was also fond of wearing "shabby" blue serge shirts nearly everywhere he went, in the unassuming manner of workmen and laborers. See MacCarthy, *William Morris*.

[111] Virno writes, "The people are the result of a centripetal movement: from atomized individuals, to the unity of the 'body politic,' to sovereignty. The extreme outcome of this centripetal movement is the One. The multitude, on the other hand, is the outcome of a centrifugal movement: from the One to the Many." See Virno, *The Grammar of the Multitude*, trans. Isabella Bertoletti, et al. (Semiotext[e], 2004) 42.

[112] Joel Nickels, *The Poetry of the Possible: Spontaneity, Modernism, and the Multitude* (University of Minnesota Press, 2012) 4.

The technique of distantiation which occurs in *Pilgrims* is useful for a variety of reasons. Morris depersonalizes elements of bourgeois domesticity and privatized selfhood in favor of a re-personalized communal existence, or what I would call an "incorporation" into communal order. This is the gist of what I am suggesting in Morris's drama of individuation and incorporation in *Pilgrims*: he conceives of a process of individuation which is both a learning of automatisms that suture labor and pleasure to each other, and an unlearning of bourgeois notions of the private self in favor of communal incorporation. This notion gives a positive slant on what Thomas Carlyle had described as the necessity to "make interest with some existing corporation" in order to survive the age of machinery.

Morris, in speaking of a medieval guild system that could usefully instruct the socialist cause, uses Carlyle's own terminology:

> All these guilds aimed at freeing the individual from the domination and protection of the feudal lord, and substituting for that domination the authority and mutual protection of the associated guild-brethren; or to put it in another way *the object was to free labour from the power of individual members of the feudal hierarchy, and to supplant their authority by that of corporations*, which should themselves be recognized as members of that hierarchy, out of which indeed the medieval mind could not step.[113]

Morris's meaning of "corporations" is, of course, pointing toward the modern formation of labor unions and syndicalism, but Morris's understanding of individuation (e.g. "freeing the individual") remains dependent on a concept of labor inextricable from sensations of pleasure, a pleasure conflated with the joy of fellowship. But we must return to Morris's concept of labor, and how it is exemplified in *Pilgrims*, to begin to understand how it forms the basis for socialist order.

[113] William Morris, "Art and Labour" in *The Unpublished Lectures of William Morris*, Eugene D. Lemire, ed. (Wayne State UP, 1969) 103 (my emphasis).

In part VI of *Pilgrims*, "The New Proletarian," Morris describes the transition Richard makes from an aesthetic proletarian (one who works, as Morris had worked, for pleasure, knowledge, and self-fulfillment) to a wage-labor proletarian (one who works strictly for sustenance), due to misfortune and the havoc caused by capitalist-bureaucratic scheming. Morris cannot resist another stroke of semi-autobiography, poking fun at himself yet again, as "gentleman Dick" working among the dyemakers, for instance, in Leek:

> When I worked pretty much for my pleasure I really worked with a will,
> It was well and workmanlike done, and my fellows knew my skill,
> And deemed me one of themselves though they called me gentleman Dick,
> Since they knew I had some money; but now that to work I must stick,
> Or fall into utter ruin, there's something gone, I find;
> The work goes, cleared is the job, but there's something left behind;
> I take up fear with my chisel, fear lies 'twixt me and my plane,
> And I wake in the merry morning to a new unwonted pain.[114]

Working for pleasure equates to "work[ing] with a will," which would not normally equate to automatism, if we understand the will to be a conscious endeavor. But Morris's form of automatism is one that posits technical craft as the accumulation of non-automatic forms in a pleasure which becomes automatic through this very internalization. It is an understanding contained in what Morris had remarked that "if a chap can't compose an epic poem while he's weaving tapestry he had better shut up." This is a certain kind of mastery that can switch rather than specialize, a mastery defined by transitions and feedback. Such a mastery is modeled on communal forms, insofar as mastery is achieved through multiplicity and code-switching instead of singularity or specialization. We have seen in *Sigurd* how craft for Morris represents an intrinsically collaborative aspect, and when craft is severed from this manual bond with others, tragic implications occur.

[114] William Morris, *SW*, 376.

Such is the case of poor Richard, who, like Regin, endures a capitalist alienation that removes him from the intrinsic joys of labor into the extrinsic pains of working for others rather than for himself. "Fear" is wedged in between Richard and his chisel because labor has been contaminated by capital. Richard's exit from the gentlemanly life has at least one significant benefit: he and his wife are made fully codependent and equal in their new situation: "My wife is my servant, and I am the servant of my wife, / And we make no work for each other." Parity in sex, gender, and matrimony produces an equanimity of force that sets the stage for communal equality, even if, problematically, the wife remains nameless throughout *Pilgrims*.

This was one Marxist characteristic in Morris's personal life that he stuck to: he allowed for Jane to live her own private life and "make no work" for him, only for herself. His respect for her private life speaks volumes about the complicated position he maintained regarding Rossetti's and Jane's dalliances and his views on love and marriage in general. Much has been written about the depiction of the love triangle which motivates the central dramatic kernel of *Pilgrims*.[115] The love triangle in *Pilgrims* is provoked by the insertion of a third major character, Arthur (whose name we don't learn until Part X), who befriends Richard and his wife in part IX, "A New Friend." Soon enough Arthur begins to visit Richard and his family at home, and eventually Arthur and Richard's wife feel an attraction for each other, in spite of their reservations, but Richard notices. On one of their nights together, discussing the current events of the 1870 Revolution and the fall of the Second French Empire, Richard uses the word "betrayed" (to describe those left behind in Paris in the aftermath), which elicits a reaction from his wife and from Arthur:

[115] For example, see Philip Henderson, *William Morris: His Life, Work, and Friends* (Longmans, Green, 1952); Jack Lindsay, *William Morris: His Life and Work* (Taplinger Pub.Co., 1979); Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris*, 150-200; and Florence Boos, "Unprintable Lyrics: The Unpublished Poems of William Morris," *Victorian Poetry* 53.2 (Summer 2015) 193-225.

> As I spoke the word 'betrayed,' my eyes met his in a glance,
> And swiftly he turned away; then back with a steady gaze
> He turned on me; and it seemed as when a sword-point plays
> Round the sword in a battle's beginning and the coming on of strife.
> For I knew though he looked on me, he saw not me, but my wife…[116]

Already Morris transposes some medievalist imagery that evokes the love triangle between King Arthur, Launcelot, and Guenevere which inspired his earliest lyrics.[117] Significantly, the historical frame of the conversation between the three (the 1870 revolution) becomes contaminated by the personal frame of the three as individuals. In both scenarios, Richard is left out: he neither participates in the news event in Paris nor was he cognizant of the possible love affair carried on behind his back by his wife and Arthur. Historical cataclysm is reflected by personal tragedy, and the feeling of betrayal emanates from both situations.

I suggest that Richard's position of outsider in the two spheres, historical and personal, is what Morris seems to frame as the crux of the problem. Richard is inactive as a participant on the stage of history and in his own love-life. More importantly, the "private sector" of emotional life seems to overtake and sabotage the social potential of labor and activism to build connections and enact communal emotions. The moment Richard feels left out of his wife's and Arthur's mutual interest is the very moment he gives in to feelings of jealousy and personal injury, feelings which Morris may have considered as overly proprietary and problematic. This returns us to the original problem set up by the poem in the first part, in the double sense of "twainhood" (two as one, two as two): how does the private life of two lovers reconcile itself to the public life

[116] William Morris, *SW,* 394.

[117] Morris had previously dramatized the infidelity and trial of Guenevere in the poem "The Defense of Guenevere" (*SW* 411). Besides this fictional love triangle and his own troubles with the philandering Rossetti, Morris may also have had in mind a third tortured love triangle in Edward Burne-Jones, Georgiana Burne-Jones, and model-muse Maria Zambaco. Morris's close friendship with Georgiana was likely deepened by their similar plights as injured lovers. See Florence Boos, "Unprintable Lyrics," 193-5.

of the community, or more generally, how do the two (lovers, citizens) become one (union, commune)? Arthur's insertion brings up a second question: how is this problem complicated by the insertion of a third party who threatens to derail communal feelings of twainhood into a "coming on of strife" and a permanent sense of separation? Where do feelings of jealousy, self-integrity, and ownership disrupt the potential for communal luxury?

Michael Holzman notes that one cannot avoid the fact that "the triangle described in *The Pilgrims of Hope* as taking place in a fictional 1870 is the literary equivalent of the Rossetti-Morris triangle that actually occurred at that time."[118] While Morris almost certainly did not intend for *Pilgrims* to read as a cipher for his own personal life, there are enough resemblances between poem and biography as to suggest a channeling of personal reflections and tribulations. The insertion of the love triangle is yet another autobiographical flourish that touches upon its source but never presses too hard. Its use in the *Pilgrims* narrative is one designed, as Michael Holzman observes, to "lead from the individual emotions of the lover to collective, political goals." This is in line with Florence Boos's assertion that "Morris sought, in effect, an antipode to his anomie and emotional isolation" in either a "counterfactual northern past" (such as we glimpsed in *Sigurd the Volsung*) or in a "'socialistic religion [that] would be that higher form of conscience'" which "'impels us to actions on behalf of a future of the race...'" [119] In *Socialism From the Root Up,* Morris and E. Balfort Bax expatiate on the evolution and strengths of "socialistic religion," among which are, tellingly, the dissolution of proprietary feeling in contractual marriage.[120]

Contained in Morris's vision of socialist marriage is the refusal to reduce love to a

[118] Michael Holzman, "Propaganda, Passion, and Literary Art," 388.
[119] Florence Boos, "Unprintable Lyrics," 209.
[120] Quoted in Boos, "Narrative Design in *The Pilgrims of Hope*" in *Socialism and the Literary Artistry of William Morris,* Florence S. Boos and Carole G. Silver, eds. (University of Missouri Press, 1990) 165.

proprietary or contractual relation, a belief that quite probably informed his open, if difficult, feelings concerning what seemed to him the loss of Jane's amorous affections for him.[121] In *Pilgrims*, the resolution to Richard's (and, by proxy, Morris's) feelings of jealousy and abandonment is brought about by the insertion of the historical into the personal or, more specifically, the arrival of the Commune as a model for a communal existence that allows for "the dissolution of one tie and the forming of another." In the case of the love triangle in *Pilgrims*, the dissolution of Richard's ties to his wife leads toward a communal luxury for all. Richard and Arthur must, however, meet each other as equals in love, in the same manner that Richard and his wife had also become equals in labor:

> And it was in the London twilight and the February gloom,
> When there came a knock, and he [Arthur] entered all pale, though bright were his eyes,
> And I knew that something had happened, and my heart to my mouth did arise.
> 'It is over,' he said '-- and beginning; for Paris has fallen at last,
> And who knows what next shall happen after all that has happened and passed?
> There now may we all be wanted.' I took up the word: 'Well then
> Let us go, we three together, and there to die like men.'
> 'Nay,' he said, 'to live and be happy like men.' Then he flushed up red,
> And she no less as she hearkened, as one thought through their bodies sped.
> Then I reached out my hand unto him, and I kissed her once on the brow…[122]

Arthur's correction "to live and be happy like men" resides in his faith in the labor which communal life promises them, but his words betray him and Richard's wife, since pleasure is here conflated with the presence of their illicit love. Richard's response to the unintentional betrayal of their desire is, fittingly, to extend his hand to them, not only in the form of

[121] Boos writes that "another familiar tenet of the 'socialistic religion' that Morris tried sincerely to live was the injunction [...] that marriage be based on 'mutual inclination and affection, an association terminable at the will of either party. It is easy to see how great the gain would be to morality and sentiment in this change...There would be no vestige of reprobation weighing on the dissolution of one tie and the forming of another'" (Boos, "Narrative Design in *The Pilgrims of Hope*," 165).
[122] William Morris, *SW*, 395.

polyamorous comradeship, but more importantly, in the form of manual sympathy, as workers of the world, as craftsmen in the same workshop. It is in the Commune where the three become united in the pleasures of craft-based existence, an automatism of labor that transcends the grossness of personal desire and ambition:

> Yea, fair were those hours indeed, whatever hereafter might come,
> And they swept over all my sorrow, and all thought of my wildered home.
> But not for dreams of rejoicing had we come across the sea:
> That day we delivered the letters that our friends had given to me,
> And we craved for some work for the cause. And what work was there indeed,
> But to learn the business of battle and the manner of dying at need?[123]

Morris cannot resist assigning to communal life the same Walter Scott-like glorification he attributes to medieval battle and "dying at need." Of the three, only Richard's wife is given a clear role: "But as for my wife, the brancard of the ambulance-women she wore, / And gently and bravely would serve us; and to all as a sister to be-- / A sister amidst of the strangers—and, alas! a sister to me."[124] Communal labor (as either soldier or ambulance) has diminished Richard's earlier sorrow, but it has also reduced his wife's relation to him to that of comrade and sister.

Ultimately, Arthur and Richard's wife perish side-by-side during the final days of the Commune, leaving a lasting image to those who did not know them, ironically, of a married couple: "...but thereafter as they lay / Both dead on one litter together, then folk who knew not us, / But were moved by seeing the twain so fair and so piteous, / Took them for husband and wife who were fated there to die, / Or, it may be lover and lover indeed—but what know I?"[125] Richard survives the final days of the Commune, and returns home to England to recover and

[123] William Morris, *SW*, 400.
[124] William Morris, *SW*, 401.
[125] William Morris, *SW*, 408.

"look to my son," leaving the twain of the lovers behind, while re-forming the twainhood of him and his son, who represents the hope of the future: "And the present, it is but the building of the man to be strong in me."

Morris never develops an image of the Commune beyond the most generalizable terms, hardly an outline of its logistics and machinery, because he did not have the opportunity to experience and participate in it. One can only wonder if he would have journeyed to participate in the Commune had his belated awakening to the socialist cause occurred earlier. Perhaps *Pilgrims* represents the fantasy of having done so. Morris was, as we know, in Iceland when the impact of the Commune's destruction reached him. But this remains important, beyond the evident historical connections *Sigurd* has with *Pilgrims*.[126] The dream-passage to Iceland/the Commune becomes a realism, a tangible materiality in the social sphere, when labor encounters it as an object "real, solid and at hand," one which can be touched and passed on as a thing worked upon.[127]

Such a communal realism is made possible by shared "joy and the satisfaction of need" with the Communards. The "toil that fear hath bidden, and the folly of master and lord," are extinguished by a machinic relationality within the public space of the Commune, in which labor becomes a diversified space and none have masters since all embody a level of mastery. Such a concept of labor relates to Virno's assertion that "labor requires a publicly organized 'space' and resembles a virtuosic performance (without end product). This publicly organized space is called

[126] Regin the dwarf seems to reappear in *Pilgrims*, this time disguised in the historical personage of Adolphe Thiers, in Part XI of *Pilgrims*: "In Paris the day of days had betid; for the vile dwarf's stroke, / To madden Paris and crush her, had been struck and the dull sword broke" (*SW*, 399).

[127] Iceland's bold template of possibility ("Ah! what came we forth for to see that our hearts are so hot with desire? / Is it enough for our rest…?") is re-echoed in the confrontation with the Paris Commune in Book XI of *Pilgrims*: "I say that I saw it now, real, solid and at hand. / And strange how my heart went back to our little nook of the land, / And how plain and clear I saw it, as though I longed indeed / To give it a share of the joy and the satisfaction of need / That here in the folk I beheld" (*SW*, 399).

'cooperation' by Marx."[128] As Kristin Ross points out, Marx's "cooperation" (and Kropotkin's "mutual aid") are designated "fellowship" by Morris, a social apparatus that works to produce newly awakened subjects capable of self-regulation.[129]

In the virtuosic space of the Commune, it is the labor of speech which animates and drives forward the Communards contra the "war machine" of unproductive, bureaucratic-bourgeois culture. In the space of the poem, this is evident in the animating force that speech holds for Richard hearing the blue-serge-wearing Morris speak, and for Arthur when he hears Richard reiterate the same message. In the meta-space of the poem, *Pilgrims* enacts this very role in the performativity of Morris's self-insertion into the historical scene of the Paris Commune. Strikingly, *Pilgrims* feels unfinished, incomplete, and open to revision and collaboration, a monument to the Commune's simultaneous failure and inspiration.[130]

Virno describes virtuosity as an "activity which requires the presence of others, which exists only in the presence of an audience."[131] The figurality of the Commune fits in with Morris's lyric enunciations, whether in *Sigurd* or in *Pilgrims*, since both works enact a recovery of virtuosity as its own value. In both cases, virtuosity depends on a public or commons, a utopic space that challenges and motivates communal desire. But Virno is also borrowing from Marx's specialized understanding of virtuosity as the technical automatisms of craft-based knowledge. For Morris, Marxist virtuosity was the "art of unconscious intelligence," the automatisms of craft that drive away proprietary emotions but also fulfill the desire for communal incorporation.

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[128] Paolo Virno, *The Grammar of the Multitude*, 54.
[129] Kristin Ross, *Communal Luxury*, 60-65.
[130] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri remark that among the "'errors'"of the Communards was the dissolution "of the central committee of the Commune" and "putting decision-making immediately in the hands of the people," factors which continue to simultaneously generate communal emotion and perplex the desire for strong leadership. See Hardt and Negri, *Assembly* (Oxford UP, 2017) 3-14.
[131] Paolo Virno, *The Grammar of the Multitude*, 51.

Intriguingly, the final line of *Pilgrims* places hope in a new craft-driven proletariat in "the building of the man,"[132] which I interpret in two ways: "the building of the man" is the learning of craft automatisms that produce an ethics of labor and action. But the building of the man is also the hope in the next generation, literally embodied in the reproduction of children ("I came to look to my son…"). As the next chapter will examine, the shift from automatisms of craft to (biological and aesthetic) reproduction created new obstacles and problems that coincided with the pivot from a Victorian avant-garde to literary modernism.

[132] William Morris, *SW*, 408

CHAPTER 2
MINA LOY AND THE AUTOMATISMS OF REPRODUCTION

Writing to Mabel Dodge in 1914, Mina Loy sent along a draft of a text titled "Feminist Manifesto," which Loy described as an "absolute resubstantiation of the feminist question." The political atmosphere in Florence at the time was very tense, with news of war already commencing, and questions regarding a woman's role in and around the war effort were being provocatively asked. Feminists, sexologists, and suffragists like Margaret Sanger, Marie Stopes, and Stella Browne were asking what a woman's position beyond that of "mother" and "wife" could be if they were to be deprived of the kind of agency men ordinarily appropriate and conduct during periods of war? Having learned of Sanger's writings through Dodge, Loy was curious to know if Dodge, who Loy considered the most "evolved" woman she knew, had "any idea in what direction the sex must be shoved--psychologically I mean?"[1] The manifesto, written in the style of the futurist texts Loy was directly in contact with, calls for the demolition of the "two classes" of "**the mistress, & the mother**" to which women are routinely reduced to by patriarchal society. Loy believed that it was only through the "unconditional surgical destruction of virginity through-out the female population at puberty--" that women would be able to attain "a right to maternity" in which

> Every woman of superior intelligence should realize her race-responsibility, in producing children in adequate proportion to the unfit or degenerate members of her sex-- Each child of a superior woman should be the result of a definite period of psychic development in her life-- [...] For the harmony of the race, each individual should be the expression of an easy & ample interpenetration of the male and female temperaments--[2]

[1] Carolyn Burke, *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy* (FSG, 1996) 179.
[2] Mina Loy, *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ed. Roger L. Conover (FSG, 1996) 155. Hereafter *LLB II*.

Loy's emphasis on "race-responsibility" and racial "harmony" is a troubling one that seems to invoke some of the eugenicist ideas espoused by the futurists and by some of the sexological thinkers of the time, namely Havelock Ellis, Dora Marsden, and Margaret Sanger, all of whom Loy mentions in her correspondence.[3] Common to all these thinkers was a recasting of biological reproduction as utopian social program. Sharing in their racist language, Loy's manifesto attempts to synthesize these views into a bracing avant-garde program that disrupts the gender binary by, paradoxically, reinscribing sexual difference as the platform for revolutionary self-awareness and spiritual evolution.

Critiquing the "**Inadequate**" state of the feminist movement, the manifesto denigrates the feminist call to equality with men as "pathetic clap-trap," and instead advises women to transcend their reduction to either "**Parasitism, & Prostitution**" by recognizing that "Men & women are enemies" and can only "merge" in the "sexual embrace." This view would be adopted in many of Loy's early poems, one of which describes an "Evolution fall foul of / Sexual equality" that "Prettily miscalculate[s] / Similitude."[4] In such moments, Loy seems to reject sexual equality based on a commitment to a gender binary structured on the premise of a woman's exclusive ability to *reproduce*--not only other human beings but her sense of subjecthood as well. In other words, Loy suggests that the false choice between marital subservience or prostitution is canceled out by sexual difference and procreative power when women have begun to realize their "race-responsibility," presumably as eugenicist mothers who instinctually pursue evolutionary prestige.

[3] See Paul Peppis, "Rewriting Sex: Mina Loy, Marie Stopes, and Sexology," *Modernism/Modernity* 9.4 (Nov. 2002) 561-79; and Rachel Blau DuPlessis, "'Seismic Orgasm': Sexual Intercourse and Narrative Meaning in Mina Loy" in *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet* (National Poetry Corner, 1998) 45-74.
[4] *LLB II*, 65.

Indeed, only a few months prior to her letter to Dodge, Loy's first ever published work, "Aphorisms on Futurism" (in Alfred Stieglitz's *Camera Work*), denigrates the "mechanical re-actions of the subconsciousness, that rubbish heap of race-tradition—" in which "your least conception is colored by the pigment of retrograde superstitions."[5] While it may be disingenuous to align "race-tradition" and "colored by the pigment of [the] retrograde" with Loy's pronouncements on maternity and "race-responsibility," these cultural associations posit a problematic (white) feminism that seems to undermine its own position when brushing up against the contemporaneous attitude toward the reproduction of race and ethnicity, one which Sanger would echo in declaring that the "most urgent problem of today is how to limit and discourage the over-fertility of the mentally and physically defective."[6] What Loy calls "mechanical re-actions" constitute what I call "automatisms" of the unconscious, such as were recently theorized by William James, Sigmund Freud, and the modernist turn to psychology: the repeated motor gestures, unanalyzed thoughts, and repetitive character and "racial" traits that were being documented and narrativized by artists, psychoanalysts, and behaviorists alike.

For Loy, as I will argue, gendered and racialized automatisms generated a significant challenge to thinking through questions of aesthetic subjectivity and female agency. For many scholars, the crux of Loy's early feminist thought acquires a particular difficulty when considering the implications of her eugenicist and racist ideas, parts of which continued to manifest throughout her career. How do Loy's feminist concerns find coherence within a futurist paradigm that virulently maligned and ridiculed feminist rights, even as she borrowed troubling forms of speech and dialectical ideas from the futurists? Similarly, how does Loy's racial

[5] *LLB II*, 152.
[6] Margaret Sanger, "The Eugenic Value of Birth Control Propaganda," *Birth Control Review* (Oct. 1921) 5 <Margaret Sanger Microfilm S70:913>.

thinking, which attempted to account for contemporary versions of eugenics and racism, square with a self-labeled "mongrelization" as a half white English, half Hungarian-Jewish woman? In both its feminism and self-racialization, Loy's work plays at the intersection of these difficult questions, and her manifestos and poems offer complicated, but aesthetically provocative, solutions to the dual question of human and aesthetic reproduction.

This chapter argues that Loy's poetry, artwork, and writings powerfully document the feminist avant-garde response to the previous century's transition from automatisms of industrial production to automatisms of behavioral and psychological reproduction, in which the avant-garde responded to the discoveries of psychoanalysis by formulating strategies of self-production. Very often these strategies became racialized and gendered in what Wyndham Lewis, Loy's contemporary, described as the conflictual notions of race and sex in twentieth century identity formation, what Lewis calls the "piecemealing of the personality": "So women were thenceforth one *race* and men another *race.* The idea of race substituted itself for that of sex. But where there are *races* there are *wars*."[7] Seeking to confront and untangle some of these complex, charged interconnections, this chapter will examine the intersection of the sexual politics of reproduction in Loy's work.

I will read Loy's work through the lens of psychological automatism, a belief Loy held that human behavior and cognition depend on "mechanical re-actions" that instinctually seek spiritual-evolutionary improvement through aesthetic production and biological reproduction. I argue that the base conservatism of Loy's racist and sexual thought becomes understandable through reading automatism as a theory of reproduction that Loy embraced, interrogated, and reassembled. Taking apart the male-centric avant-garde's conviction that it must "make it new,"

[7] Wyndham Lewis, *The Art of Being Ruled* (Black Sparrow Press, 1989) p. 203 (emphasis in the original).

Loy insisted that the avant-garde's masculinism tended to reproduce the same. But it is through a critique of the *reproduction of the same* that Loy, paradoxically, based an entire literary style. Psychological automatism--which in her lifetime evolved into surrealist automatism--provided Loy with the means to montage together the mechanical aspects of human personality with the spiritual belief that the automatisms of human behavior could still evolve toward sexually-open and racially-hybridic states of subjecthood. An intersectional reading of Loy's work under the lens of automatism thus provides a useful hermeneutic for untangling the knot of racist and feminist associations that compound Loy's (proto-)second-wave feminism, her deconstructive mashup of Victorian aestheticism and avant-garde experimentation, and her dynamic interdisciplinary work across mediums and forms.

In the first section, I look at Loy's poems and prose-writings that deal either implicitly or explicitly with automatism. Loy's evolution from a painter of late-Victorian mannerism to a radical modernist poet becomes traceable through her appropriation of futurist formats. I argue that Loy's peculiar feminism was nourished through a steady contact with the masculinism of futurist polemic. While the futurists proselytized that human reproduction needed to be substituted by machinic reproduction, in the sense that the romantic sublime was to be replaced by the cold beauty of machine guns and automobiles, Loy satirized this masculinist desire as envy of female reproductive power. I argue that Loy subverted futurist masculinism by identifying and mocking the automaton-nature of the male-centric avant-garde, even as she tacitly agreed with the notion that reproduction was predominantly a female concern based on deeply conservative ideas of biological determinism. If women were "destined" to give birth to other humans, Loy still subscribed to the belief that women everywhere had to spiritually evolve themselves first (that is, give birth to themselves as modern subjectivities) before becoming

actual mothers of (presumably) racially-evolved beings. As troubling as these notions are, they are key to comprehending how Loy's conservative views would paradoxically lead toward radical forms of literary experimentation.

In the second section, I conclude with a look at Loy's posthumously published novel, *Insel*, in which she dramatizes her late career as an art dealer, agent, and confidante of surrealist artists while living in Paris during the 1930s. I argue that *Insel* functions as an implicit critique of surrealism and its problematic dedication to automatism and automatic writing. By casting a harsh light on the surrealist fetishization of women as mere muses and "communicating vessels," Loy disassembles the practice of automatism and unveils it as an ideological machine for masculinist fantasies regarding aesthetic self-production and biological reproduction. But instead of abandoning automatism altogether, Loy reclaims surrealist automatism for her own purposes, and I read *Insel* as a document that repurposes automatism into an evolutionary principle for spiritual redintegration, telepathy, and new forms of life.

I. "Human Cylinders": The Sexual Politics of Automatism

1914 was a pivotal year for Mina Loy, a period that she called her "*risorgimento*." Stranded in Florence to tend to her two children, Joella and Giles, while her impecunious husband, Stephen Haweis, was traveling on a feckless trip *à la Gauguin* to the South Seas, Loy felt emotionally and culturally isolated in a picturesque city that still seemed to function as an antique relic in light of the modernist espades her wealthier friends, Mabel Dodge and Gertrude Stein, were engaged in, in New York and Paris, respectively. It was not until Loy began to rent out her husband's art studio to Frances Simpson Stevens, a young U.S. American artist who would be one of the few expatriates working under the Futurism tag, that Loy came into contact

with Giovanni Papini and his circle. Papini was a polemicist and philosopher, whose journal, *Lacerba* (1913-15), functioned as a literary outlet for the Florentine branch of futurists. Since Stevens had traveled to Florence with the express purpose of studying futurist art, Loy found herself in the position of accompanying the much younger Stevens (only twenty-two at the time) to events and gatherings populated largely by male artists and writers. Loy's encounters with the futurists proved to be an enduring episode in her aesthetic education, particularly at a time that she wished to extricate herself not only from a loveless marriage to Haweis but also from the antiquated Victorian aestheticism that Haweis, an artist-photographer, represented for her.[8]

Eventually Loy became so involved in the futurist circle that some of her paintings and drawings (which she had submitted with some regularity to annual exhibitions like the Salon d'Automne[9]) began to be showcased as British examples of futurist aesthetics.[10] The artworks proceeded from the education Loy had when she studied at various art schools in London, Munich, and Paris during her youth,[11] but Loy personally felt that she had not gone "beyond

[8] Haweis is mocked as "Esau Penfold" in Loy's verse epic, "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose," a Victorian aesthete who gained minor fame as a photographer (rather than as an original artist) of works by artists like Auguste Rodin and Eugène Carrière. Surprisingly, Haweis was deeply inspired by Gertrude Stein's work when he and Loy met the Stein circle (Leo, Gertrude, and Alice B. Toklas) in Florence in 1910, and Carolyn Burke suggests that Haweis' trip to the South Seas was in part instigated by Stein's demanding work and his exposure, through her, to Paul Gauguin, Post-Impressionism, and the "New Movement in Art." Despite these motivations, Haweis never achieved the degree of modernity (nor productivity) his considerably more talented wife would. See Burke, *Becoming Modern*, pp. 134ff

[9] Before becoming a poet, Loy was a practicing visual artist who, starting in 1905, frequently submitted works to the Salon d'Automne, the same year when Fauvism arose as a movement in the works of Henri Matisse, Andre Derain, and others who made their mark there. If, as Mark Antliff remarks, particular aspects of Fauvism "defined feminine creative capacities as synonymous with those found in nature, thereby denying women the power to realize the creative potential in spheres of cultural production," then it is noteworthy to remark that one of Loy's submissions in 1906, an oil painting titled *L'amour dorloté par les belles femmes*, seemed to reverse the gendered formula of the sexualized, aestheticized female nude (often surrounded by clothed men) with a portrayal of a naked male figure surrounded by fashionably clothed women. See Mark Antliff, *Inventing Bergson* (Princeton UP, 1993), pp. 67ff

[10] Loy's invitation to and participation at the First Free Futurist International Exhibition in Rome in the spring of 1914 was made possible due to three portraits she made of F.T. Marinetti, which were called "dynamisms," in league with Frances Stevens' paintings, Dynamism of a Market, Dynamism of Pistons, and Typographic Simultaneity. See Burke, *Becoming Modern*, pp. 164-66.

[11] In London, Loy's parents installed Mina at the St. John's Wood School, a school with "solid connections with the Royal Academy schools," where she learned to draw from classical models; in Munich, Loy was placed in the Kunstlerinnenverien, where she was exposed to the *Jugendstil* and practiced the "applied arts" of embroidery and lamp and furniture design; and in Paris, Loy studied at the Academie Colarossi, where she practiced studio painting

Post-Impressionism" and felt stagnant as a visual artist. It was not until her encounter with F.T. Marinetti, however, that Loy shifted mediums and started to write and publish her first major poems. Marinetti's manifestos, particularly *The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism* (1909), the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature* (1912), and *Destruction of Syntax—Untrammeled Imagination—Words in Freedom* (1913), exposed Loy to the possibilities of textual experimentation and literary form, and their boisterous innovation inspired the stylistic choices of Loy's own manifestos, for instance, in the underlined and bold-faced phrases of the "Feminist Manifesto" or in the use of single-line declaratives in "Aphorisms on Futurism." Indeed, Loy was grateful to Marinetti for the rude awakening he gave her and expressed how "indebted" she was "to M. for twenty years added to my life from mere contact with his exuberant vitality."[12]

The encounter with Marinetti sparked a sudden and prolific output in Loy that spawned the first poems she was to publish, all of which appeared in a flurry in 1914: "Café du Néant," her first ever poem to be published (in August 1914[13]), which formed part of a triptych titled "Three Moments in Paris" (published later in May 1915); "Parturition," a poem about childbirth (published October 1914); "Italian Pictures," another triptych of scenes in and around Florence (published November 1914); and "Sketch of a Man on a Platform" and "Virgins Minus Curtains Plus Dots," both composed during autumn/winter 1914, but published in *Rogue* in 1915. Along with the manifestos and an unpublished play, *The Sacred Prostitute* (composed in late 1914), these poems frame the first half of Loy's futurist phase, during which she developed some of the recurring themes and formal components of a thoroughly unprecedented poetic style.

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and drew from live models. However scattershot Loy's art training may have been, the breadth of her studies was formidable, and it encompassed the major styles and transitions that prompted the switch from nineteenth-century aestheticism to modernist avant-garde experimentation. See Burke, *Becoming Modern*, pp. 36-46, 54-57, 71-78.

[12] Burke, *Becoming Modern*, 180.

[13] Published "out-of-suite" in *International: A Review of Two Worlds* 8:8 (p. 245), the poem was Loy's first appearance in print as a poet, although several poems that would be published later were composed earlier (Conover, *LLB II*, 178).

But Loy was never, nor could she have stayed, an orthodox futurist. For one thing, Marinetti's and Papini's misogynistic screeds seemed to offer no place for Loy as a working artist. Marinetti's universal call for "scorn for women" and a "fight against […] feminism,"[14] and Papini's "hysterical call for the suppression of women"[15] seemed to invalidate Loy's own place in their ranks. Moreover, the two factions, Milanese (Marinetti) and Florentine (Papini), could not agree with each other from all the internal frictions the ostentatious nature of futurist polemic placed them in. Indeed, the antagonistics of Papini's bellicose "anti-philosophy" at times clashed with Marinetti's desire to "kill the moonlight," and they each drove Loy toward satirizing the inconsistencies and contradictions of futurist ideology. If Marinetti's *The Exploiters of Futurism* (published in April 1914) demanded "THE SYSTEMATIC DEMOLITION OF AN EXCESSIVE ADHERENCE TO THE PAST,"[16] Loy satirized this expression in the "Feminist Manifesto," a position that openly challenged the futurist adherence to the mistress/mother binary that undergirded their attacks on women and "sentimentalism." Loy seemed to prescribe such "surgical" destruction ironically, while taking evident joy in declaring herself one of the "exploiters of Futurism" Marinetti excoriated in his speeches.

Although Marinetti claimed to combat "erotomania" in favor of a "semi-equality between man and woman, and less of an imbalance in their social rights,"[17] Loy noted the futurist obsession with male parthenogenesis and procreation as a species of male "womb envy." In *Mafarka the Futurist*, a novel published in 1910, Marinetti fantasizes about bypassing "the animal worth of women" and "creating and giving birth to my son, a gigantic, invincible bird"

[14] F.T. Marinetti, *Critical Writings*, ed. Gunter Berghaus, trans. Doug Thompson (FSG, 2006) 14.
[15] Burke, *Becoming Modern*, 166.
[16] Marinetti, *Critical Writings*, 178.
[17] Marinetti, *Critical Writings*, 105, 121.

carved "with my own hands."[18] Loy satirizes this desire in two poems, "Parturition" and "One O'Clock at Night." The former, a poem that Roger L. Conover describes as "the putative first poem ever written about the physical experience of childbirth from the parturient woman's point of view,"[19] opens with a scene of pain: "I am the centre / Of a circle of pain / Exceeding its boundaries in every direction". Loy's emphasis on the "I" that opens the poem mocks Marinetti's insistence to "**eradicate the 'I,'** which means all psychology" in literature.[20]

Loy's images of becoming an "I" through the intense, unquantifiable pain of parturition, in which she seems to give birth not only to a child but to a new physical, ego-expanding sentience, indicates the value of a woman's "right to maternity" (in the "Feminist Manifesto") as a source of literary subjecthood. Loy repeats the first-person "I" several times in the poem ("I am the false quantity / In the harmony of physiological potentiality"), each time questioning how the "I" can be "emptied of life" while "Giving life / For consciousness in crises races / Through the subliminal deposits of evolutionary processes."[21] Loy asks how the "Negation of myself as a unit" can somehow birth entire "races": "I am absorbed / Into / The was--is--ever--shall--be / Of cosmic reproductivity."[22] What Loy calls "cosmic reproductivity" indicates the beginnings of her "racial" thinking, in both senses of the term: a woman's singular ability to produce the *human race* as a whole, in every child, and also a woman's capacity to prefigure new *cosmic races* that hybridize and collage spiritual elements together into psychologized, self-racializing identities.

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[18] Marinetti, *Critical Writings*, 32, 34.
[19] Loy, *LLB II*, 177, n. 2; see also Virginia Kouidis, *Mina Loy: American Modernist Poet* (Louisiana State UP, 1980); and Carolyn Burke, "The New Poetry and the New Woman: Mina Loy," in *Coming to Light: American Woman Poets of the Twentieth Century* (University of Michigan Press, 1985) 37-57
[20] Marinetti, *Critical Writings*, 110.
[21] *LLB II*, 6.
[22] *LLB II*, 7.

At some level, Loy was directly answering some of Marinetti's calls for getting "rid of this obsessive 'I'" by abandoning "the habit of humanizing nature" through anthropomorphism.[23] Yet, in the poem "One O'Clock at Night" (which comprises the first section of "Three Moments in Paris"), Loy catches Marinetti in his contradictions and mocks his reduction of women to "animal worth," a crude zoomorphism that does not extend to women the privilege men enjoy in reproducing themselves. Recalling a moment when Marinetti's "indisputable male voice roared / Through my brain and my body / Arguing dynamic decomposition," Loy is awakened from sleep (and boredom) during one of Marinetti's "Deafening" private harangues with a fellow male futurist. She catches "the thread of the argument / Immediately assuming my personal mental attitude / And ceased to be a woman." Slyly mocking Marinetti's insistence that women can only be biological creatures who reproduce other men, Loy attempts to return to the "Beautiful half-hour of being a mere woman / The animal woman / Understanding nothing of man / But mastery," a status she parodies through a distanced view of her own complicity.[24] In this respect, Loy perceives a crude automatism in Marinetti's incessant phallocentrism, which she reads as disguising a fear of women and an automatic inclination to diminish their status.

Loy's aggressive adoption of, and awakening to, an "I" before and after parturition, or before and after Marinetti's deafening gutturals, rejects the grotesque zoomorphic status Marinetti attributes to women and reproductive power. Loy perceives in the Futurist obsession with masculine self-reproduction a narcissism that betrays the type of "I"-obsessed subjecthood Futurism supposedly refutes. In the poem "Giovanni Franchi" (composed ca. May-July 1915, published in *Rogue* in October 1916), Loy mocks the desire of "Giovanni Bapini" (Giovanni Papini) for male followers who would reproduce not only his ideas but his likeness as well.

[23] Marinetti, *Critical Writings,* 125-6.
[24] *LLB II,* 15.

"Franchi," an acolyte of Bapini's, "Looked [...] as nearly as he could as the / philosopher [Bapini] looked."[25] Loy ironizes Bapini's and Franchi's (and Bapini's and Papini's) absurd self-copying through a satirical contrapuntal image of "threewomen who walked / In the same dress" and "Skipped parallel / To the progress / Of Giovanni Franchi." Loy describes the women's indiscriminate union in a sardonic way that emphasizes how futurist sexism tends to portray women as nameless assemblages of "tubular" features that "rely on [...] instincts" rather than on any conscious intellection. These supposedly feminine "instincts" (or what Marinetti described as a woman's "animal worth") "sniff" in a bestial way, indicating a crass fidelity to patriarchal order that in turn reveals that order's refusal to embody itself in similar terms:

> The threewomen was composed of three instincts
> Each sniffing divergently directed draughts
> The first instinct first again may
> renascent gods save us from the enigmatic
> penetralia of Firstness
> Was to be faithful to a man first[26]

The repetition of "first" and "Firstness" redirects the attention to the automatisms of gender heteronormativity, in which women are automatically (that is, "instinctually") expected to "be faithful to a man first," and whose second instinct is "to be loyal to herself," but "She would have to find which self first." A woman's subjectivity, beholden to a male gaze that standardizes her features into "threewomen" (or *all women*), somehow has to negotiate the narrow path between virginity and sexual reproduction by skirting "the enigmatic / penetralia of Firstness." Loy decodes this aspect of "Firstness" as the male obsession for being "the first" in both amorous and aesthetic relations. If women are reduced to virgins or mothers, men are

[25] *LLB II,* 28.
[26] *LLB II,* 27-8.

always seeking to be the first to define women as either of these muse-objects. The same fetishization extends to the masculinist avant-garde's obsession with "Firstness" in the arts, one in which the negative or inverse capital of cultural precedence trades in the currency of "originality" and "genius".[27]

Jessica Burstein, writing on this poem, calls this the enigma of being "virginal" while still reproducing, and maintaining, the male gaze. Burstein notes that the poem's "critique of the logic of the copy," embodied in Franchi's flattening of the threewomen, dissects how Futurism "privileges the exceptional" even as it fails to take stock of its own reproducibility.[28] In a comic moment, Loy describes a "third instinct" which seeks "to find out how many toes the / philosopher Giovanni Bapini had first," an oddly specific and minute facticity that eludes not only the threewomen (who have not attained subjectivity under the male gaze) but also the male acolyte Franchi, a "semieffigy" who "Knew no more how many toes---- / Than

Giovanni Bapini knew himself."[29] Loy exposes how clueless the futurists are as to "how many toes" they have (they are too abstract), and the poem mocks their hypocritical rejection of abstraction. Bapini and his male copies are too obsessed with physicalized power and localized violence to render abstraction an intelligible phenomenon. Seen under Loy's gaze, Marinetti's excoriation of anthropomorphism and his dream of "one day being able to create our own mechanical son"[30] does not cohere with a sexism that insists upon sexual difference as a

[27] I'm citing here Rosalind Krauss's argument that the presumed "originality of the avant-garde" was actually a careful, nearly automatic reproduction of the "grid" that fashions iterations of the cult of authentic (implicitly male) "genius." My version of this argument is that Mina Loy and other female avant-gardistes parodied the masculinist "grid" as a subpar, self-deluded imitation of the female "matrix" that, as Monique Wittig, Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, Judith Butler, Diana Taylor, and others have argued, produces difference, hybridity, and gender performativity rather than any stable construction of gender or sexual difference. See Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde* (MIT Press, 1986).
[28] Jessica Burstein, *Cold Modernism: Literature, Fashion, Art* (Penn State UP, 2012) 157-9.
[29] *LLB II*, 32.
[30] Marinetti, *Critical Writings*, 59.

hierarchical economy of reproductive energies. Marinetti's dogmatic recantation of the "I" somehow fails to suppress the desire for more copies of one's masculine self.

In *The Sacred Prostitute*, an unpublished play written in 1914, Loy gives us the most straightforward mockery of futurist self-delusion. The first stage character is "Some Other Man," while other characters, as indiscriminate in their pronouncements as the next, are described one after the other as "The Idealist," "A Man," and "Another Man." One of the nameless men, insisting that "Woman must exist," just as quickly asks, "is it possible she belongs to somebody else?" – implying this "somebody else" not as "another man," but as possibly other women. A "Tea-Table Man" confesses that the masculinist code which enjoins men to be both civilized and "aboriginal" leads to a "double personality," a code-switching that Loy activates in the character of "Futurism," the collective persona of Marinetti, Papini, and other futurists. Brutalizing the figure of "Love" while in the presence of men, Futurism turns soft and seductive as soon as no men are in sight, asking Love to forgive him: "I have to do that for the sake of my reputation."

The rest of the play functions as an allegorical dramatization of the "sex war" between Futurism and Love, in which Futurism chastises sentimental *passéist* ("pastist") attitudes toward women and woos Love through aggressive sexualization: "Love *must* be atrociously carnal -- will you be atrociously carnal—?" Yet Futurism contradicts its own positioning through confessional self-pity: "...in reality, I have an infinite need of tenderness. Will you be *very* tender to me?"[31] As Janet Lyon notes, "*The Sacred Prostitute* highlights Italian Futurism's elisions of 'impersonal' aesthetic values and personal sexual politics," suggesting that Futurism's "bourgeois foundations" reproduce the very same Victorian gender politics and sentimental

[31] Loy, *Stories and Essays*, ed. Sara Crangle (Dalkey Archive Press, 2011) 188-215. Hereafter *SE*.

amorism that it supposedly rails against.[32] What men like Marinetti and Papini disguise in mimetic copies of themselves was not ideological polemic but rather psychological confession of gendered automatisms, a belief in the intrinsic nature of the sexes. Loy, in her depictions of their studied prevarication, sought to psychologize the motivations for the deceit that programmed their aesthetic code.

My argument here is that Loy's "reproductions" of Futurist polemic perform the kind of "gender subversion" that Judith Butler attributes to certain acts of gender performance and imitation. For Loy, skewering the masculinist desire for self-reproduction, and uncovering the hypocrisy of gendering female artists and muses as reproductive vehicles of male desire, accomplishes the work of appropriation and parodic subversion. Loy's mimesis of the logic of the male copy produces what Butler calls a "copy [...] subversive of heterosexual hegemony" that "mime[s] and displace[s] its conventions."[33] Nevertheless, Loy's subversive mimicry is a complicated one that mimes and displaces, even as it accedes to specific types of avant-garde power normally coded as male. In the writings of her Florentine period, Loy continued to insist on sexual difference as a platform for revolutionary change, and the issue of eugenics and racialization is one that cannot be avoided in the literary treatment of child-bearing, parturition, and motherhood, especially by a female poet unafraid to anatomize sex in all its fleshy complexion.

Multiple examples can be glimpsed in "Songs to Joannes," the poem sequence (completed in 1917) that symbolically terminated her Florentine period and transitioned to what might be regarded a new phase in her poetic career after the First World War. Published in

[32] Janet Lyon, "Mina Loy's Pregnant Pauses: The Space of Possibility in the Florence Writings," in *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet*, eds. Maeera Schreiber and Keith Tuma (National Poetry Foundation, 1998) 397.
[33] Kotz and Butler, "The Body You Want: Liz Kotz Interviews Judith Butler," *Artforum* (November 1992) 82-89.

Alfred Kreymborg's inaugural issue of *Others* (1915), the first four sections of the poem imagine "an unimaginable family / Bird-like abortions / With human throats" that emerge from "suspect places." Sexually explicit, the poem narrates erotic desire, intercourse, conception, and abortion as a kind of repetition of reproductive tragedy, one in which the "sex war" is staged as a failure of (racial, sexual) otherness, and conception as a failure of true unison. What does persist, and endure, however, is the lyric space opened up by sexual joy and "seismic orgasm." John Wilkinson calls this sequence "a poetry of space, perhaps of an inner space within which entities coexist, and one single entity may split into positive and negative part-objects."[34] Rachel Blau DuPlessis notes that the poem's interest in orgasmic experience seeks to determine to what extent female subjectivity parts with or draws from sexual heteronormative experience as a source of subjecthood distinct from that of male experience.[35] In both cases, sexual difference precedes and stages orgasmic unity, but only to the extent that male "parts" and female "parts" posit a machinic theory of the human subject as a kind of piecemealed sexual *automaton*, a crass flesh-machine that only becomes unified during intercourse in a part-to-part relation.

I insist however that Loy's poem (and the figure of "Joannes," based on Giovanni Franchi, but just as likely based on a superimposition of multiple lovers) views love and sex as aesthetically fructuous but amorously sterile conjunctions, largely due to the compulsions of futurist sexuality for self-absorption and otherizing women. While Futurism did not, of course, represent the conventional sexual attitudes of its day, Loy perceived in Futurism a solution to the Victorian sexual mores that she had been raised with. But even in Futurism's risqué attachment to carnality and aggression, the same sexist dualisms from the previous century persisted. This

[34] Wilkinson, "Stumbling, Balking, Tacking: Robert Creeley's *For Love* and Mina Loy's 'Love Songs to Joannes'" in *The Salt Companion to Mina Loy*, eds. Rachel Potter and Suzanne Hobson (Salt, 2010) 158.
[35] DuPlessis, "'Seismic Orgasm': Sexual Intercourse and Narrative Meaning in Mina Loy" in *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet* (National Poetry Foundation, 1998).

can be seen in Loy's critique of Futurism's contradictory and "wanton duality" that conforms to no definitive shape or program:

> The skin-sack
> In which a wanton duality
> Packed
> All the completion of my infructuous impulses
> Something the shape of a man
> To the casual vulgarity of the merely observant
> More of a clock-work mechanism
> Running down against time[36]

That reproduction seems to lead only to the rote production of more men, "something the shape of a man," prefigures the automatism already latent in male-centric procreation: why make more men, if they continue to emerge as automatons ("clock-work mechanism") who repeat habits and gender conventions already marked with an expiration date and necessitating even more "mass production"? Sexual joy may be explosive and exciting, but procreation is *repetitive*. It is hard not to read the "skin-sack" and its "wanton duality" as the male genitalia, even if the alternate, safer reading—the human body as coarse automaton founded upon a male-female binary—already describes the sources for sexual difference, one to which Loy's "infructuous impulses" drive her. That Loy brings attention to this problematic injunction is part of her critique: "Unnatural selection / breed[s] such sons and daughters / As shall jibber at each other," an evolutionary grotesque that prolongs the "sex war." Under the patriarchal aegis, sexual reproduction leads toward a perennial reproduction of sexist tropes and automaton men.

It is at this point that Loy's thinking transitions and evolves: the psychological automatisms that she exposed in futurist masculinism (and by extension, avant-garde paternalism) helped to delimit a new theory of human productivity. In two undated poems

[36] *LLB II,* 54.

unpublished in her lifetime, Mina Loy describes the human brain as an "Automatic / disc-server / ceaselessly / sabotaging / my choice / of selections," while in a poem titled "Evolution," Loy describes how "evolution's / exasperation of nervous systems / sharpens our wits, / expedites our improvement – "[37] In other words, although the human mind functions according to an automatism that seems to lock up autonomous reflexes, evolution plays a part in "exasperating" organic form into something less organic and more technologically driven: a better automatism that "sharpens our wits" in ways that determine future behavior.

In some of Loy's unpublished "Notes on Existence," she describes "Our apparent person" as one which "remains a changeless mannequin, arranged by accident" through evolutionary process. Loy's description of the brain's automatism can be attributed to the cinema culture of the time, one in which the movie theater's "silent somnambulant world" lulls the brain into an automatism that only breaks when it is time to leave the theater: "the automaton, halted by the heavy bolts on the street door, awakens."[38] It is useful to read Loy's automatism as a double bind: on the one hand, automatism lulls the mind into susceptible behaviors that accept the spectacle of art and cinema in a passive state; on the other hand, automatism functions as an evolutionary principle that improves the human organism in its responsiveness to life, through a feedback loop that automatic responses make possible. So, Loy's suggestion that the "automaton [...] awakens" can be read in two distinct ways: the automaton wakes up and ceases to be an automaton once an obstacle comes in its way, or the automaton wakes up and takes control of its own mind once the cinematic spectacle (aesthetic experience as such) has finished and the everydayness of life assumes command of daily functions.

[37] Mina Loy, *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, ed. Roger L. Conover (Jargon Society, 1982) 256-7. Hereafter, *LLB I*.
[38] *LLB I*, 312.

Two of Loy's most famous poems from her futurist years provide the fullest realization of the automaton-view of human nature. In "Sketch of a Man on a Platform" (published in *Rogue* in 1915), Loy describes an automaton-man (probably Marinetti) whose "genius" lies "So much less in your brain / Than in your body," since "it is equally happy expressing itself / Through the activity of pushing / THINGS / In the opposite direction / To that which they are lethargically willing to go."[39] Interestingly, the automaton-nature of the futurist, innately and even *automatically* contrarian, persuades the automatisms of other people, like "THINGS," to go in an "opposite direction" as if by force rather than intellect. Loy openly mocks Marinetti's belief that he manipulates the opinions of other people to run contrary to their own inclinations, but Loy's poem, as Roger Conover suggests, satirizes this belief by reducing Marinetti "to an amusing spectacle—Marinetti as marionette."[40]

That same year in 1915, Loy composed another poem, "Human Cylinders," which would be among the poems Ezra Pound would comment upon in his ascription of "logopoeia" to Loy's (and Marianne Moore's) poetry in Alfred Kreymborg 1917 *Others* anthology.[41] Pound very likely had Loy's line in mind ("...frenzied reaching-out of intellect to intellect") when he defines "logopoeia" as the "dance of the intelligence among words," but Loy's meaning has less joyous implications. Describing "Simplifications of men / In the enervating dusk," Loy remarks that their "indistinctness / Serves me the core of the kernel of you," a glimpse enough to imagine something beyond the mere sexual embrace of "human cylinders" who "Revolv[e] in the enervating dust" and "wra[p] each closer in the mystery / Of singularity."[42] The cylindrical people are in effect automatons who are sexually driven toward each other for reproductive

[39] *LLB II*, 19-20.
[40] *LLB II*, 181, n. 5.
[41] Pound, *Selected Prose: 1909-1965* (New Directions, 1973) 424.
[42] *LLB II*, 40.

purposes, but Loy imagines herself, along with an unnamed partner, as eager for a sexual embrace without the reductive need for procreation:

> And at least two of us
> Loved a very little
> Without seeking
> To know if our two miseries
> In the lucid rush-together of automatons
> Could form one opulent well-being[43]

The poem's aural qualities play upon tricks of automaticity, for instance, in the automatic desire to re-hear "mysteries" in "our two miseries," or later, in the mistaking of "enervating dust" for "enervating dusk," which fools the mind into hearing what it wants to hear. At some level, these aural tricks comment upon the false replication of meaning and the alternation between positive and negative counters (e.g. "miseries" instead of "mysteries," "dust" instead of "dusk"). Reproduction may be only a trick of the mind, one which depends on psychological automatisms that reduce sex to fixed gender roles, and the human body to reproductive machinery. Loy avers that underneath the biological determinism of reproductive desire there may only be an "abyss" or "Absence of corresponding between the verbal sensory / And reciprocity / Of conception /And Expression."[44]

Despite the seeming emptiness of repetitive procreation and the automata it creates, Loy senses an opportunity in automatism. In an unpublished early story from her futurist years in Florence, "Pazzarella" (c. 1912-13), Loy describes an "incubus of desire who attaches herself to the male with all her impertinent passion for reproduction, unable to attain her ends unaided."[45] The story concerns an amorous relationship between a woman named Pazzarella ("mad woman"

[43] *LLB II,* 40.
[44] *LLB II,* 40.
[45] *SE,* 78.

in Italian) and a man named Geronimo, who more or less stands in for a hybrid of Marinetti/Papini. Most of the story takes place over a series of conversations and trysts between the lovers, in which the intellectual Geronimo contemptuously rejects the ordinariness of lovemaking and resists Pazzarella's entreaties for conjugal love and procreative desire. In one section, Pazzarella writes a letter to Geronimo, declaring that she "couldn't care less about Futurism. The child the future needs is the child of the two of us."[46]

In an interesting reversal, Loy writes the story from the "futurist" first-person perspective of Geronimo, inhabiting the male outlook, and she parodies masculinist ideas of female behavior. In effect, Loy masters the gendered automatisms that over-determine the unconscious prejudices of futurist intellectuals through a satirical mimesis of their thought patterns. Loy concludes the story with a chilling reduction of Pazzarella to an automaton who has succumbed to Geronimo's "male intellect that reduces me [Pazzarella] to an absurdity."[47] During a final confrontation between the two "enemies," Pazzarella pleads with Geronimo to "come over *on my side*," and see what her status as woman looks like from her end:

> 'Geronimo, I could describe it to you only you are over there on the *opposite* side. You can see nothing of how it appears from over here. I am in possession of a secret truth. Fate commands me to reveal it to you. I will tell you. LISTEN! Geronimo— Woman—'[48]

Before Pazzarella reveals this sphinx-like secret, Geronimo interrupts her: "'I am your secret. Now lie in peace.'" Geronimo's misogyny goes so far as to hijack Pazzarella's planned reveal, and this action not only subverts Pazzarella's attempt to reveal the "secret truth" that binds women and men together, but it effectively nullifies the last trace of her autonomy. Pazzarella,

[46] *SE*, 77-8.
[47] *SE*, 83.
[48] *SE*, 90-1.

negated for the last time, "let[s] her head drop on the pillow," and a "shadow spread across her face, enhancing in beauty the last spark of life I had extinguished with my negations."[49] Geronimo's futurist campaign to negate Pazzarella, and "woman" as such, out of existence seems, at first, to have succeeded.

But Loy leaves the last laugh for Pazzarella. Her unanswered riddle leads to a counter-realization that shakes Geronimo to the core: Geronimo is *also* an automaton, a mimetic copy of other futurist intellectuals who have been programmed, like Loy's "human cylinders," to perform acts of sexual embrace or spiritual conflict that further what Loy regards as an evolutionary process. After stunning Pazzarella into an automaton-like state, Geronimo is suddenly overtaken by an automatic impulse to look at himself in the mirror. Geronimo's mirror reflection startles him, as he can only see himself as an automaton-shape looking back at its odd, thing-like emptiness:

> Some unaccountable impulse stopped me before the mirror and I found myself staring, this time, into my own eyes. How queer, they returned my gaze without recognition. Those steely discs might have looked out of a stranger. Wondering what had happened to them, I peered into their brightness for some time. At first I could make out nothing, but gradually I became aware of a putrefying mass, a turbid residuum lying at the bottom of their wells. Luminous sepulchres of vanquished emotions, of petrified humanity, such had been my eyes. But now, beneath their inflexible logic, the effrontery of their wile, lay the decaying remains of an embryonic spirit, an almost imperceptible reflection of Pazzarella's dying.[50]

I read this passage on multiple levels. As I have claimed, Loy uses first-person perspective to inhabit the male behavioral automatisms that typify futurist and misogynist discourse. In doing so, Loy intends to expose male misogyny as a behavioral automatism that can be mimicked,

[49] *SE*, 91.
[50] *SE*, 91.

copied, and satirized with relative ease, thus deglamorizing the futurist pretension to a uniquely "male" intelligence. Consequently, Loy's veiled parody of masculinist forms of discourse performs a counter-mimesis in which Geronimo's fatuous answer (that "man" is the secret to the riddle of "woman") brings him to realize that if this tenet is true, then he himself is subject to the same conditions of the equation. In other words, if Pazzarella can be negated to the point of becoming automaton, then Geronimo, in representing the "secret" to Pazzarella's automaton-nature, reflects this negation directly, since he is an automaton himself. One's automatism is exchanged for or duplicated into another.

Lastly, the optical quality of mimesis, in which Geronimo comes to understand his own automaton-nature through a mirror-stage episode, produces in him a desire to reproduce Pazzarella, under the impression that he is in control of this newfound reproductive drive. But the opticality involved, and the reproductive desire that it magically instills, seem to recall other popular media representations of the automaton-woman, whose image possesses and drives men to desire, madness, and obsession, ranging from E.T.A. Hoffman's short story "The Sandman" (1816)[51] to the female robot in Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (1927).[52]

Loy's reproductions of futurist discourse, based on the intricacies of the automatisms that drive its rhetoric, are revealed to have a secondary purpose: to mimic, then subvert, and ultimately appropriate these automatisms for a refreshed and strengthened feminism. Masculinist automatisms, thus, provide a mirror-image to feminist automatisms, disembedded ways of articulating and responding to the world in spite of, or outside of, phallocentric discourse.

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[51] See E.T.A. Hoffman, *The Best Tales of Hoffman*, ed. E.F. Bleiler (Dover Publications, 1967) 183-214.

[52] See Thomas Elsaesser, *Metropolis* (BFI Publishing, 2000); Luca Beatrice, *Robot: A Visual Atlas from Ancient Greece to Artificial Intelligence* (Milan: 24 Ore Cultura, 2017); Julie Wosk, *My Fair Ladies: Female Robots, Androids, and Other Artificial Eves* (Rutgers UP, 2015); and Minsoo Kang, *Sublime Dreams of Living Machines: The Automaton in the European Imagination* (Harvard UP, 2011).

Although it seems that Pazzarella had not received the chance to verbalize the secret to the riddle of male-female gender relations, Loy ends the story with Geronimo spiritually overtaken and commanded by Pazzarella's reverse-automatism, and he becomes Pazzarella's mouthpiece for Loy's final message: "*The secret of woman is that she does not yet exist*. Being a creator, I realized I can create woman. I decided to 'create' Pazzarella."[53]

Although Geronimo explicitly positions himself as Pazzarella's creator, thus returning to the power relations he had been intent to indoctrinate Pazzarella with, I read this reveal as an implicit suggestion that Geronimo has been mastered by Pazzarella's automatism to the point of obliviousness. (An automatism, after all, is what drives everyday actions beyond conscious intellection.) Geronimo, unaware of the contradiction involved, goes back on his dismissal of procreative love and seems driven to fulfill Pazzarella's earlier goal to reproduce, only this time by spiritual rather than biological means. The creation here is suggested to be that of a hybridic automated being, born out of the spiritualized automatisms that pass from Geronimo to Pazzarella and from Pazzarella back to Geronimo. The ultimate irony here is that Geronimo is incepted by Pazzarella's reflected automatism and he is led to believe that the creation-instinct is his own, when in fact this desire only occurs upon the outside discovery that he himself is a biological automaton.

Desiring a universalized and cosmic unity between the sexes, Loy makes Pazzarella into a metonym for transcendent womanhood, one that is "identified with 'everything'" and "partakes of that universal 'unity' sought by the mystic; with this paradoxical result that if man is promiscuous physically, woman is promiscuous spiritually."[54] The promiscuity in question here transcends sex in the same way that Loy's reclamation of womanhood transcends the conditions

[53] *SE*, 96 (my emphasis).
[54] *SE*, 96.

of its gendering by male discourse. For Loy, then, biological reproduction and gendered automatisms are to be replaced by *spiritual* reproduction and *spiritual* automatisms that promise a universalized aesthetic that transgresses the masculinist codification of gender relations.

Loy's remarkable story predates the language of second-wave feminism and the writings of Simone de Beauvoir, Monique Wittig, and Shulamith Firestone, but "Pazzarella" echoes many of these latter writers' concerns with enforced and technologized reproduction that restrictive notions of female agency circumscribe them to.[55] Yet again mocking the futurist perspective of women as mere reproductive machinery, Loy outpaces this rhetoric by boldly suggesting that the "secret of woman is that she does not yet exist" and hence has to be created, a formulation that anticipates both de Beauvoir's foundational statement that "one is not born but becomes a woman,"[56] and Wittig's touchstone essay, "One Is Not Born a Woman" (1980). In the latter essay, Wittig writes:

> [M]ost of the feminists and lesbian-feminists in America and elsewhere still believe that the basis of women's oppression is biological as well as historical. [...] The belief in mother right and in a "prehistory" when women create civilization (because of a biological predisposition) while the coarse and brutal men hunted (because of a biological predisposition) is symmetrical with the biologizing interpretation of history produced up to now by the class of men. It is still the same method of finding in women and men a biological explanation of their division, outside of social facts.[57]

[55] For a recent debate on the labor of technological and assisted reproduction in current feminist discourse, see Merve Emre, ed., *Once and Future Feminist: Boston Review* Forum 7 (43.3), MIT Press, 2018. Online. https://store.bostonreview.net/backissues/once-and-future-feminist.

[56] See Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (Vintage Books, 2010) 330ff.

[57] Monique Wittig, "One Is Not Born a Woman," ed. Henry Abelove, et al. *The Lesbian and Gay Reader* (Routledge, 1993) 103-4.

While Loy would not have likely agreed with Wittig's stance on the primacy of a lesbian "universal perspective,"[58] Loy's critique of masculinist automatisms prefigures, and rhymes with, Wittig's language on the "myth of woman" as a standard for an ideological foundation of the sexes based on biological difference. Loy did not want to be restricted to biological motherhood, but her desire to produce new forms of creation, identity, and sexuality based itself on a reconceptualization of human automatism.

II. The "Soft-Machine": *Insel* and Surrealist Automatism

It was not until late in her life, while living in New York during the late 1940s, that Mina Loy developed the most complete definition of automatism in her personal philosophy. In the unpublished twenty-page manuscript titled "History of Religion and Eros" (written between 1948-1953), Loy outlines a "scientific-mystic teaching" that syncretizes aspects from her Christian Science beliefs of psychological self-repair[59] and some of the aesthetic insights she gained from the surrealist network of artists she encountered in Paris and New York during the 1920s-1930s. In the manuscript, Loy writes that "MAN IS A COVERED-ENTRANCE TO INFINITY," and she disputes the notion that human life "come[s] to an end, with his body."

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[58] Wittig's essay, "The Universal Point of View," uses the work of Djuna Barnes as a focal point for arguing the value of a lesbian literature that is neither feminine nor masculine and which works against a mainstream feminist discourse that still "naturalizes" the idea of a specialized feminine writing, hence depriving it of the universality of patriarchal perspective. Wittig argues that Barnes' writing "universalizes the feminine" and in doing so it "succeeds in removing from the feminine gender its 'smell of hatching'" (63-4). Fittingly enough, Barnes was a close friend of, and writing accomplice to, Mina Loy, and Loy's heteronormative skepticism regarding the mechanics of lesbian love was gently satirized by Barnes in *Ladies Almanack*, a 1928 experimental prose-work that explores lesbian culture in the artistic circle that emerged from Natalie Barney's salon in Paris during the 1920s. See Monique Wittig, "The Point of View: Universal or Particular?" *Feminist Issues* 3.2 (Fall, 1983) 63-69; and Djuna Barnes, *Ladies Almanack* (New York UP, 1992).

[59] Although Loy's Christian Science beliefs were pivotal in defining her valuation of human automatism as a question of evolutionary insight, my chapter does not pursue this line of thinking. For more on the relation of Christian Science to Loy's career, see Richard Cook, "The 'Infinitarian' and her 'Macro-Cosmic Presence': The Question of Loy and Christian Science" in *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet*, 457-466; and Tim Armstrong, "Loy and Cornell: Christian Science and the Destruction of the World" in *The Salt Companion to Mina Loy*, 204-220.

Instead, Loy professes the belief that common human intelligence is "unaware of the currents in cosmic power conveying to man his apparent *esse*" and human consciousness is equally "unaware of the brain being merely an instrument of reception and transmission." Automatism, as a theory of the cosmic forces that work upon the human mind from without and control one's desiring body like an automaton infused with purpose, assumes a central importance in Loy's eyes as an evolutionary theory of artistic progression. Lamenting the loss of the art of automatism "for our intended evolution," Loy imputes its decadence to a common misinterpretation that "the scientific-mystic teaching" is an "exhortation to make the mind a blank; to immobilise the flesh."[60]

Loy's language here recalls the earlier discussion of automatism as a kind of practical unconsciousness that produces new forms of intelligence, competence, or mastery. The automaton is theoretically a blank slate, a robotic being programmed not to think but to perform single-order functions repeatedly, as rapidly and skillfully as possible, or, at least, in as human a way as possible. Loy expands this notion by reducing the emphasis on unconsciousness and stressing the qualities of spiritualized mediumship. Without relinquishing her belief in the intrinsic value of automatism, Loy critiques the typical understanding of automatism as an injunction to "make the mind blank," and proposes instead that automatism entails in the practitioner "closing his eyes, his ears, invert[ing] the senses from the multiple outlets for contact, [and] *concentrating* the various electric currents of mind and body to a unique current [...]"[61] In determining to remove common bodily functions "out of the way of his *attention*," the practitioner of spiritual automatism realizes a new evolutionary potential:

[60] *SE,* 245.
[61] *SE,* 240.

> - - - - - He felt his body sustained no longer by air but by something comparable to the ether, which, interpenetrating its atomic structure, *liberated his organism from biological law hitherto insurmountable*.
>
> This lightening of the body, *this etheric transmutation of the mind's instrument*, liberated that latent faculty of the mind for reception of a transcendent form of radio transmission.
>
> He found his perception, usually narrowed down to focus on the concrete world as intellect, when released from this focus, to amplify its contacts as it FLOWED BACK ALONG THE CURRENT OF ITS CONVEYANCE from the All-Conscious, whose medium may be likened to INTELLIGENTIAL ETHER.
>
> At this stage of increasing potency his mind became reinforced as spirit; its ultimate dimension attainable being soul, indestructible component of the Absolute.[62]

I quote this passage at length because it contains all the components of Loy's mature theory of automatism. First, automatism frees up the human body from biological determinism, and Loy seems to be signaling her earlier struggle, during the futurist period, with diagnosing and subverting masculinist automatisms that confine gender relations to fixed reproductive poles. Loy's story, "Pazzarella," for instance, inverted this logic by mimicking and satirizing futurist misogyny, appropriating its rhetorical functions, and then turning the mirror (literally) on this destructive discourse, in effect canceling out its violent motivations and replacing them with an ironized reproductive desire for spiritual evolution.

Second, the passage paints a loose theory of the human mind as a kind of instrument or medium for other currents beyond that of language or sense-data. Automatism, generally a theory of the mind, is represented here as an artist's theory of telepathy. Loy writes elsewhere that "man is an instrument for imposing form upon phenomena. Man IS auto-conscious."[63] To some degree, this theory depends on conceiving of the human body as an automaton or machine that can fall prey to the hazards and commands of otherworldly psychic currents. But Loy

[62] *SE*, 241 (italics mine; capitalization in the original).
[63] *SE*, 267.

conceives of automatism as a super-conscious activity that is neither unconscious nor strictly conscious in the everyday sense. What sets Loy apart from other theorists of automatism is that she regards the activity of automatism as primarily *evolutionary*. She envisions "a few human beings [...] born [to] exceptionally react to vibrational stimuli beyond the standard gamut. A simple, rational, electrical extension endowing them with quirks of perception comparable to telepathy, television… etc."[64] Telepathy is not a figure of speech, nor a metaphor for psychic processes, but a real psychic cognition that promises a new evolutionary plateau for human machinery.

This kind of literalness is in direct contrast to surrealist theories of automatism, which in André Breton's formulation, regarded automatism as a means, rather than the goal, of tapping into a psychoanalytic material-unconscious that required literary expenditure to decode and recode into formal experimentation. Breton's famous definition of automatism in the first *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924) scaffolds it as a technique "by which one proposes to express—verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other matter—the actual functioning of thought."[65] Breton's use of automatism is hermeneutic rather than "scientific-mystic," and it instrumentalizes automatism into a kind of technical hypnosis rather than into an evolutionary principle.[66] As Walter Benjamin noted of the surrealists, automatism served a greater vehicle for political liberation, and the systematic use of "profane illumination" was more of an instrument employed to "win the energies of intoxication for the revolution." Indeed, Benjamin cites telepathy as only *another* act of reading, since "telepathic phenomena [...] will not teach us half

[64] *SE*, 239.
[65] André Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (University of Michigan Press, 1969) 26.
[66] See Kasper Opstrup, "From the Mouth of Shadows: On the Surrealist Use of Automatism," *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics*, No. 53 (2017) 41-59; Krzysztof Fijalkowski and Michael Richardson, eds. *Surrealism: Key Concepts* (Routledge, 2016); Katherine Conley, *Surrealist Ghostliness* (University of Chicago Press, 2013) 69-89.

as much about thinking [...] as the profane illumination of thinking about the hashish trance." For the surrealists, as well as for Benjamin, it is not telepathy which brings about revolution, but better hallucinatory forms of reading.[67] In surrealist automatism, there is no mysticism or evolutionary progress, only a transmedial decoding from the unconscious that is recoded back into the language of the uncanny. Indeed, Hal Foster confirms that much of the surrealist use of automatism tracked back either to the proscriptive, clinical formulas of control practiced by nineteenth-century neurologists like Pierre Janet or Jean-Martin Charcot, or to "an unconscious [inscription] less liberatory than compulsive…"[68]

Loy's sense of automatism, I argue, works along different lines. Strikingly, her contributions to surrealism and to automatism have been overlooked (likely due to her critical stance toward the surrealist faction), and her novel *Insel* (likely composed between 1933-1936 but unpublished in her lifetime) signals one of the most thorough explorations of surrealist technique in anglophone literature. The novel, however, discards the gimmick of automatic writing (in which surrealist artists and writers pretend to produce art by disavowing any intellection or conscious decision-making) in favor of a more controlled, yet psychically unbound, pictorial writing that utilizes many of the experimental techniques Loy employs in her poetry.

As Elizabeth Arnold, in the "Afterword" to the novel, notes, "*Insel* can be read not only as an experiment in surrealist narrative, but as a satire on the whole surrealist endeavor."[69]

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[67] See Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings,* ed. Peter Demetz (Schocken Books, 2007) 177-192.

[68] Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty* (MIT Press, 1995) 1-17.

[69] Arnold goes on to suggest that Loy's novel bears similarities to Andre Breton's Nadja (), and "Loy may have actually structured her novel after Breton's in order to satirize him [...] to express her indignation at the compromised role the Surrealists assigned to women." See "Afterword" to Mina Loy, *Insel,* ed. Elizabeth Arnold (Melville House Publishing, 2014) 174-5.

Arnold, in fact, was responsible for bringing *Insel* to publication after discovering the manuscript at the Beinecke Library while performing research for her doctoral dissertation on Loy's work (University of Chicago, 1990).[70] In reference to the novel, Arnold's dissertation explores how Loy willingly marginalized herself from the impetuous rhetoric of male avant-gardes like the futurists and the surrealists, and it reads *Insel* as an "attempt to control in prose narrative the destabilizing effect of an attractive and yet ultimately repellant surrealist exploration of the subconscious mind."[71] Although my chapter agrees with Arnold's reading of *Insel*, I look more closely at how automatism emerges as an evolutionary principle, an interpretative move that complements Arnold's foundational research.

The story-plot of *Insel* is fairly simple. Mrs. Jones, the first-person narrator, is "a tout for a friend's art gallery" tasked with the part-time role of taking care of and motivating a German surrealist artist named Insel. Besides suffering from a creative block, Insel is an opiate and morphine addict, and Mrs. Jones spends time with Insel in the hope of encouraging him to produce more paintings, potentially with the view of selling his work to interested buyers in Paris and New York. Set in the Paris of the early 1930s, the novel works like a roman-à-clef, and some scenes involve brief cameos by artists like Man Ray. Mrs. Jones seems to stand in for Loy herself, who moonlighted in Paris as an art gallery scout for her son-in-law Julien Levy, an art dealer based in New York.[72] Insel is based upon the German surrealist painter Richard Oelze, a pupil of Paul Klee, who studied in the Bauhaus and eventually traveled to Paris in 1932, ostensibly to network with and paint alongside the surrealists. As a painter, Oelze practiced a

[70] See Sarah Hayden, "Introduction" in *Insel*, xviii-xx.
[71] Elizabeth Arnold, *Mina Loy and the Avant-Garde*, Order No. T-31139 (The University of Chicago, 1990) *Proquest*, 12.
[72] Burke, *Becoming Modern*, 381-4.

form of "semi-automatism, a form of automatism akin to *frottage* and *décalcomanie*."[73] Almost the entire novel takes place as a series of drawn-out conversations, on walks together or at cafes, between Mrs. Jones and Insel. They share strange, surrealistic exchanges in which time seems hardly to move and they often slip into a kind of telepathy in which very little said is between them.

Formally speaking, the novel functions more as an experimental poetic-narrative than as an event-based narrative, and Loy virtuosically depicts Mrs. Jones' changing perception of Insel as the key narratorial dynamic that draws out different notions of automatism. Indeed, Loy seems to depict Insel as a kind of aesthetic automaton, an organic machine who happens to produce art when he is at his most optimal, like a human combustion engine that feeds off fossil fuel and winds down when it has exhausted its resources. Similar to one of Wyndham Lewis's automaton characters,[74] Insel's "visible person" appears like a "mannequin he operated on occasion."[75] In the first chapter, Mrs. Jones describes Insel as "the primordial soft-machine" who is "without the protective overall of the daily job [...]"[76] Later in the novel, she describes Insel's "soft-machine" as "made of extremely diaphanous stuff. Between the shrunken contour of his present volume his original 'serial mold' was filled in with some intangible aural matter remaining in place despite his anatomical shrinkage."[77] Insel, as automaton, is a "serial" body which can be made and remade, whose prototype-form theoretically could be manufactured in the way automobiles, "with which modern man, still unable to create soft-machines [construct] heavy plagiarisms," are made.[78] Poor and undernourished, Insel is an "acknowledged surrealist" whose "skeletal symbol

[73] Keith Aspley, *Historical Dictionary of Surrealism* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2010). EBSCOhost.
[74] See Chapter Three of this dissertation, "Wyndham Lewis and the Automatisms of Violence".
[75] *Insel*, 31.
[76] *Insel*, 7.
[77] *Insel*, 46.
[78] *Insel*, 37.

of an ultimate starvation had need of a food we knew not of."[79] Part of the dilemma of the novel is determining what source of fuel Insel's "soft-machine" requires, especially for an artist who seems to shun money and most types of food, and who disappears as quickly as he reappears. Mrs. Jones finds herself puzzling over how to feed "a cagey genius in the hope for production."[80]

One passage in particular draws out the automaton-qualities of not only Insel's character but also of Loy's demonstration of automatism as a kind of delayed predicate at the level of the syntax:

> Only towards the close of his reminiscences did he seem to have shared a responsibility with normal men: 'They sent me to war,' he told us wryly, voicing that unconvincing complaint against their perpetual situation in the ridiculous made by people who, pleasing to laugh at themselves, one suspects of aiding destiny in detaining them here, 'in two left-foot boots, and,' trotting his fingers along the table in a swerve, 'the one would follow the other,' he explained as the mental eye also followed that earlier Insel—out of the ranks; on the march to a war that, at its blasting zenith, ceased to be a war, for, in elaborating his martial adventures, Insel turned out to have been taking part in a film.
> *A wound up automaton running down,* Insel ceased among the clatter of our amusement.[81]

This remarkable passage typifies the kind of textual experimentation Loy enacts in the novel. Ostensibly, the passage is about the narrator's realization that Insel, an inveterate prevaricator, is probably lying about his experience enlisting in the First World War. The narrator's "mental eye," however, tracks Insel's consciousness along a different route than what the narrator is hearing Insel say. This dual-track play (what the narrator dialogically hears, and what the narrator telepathically tracks) is reconstituted in the winding paragraph-long sentence beginning "'They sent me to war...,'" a sentence which seems to add clauses and parts to the bigger

[79] *Insel*, 12.
[80] *Insel*, 55.
[81] *Insel*, 13 (my emphasis).

machine of the paragraph. This "running down" of the sentence, as we read comma follow clause follow comma, mimics Insel's automatism, as he mimics, "trotting his fingers along the table," the automaton-like soldier's trot that he had likely seen in a film somewhere.

In much of the novel, Insel automatically copies the biographies and events belonging to other people and pretends they are his own. Like a robot learning how to be human by mimicking the emotions and actions of others, Insel compulsively steals from human experience and montages together his life story from the remnants of borrowed memories made available through mass media: film, literature, other paintings. At one point, Mrs. Jones, proposing to write Insel's biography, has to abort her project when she finds out that Insel has largely stolen from what he has read from Kafka's stories: "'You atrocious fake—you have no life to write—you're *acting* Kafka!'"[82] What had seemed a definitive break with Insel's automatic penchant for reproducing other lives is, ironically, restored through a telepathic automatism: "I thought I had dropped Insel. I was mistaken. Some weeks later I was writing letters when all of a sudden I stopped. An urgent telepathy impinging on my mind, I automatically dashed off a card."[83] Writing to see if Insel is well, Mrs. Jones concludes that their union is not only telepathic but spiritually interdependent. If Insel plagiarizes from mass media, he also seems to transmit himself like a wireless automatic message across mediums: telegrams, telephones, and, in a prophetic version of the medium, "tele-vision."[84]

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[82] *Insel*, 18.

[83] *Insel*, 19.

[84] The collective work of Tim Armstrong, Sara Danius, Mark Wollaeger, Juan A. Suarez, and Julian Murphet deal directly with what Murphet calls a "media ecology" that became operative during the high modernism of the early twentieth century. Loy's preoccupation with how media embeds itself into the human automaton is a tiny feature of a long critical literature dealing with medial and transmedial territorializations in modernist studies. See Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body* (Cambridge UP, 1998); Sara Danius, *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics* (Cornell UP, 2002); Mark Wollaeger, *Modernism, Media, and Propaganda: British Narrative from 1900 to 1945* (Princeton UP, 2006); Julian A. Suarez, *Pop Modernism: Noise and the Reinvention of the Everyday* (University of Illinois Press, 2007); and Julian Murphet, *Multimedia Modernism: Literature and the Anglo-American Avant-Garde* (Cambridge UP, 2013) 1-38.

Plagiarism for Insel is also a matter of mediumistic opportunism. Mrs. Jones notes that as "mediums on becoming professional [...] lapse to the most lamentable dupery, Insel would actually plagiarize his innate mediumistic quality of which he appeared to be but partially conscious."[85] Mrs. Jones senses that Insel needs not just her agency on the art market, but her spiritual agency on the telepathic radio waves he seems to be only "partially conscious" of. Loy suggests a transmedial theory of automatism that, like a phone call, requires two conversationalists to participate. "As those who are of the body, whom other bodies have traffic with [...] with Insel intercourse depended on putting out feelers among the loose matter of psychological nebulae."[86] At another point, Mrs. Jones, in "sitting so close to Insel at the small terrace table" feels "all the filaments of what has been called the astral body, that network of vibrational force."[87] The immaterial relations between Mrs. Jones and Insel cultivate a different kind of eros between them that is neither physical nor platonic.

I claim that Loy, by this point, has shifted from an evolutionary theory of a purely physical sexual embrace, described in poems like "Human Cylinders" as a "lucid rush-together of automatons," to a more nuanced, spiritualized theory of psychic coitus, a conjunctive act that, much like her theory of automatism, is not so much unconscious as "super-conscious" and transcendent. In the essay on "Religion and Eros," Loy calls eros the "*automatic transmutation of virility*," and she attributes this automaticity to a "'man of flesh' phrase in evolution" that is "giving away to the 'man of electronic vitality [...]"[88] The evolutionary rhetoric that Loy had once conceived in purely racial terms has now shifted to a kind of electrical or electronic expansion of conceptualization of the human-as-automaton. In Loy's view, if the human artist

[85] *Insel*, 29.
[86] *Insel*, 24.
[87] *Insel*, 38.
[88] *SE*, 249 (italics in original).

can be a sort of aesthetic automaton who "automatically transmutes" its vitality through its art, then new forces and means of perception (telepathy, etc.) could possibly be bred, like an awakened genetic strain, in the human apparatus.

Indeed, throughout the novel, Mrs. Jones notes the electrical appearance of Insel, whose "magnetism" draws her out from her zones of operation, often influencing her to perform actions contrary to her will. In other words, the "faintly electric current he [Insel] emitted" influences and awakens the automatisms already latent in Mrs. Jones herself.[89] Mere physical actions committed by Insel spark up Mrs. Jones' awareness of a universal automatism in everyone: "He [Insel] shut the door, an act I have heard an authoress describe as so banal it is unfit for publication. But shutting the door, *like all automatism we take for granted*, is stupendous in its implications."[90] The implications here are that such automatisms disguise an evolutionary principle which might be acquired and mastered through a technical awareness of human automatism: "So the shutting of doors is *a concentration of our radiations* in rectangular containers, to economize the essences of our being we dispense to those with whom we communicate."[91]

Part of Loy's critique of surrealism emerges in her attributing Insel's powers to real "black magic." Besides Insel's uncanny ability to telepathically influence Mrs. Jones, seemingly against her will, to "automatically" write a card to him, Insel also charges objects with traces of magical infusion. Mrs. Jones is "drawn" as if "by a magnet" to a flat packet that "emitted a faint phosphorescence" left behind by Insel.[92] In another passage, Mrs. Jones attributes a power in Insel to impart "hallucinatory transformation" in things: "He possessed some mental conjury

[89] *Insel*, 47.
[90] *Insel*, 32 (emphasis mine).
[91] *Insel*, 32 (emphasis mine).
[92] *Insel*, 26.

enabling him to infuse actual detail with the magical contrariness surrealism merely portrays."[93] This active magical ability renders Insel "too surrealistic for the surrealists."[94] Revealingly, Loy regards surrealism as a kind of visual parlor trick, a form of stylistic legerdemain that strokes the ego of its male artists rather than imparts actual spiritual technique. At one point, Mrs. Jones informs Insel, "'I should have thought you'd be *worth* a little money to a surrealist. He might learn what supereality [sic] is about—you are organically surreal—'"[95]

Loy consequently regards Insel as an unconscious but authentic practitioner of "sympathetic magic," whose influence over Mrs. Jones is more collaborative than forced: "An influence which, rather than having submitted to it, I purposely invaded, so urgent was my premonition of some treasure he contained."[96] The "treasure," much like the "secret" that Pazzarella imparted to Geronimo in Loy's story, involves a recognition of the universal automatism in human artists. Loy describes it in spiritual terms as a "procreational chaotic vapor in which all things may begin to grow,"[97] and she conceives it as a mediumship through which human development might be reconceptualized and harnessed into an evolutionary standard that could transform the human race in the same way Insel transforms everyday objects. What is promised is an "astral body" that Loy describes elsewhere, in the manifesto "International Psycho-Democracy" (written 1918-1919), as a "Democracy of the Spirit" that is "based on the laws of psychic evolution" and whose "principles spring from Intuition."[98] Similar to Walter Benjamin's notion of a technological collective "physis" that would produce innervated

[93] *Insel*, 33.
[94] *Insel*, 104.
[95] *Insel*, 108.
[96] *Insel*, 40.
[97] *Insel*, 43.
[98] *LLB I*, 276-7.

sensoriums,[99] Loy envisions a "Movement to Focus Human Reason / on / The Conscious Direction of Evolution." Loy concludes "International Psycho-Democracy" with the observation that the "Tediousness of Human Evolution is owing" to the "tendency of human institutions to outlast the psychological conditions from which they arose," and it is only years later that Loy begins to draw out, in *Insel*, a portrait of automatism as the solution to what she perceived as an evolutionary stagnation exacerbated by war, xenophobia, and nationalism.

Ultimately, however, Insel is still a *male* artist, and toward the end of the novel, Mrs. Jones realizes that collaborative automatism and psychic conjunction can only go so far. Insel, having gained some minor recognition and success and now "barricaded with women," becomes a more stable, well-fed artist, and he is transformed from spiritual automaton to a "hard-eyed, low class German." Mrs. Jones realizes that she "had cured [Insel]. Here was the 'normal' man. An Insel unobsessed" who someone has replaced, "his mesmeric, melodic voice exchanged for a hostile creak."[100] Insel assumes the paternalist voice and patriarchal outlook of his male surrealist compatriots, whose "libido [is] threaded with some viciousness impossible to construe." The "telepathic, televisionary machinery of our reciprocity" is broken apart, ironically, by a modicum of financial and aesthetic success, and Insel's "emaciation no longer of flesh had become an exteriorized act of the flesh in which the last ooze of the spermatic juices might have been, in some fearful enervation, spent."[101] Saying her farewell to Insel as she prepares to voyage to New York, Mrs. Jones finds herself disappointed by Insel's regression to a crass male avant-gardism.

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[99] Benjamin, *Reflections*, 92-94, 192; see also Miriam Bratu Hansen, "Benjamin and Cinema: Not a One-Way Street," *Critical Inquiry* 25.2, "Angelus Novus": Perspectives on Walter Benjamin (Winter, 1999), 306-343; and Hansen, *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Krakauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno* (University of California Press, 2012) 75-204.
[100] *Insel*, 142.
[101] *Insel*, 145-6.

But, as Loy herself would realize on her permanent relocation to New York in 1936, the secret to automatism was lastingly acquired, and it would be a principle that Loy would transcribe in the fictional novel Mrs. Jones was writing in Paris, the meta-novel that would become Loy's *Insel*. Indeed, in an unpublished fragment written in 1921, "Oil in the Machine?", Loy would describe this secret in unequivocal terms:

> The machine has no inhibitions
> *Man invented the machine in order to discover himself* [...]
> We spasimal engineers
> Whose every re- act -ion of grace is an explosion in consciousness[102]

Emphasizing the action in "re- *act* -ion," Loy reverse-engineers automatism's usual stagnant and repetitive qualities into a theory of spiritual evolution that merges the machine's lack of inhibitions with the human body's need for a universalized aesthetic. For Loy, her poetry and fiction function as a kind of spiritual engineering that reconfigures automatism as a promising feature of human evolution.

Having circuited the masculinist avant-gardes of futurism and surrealism, Loy's ultimate appropriation is that of the automatisms that had driven their experimental qualities toward a gendered conservatism, and her work reverses these automatisms from a reproduction of the same into a reproduction of the new. The involuntary reactions of automatism are thus reconceived as voluntary, yet deeply biological, acquisitions of "grace" that transcend the masculinist codification of avant-garde forms.

[102] *SE*, 285 (my emphasis).

CHAPTER 3
WYNDHAM LEWIS AND THE AUTOMATISMS OF VIOLENCE

In the short essay, "The Meaning of the Wild Body," Wyndham Lewis locates the "root of the Comic" in the "sensations resulting from observations of a thing behaving like a person." Writing in 1927, Lewis was concerned with providing a definition for the purposiveness of laughter as a "dangerous form of absolute revelation," in this case, the knowledge that "man is ridiculous fundamentally… *because he is a man*, instead of a thing."[1] This position saw in human personality the overlooked notion that people are, in fact, "*things*, or physical bodies, behaving as *persons*," and it was this cynical materialism concerning the organic limitations of human personality that afforded Lewis a kind of aesthetic philosophy that would extend into his political thought.

Only ten years earlier, in 1917, Lewis published another essay, "Inferior Religions," in which he described the human body as part of a greater "Wild Body, the generic puppet of all," which represented not just the public at large but the epigenetic basis of the human race: "When we say 'types of humanity,' we mean violent individualities [...] A comic type is a failure of considerable energy, an imitation and standardizing of self, suggesting the existence of a uniform humanity…" Lewis's belief that human actors are just bundles of energy that alternate between comic and violent automatisms ("standardizing[s] of self") seems to posit the comedy of human malfunctioning as only a gradation away from the violence of high-functioning bodies. For Lewis, then, there is very little difference between comedy and violence, and laughter is a shared

[1] Wyndham Lewis, *The Complete Wild Body*, Ed. Bernard Lafourcade (Black Sparrow Press, 1982) 158-9. Henceforth, *CWB*.

trait between them, the "brain-body's snort of exultation" that "expresses its wild sensation of power and speed."[2]

Lewis's ideas on laughter and the comic, however, are unoriginal, since they are predicated on Henri Bergson's famous assertion that "we laugh every time a person gives us the impression of being a thing." First published in 1900, Bergson's essay, *Le Rire: essai sur la signification du comique* (*Laughter: essay on the meaning of the comic*), theorized that the comic emerges from "the attitudes and movements of the human body" which remind us "of a mere machine." Bergson directly attributes the effects of the comic to automatism, writing that "it is really a kind of automatism that makes us laugh—and automatism [...] is closely akin to absentmindedness." In one passage, Bergson specifies that automatism is what makes certain qualities reproducible in people, giving one the impression that people act like automatons through repeated actions which lead to comic errors. This repetition is what allows for the possibility of imitation and mimesis:

> In one sense it might be said all character is comic, provided we mean by character the ready-made element in our personality, that mechanical element which resembles a piece of clockwork wound up once for all and capable of working automatically. It is, if you will, that which causes us to imitate ourselves. And it is also, for that very reason, that which enables others to imitate us. Every comic character is a type. Inversely, every resemblance to a type has something comic in it.[3]

Bergson's theory of the comic establishes it as a feature of a greater tendency toward automatism that can be imitated as well as provoke laughter in others. Absent-minded people remind us of automatons, and it is through this absent-mindedness, Bergson writes, that the comic person "becomes invisible to himself while remaining visible to all the world." The optical character

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[2] *CWB*, 150-1

[3] Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, Trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell, *Project Gutenberg*, 26 July 2009. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4352/4352-h/4352-h.htm.

given to automatism—that it is *visibly* comedic for its automatic nature, and that its automatic nature gives it a mimetic, reproducible quality—is shared by Lewis as well, who insists on the visual nature of automatism in people whose "chemistry of personality [...] puffs up in frigid balls, soapy Snowmen, arctic carnival-masks, which we can photograph and fix."[4] Indeed, Lewis elsewhere proposes a counter-philosophy to Bergson's vitalism, one which he calls a "philosophy of the eye." Lewis describes this philosophy as the "propensity for the exactly-defined and also, fanatically it may be, the physical or the concrete" that draws out (and *draws*) what it sees.[5] This position, while pretending to be anti-Bergson, in fact ends up mimicking much of what Bergson earlier describes as "that mechanical element [...] which causes us to imitate ourselves" through visual or physical mimesis.

As many critics have pointed out, Bergson's philosophy deeply influenced Lewis's early thought and became an obsessive target of his later writing, eventually leading Lewis to become an enemy of Bergsonism and its "predatory *time-philosophy*," which in Lewis's eyes produced a "herd-mind" in modernist trends, whether in James Joyce's novels, Oswald Spengler's philosophy of history, or Albert Einstein's theory of relativity.[6] In her study of Lewis's appropriation and subversion of Bergson's ideas, SueEllen Campbell concludes that "in creating his role as the Enemy, he [Lewis] openly defines himself as an opposite to other writers of his culture."[7] Lewis himself describes his positioning as an "Enemy" to not only Bergsonism but to dominant forms of avant-garde culture and literary modernism in the formula of a self-aware "Cynic philosophy":

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[4] *CWB*, 152.
[5] Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, Ed. Paul Edwards (Black Sparrow Press, 1993) 109. Hereafer, *TWM*.
[6] *TWM*, 108.
[7] SueEllen Campbell, "Equal Opposites: Wyndham Lewis, Henri Bergson, and Their Philosophies of Space and Time," *Twentieth Century Literature* 29.3 (Autumn, 1983) 367.

> But certainly I am issuing a 'challenge' to the community in which I live. I am 'criticizing all its institutions and modes of action and of thought.' [...] What I have written… should prove me exceedingly remote from what is generally termed a 'reactionary.' But I am entirely sick to death… of the many forms that 'revolution' takes, in art, sociology, science and life… [8]

Setting up a rhetorical antagonism that prompts him to give ripostes to the imagined remonstrations of his opponents and critics, Lewis's compositional philosophy seems to rely on a dyadic rivalry that often reverses or repeats its adversary's claims. Lewis concludes that "I have allowed these contradictory things to struggle together" so that, in some Nietzschean mode, "the group that has proved the most powerful I have fixed upon as my most essential ME." In this way, the "natural matching of opposites within saves a person so constituted from dogmatism and conceit."[9] For Lewis, then, the construction of an internal agon (between himself and Bergsonism, between himself and the avant-garde, etc.) becomes a type of ethic which prevents, ironically, a slippage into conservatism, fake radicalism, or self-deceit.

Faced with these contradictions, this chapter will set out to answer a seemingly simple, yet critically significant question: why does Lewis *reverse* Bergson's formula for the comic by switching the emphasis from a human acting like a thing (i.e. a human acting like an automaton) to a human pretending it is something more than just a thing (i.e. an automaton believing it is human)? This reversal is puzzling if one reads Lewis and Bergson closely, since Lewis seems to arrive at similar conclusions regarding automatism and the nature of the comic. As I will argue, Lewis's reversal of Bergson's theory of the comic has no rational basis other than to reproduce the internal agon of opposites I have signaled above. This agonistic system, I suggest, conceals a greater apparatus of satiric mimesis that performs the "hygienic" work of aesthetic violence to

[8] *TWM*, 131.
[9] *TWM*, 132-3.

what Lewis perceives as dangerously entrenched systems of thought, such as Bergsonism, the "time-philosophy," futurism, classicism, romanticism, and so forth. Lewis reverses Bergson's ideas in a mode strikingly similar to what French theorist Rene Girard calls "mimetic rivalry." Drawing on Girard's theory of mimesis, this chapter explicates the obsessive qualities in Lewis's work that tend toward "mimetic violence," the destruction of a copy or rival in the hope of securing a philosophic or aesthetic supremacy. For Lewis, the destruction of a mimetic copy produces a reversal of values that liberates aesthetic thought from what he regards as a crippling adherence to the herd-mind and to false notions of collective power. For Lewis, this compulsion to mimic and to reverse the positions of his enemies is as much an automatic drive as it is a feature of Lewis's belief in the intrinsic automatism in others.

My argument works against prior readings of Lewis that attempt to code him as either a proponent of classicism or a partisan of collective agency. Recent work by Edward Comentale, for instance, ignores the relationship of automatism to Lewis's "reversal [...] of his own avant-garde authority," favoring instead to dress up Lewis as a classicist who "seeks a middle way between the violence of the avant-garde and the formalism of High Modernism" and "finds coherence in a progressive phenomenology of labor."[10] While Comentale accurately depicts Lewis's compositional method as a "satirical mode" that "does not evade ideology, but continuously negates its power,"[11] the sources of this method are not sufficiently traced back to Lewis's "philosophy of the eye," in which Lewis secures his supremacy as a visual artist over any and all philosophical posturing. The emphasis on a "phenomenology of labor," I contest, is less relevant in the case of Lewis as it was, for instance, in the case of William Morris. Joel Nickels, on the other hand, argues that Lewis's work "continuously returns us" to a moment of

[10] Edward Comentale, *Modernism, Cultural Production, and the British Avant-Garde* (Cambridge UP, 2004) 12, 20.
[11] Comentale, *Modernism, Cultural Production, and the British Avant-Garde*, 13.

"constituent power" that "allows the multitude to resist the hypnotic sway of fascist vanguards and develop their own forms of political critique and organization."[12] Although I agree with Nickels' point that Lewis's enemy-politics essentially attack *any* calcification of political or aesthetic vanguards, be they fascist or liberal, the commitment to presenting Lewis as an apologist for constituent power seems to miss the mark concerning the motivations for why Lewis favors oppositions at all. Part of the problem is that scholars have overlooked the central importance an ideological theory of automatism has held for Lewis throughout his works.

This chapter does, however, accord with the prevailing tenor adopted by much Lewis criticism, ranging from Hugh Kenner[13] to Fredric Jameson[14] to Jessica Burstein,[15] which focuses on the mechanistic, "cold modernism" of Lewis's fascination with automatons and automatism. Lewis himself avers that "Satire is *cold*, and that is good! It is easier to achieve these polished and resistant surfaces of a great *externalist* art in Satire."[16] The work of Hal Foster and Tim Armstrong, respectively, was significant in pushing forward, on the one hand, the significance of Lewis's surprising reversal of the human body as an organic prosthesis to machine culture;[17] and, on the other hand, in suggesting Lewis's recalibration of the human psychological self as an ideologically-driven "protective shield" against the encroachment of a technological sphere that

[12] Joel Nickels, *The Poetry of the Possible: Spontaneity, Modernism, and the Multitude* (University of Minnesota Press, 2012) 38.
[13] Kenner has a chapter in his study of Lewis titled "Automata," in which he describes Lewis's characters as seeking "the articulation of the machine." See Hugh Kenner, *Wyndham Lewis* (New Directions, 1954) 86-118.
[14] Jameson writes that "the machine in Lewis's style generates a whole painstaking and analytic dismemberment of the external world and of gesture, a kind of tireless visual inventory [...]" See Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Fascist as Modernist* (Verso, 2008) 31.
[15] Burstein writes that "Lewis's reversal of Bergson's theory of laughter resides in manifesting the thing in the person. [...] If laughter exposes the thing in the person, the recording of that truth [...] becomes the animus of the animate. Copying, impersonation, and counterfeiting are cold modernism's modus operandi." See Jessica Burstein, *Cold Modernism: Literature, Fashion, Art* (The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012) 64.
[16] Wyndham Lewis, *Men Without Art*, Ed. Seamus Cooney (Black Sparrow Press, 1987) 99.
[17] See Hal Foster, *Prosthetic Gods* (MIT Press, 2004) 109-49.

threatened the solidity of the ego-subject.[18] Lastly, Julian Murphet's *Multimedia Modernism* capably suggests that Lewis's work served the role of "vorticist membrane" in the development of a "media ecology" that would re-constitute concepts of organicism under an augmented lens of media culture.[19]

I intend to push these interpretative models forward by aligning Lewis's interests in automatism with the gnarly issue of his presumed conservatism and interest in fascism. Automatism becomes a way of understanding Lewis's tendency toward conservative thought as a form of mimesis (as opposed to actual adoption), but it also presents a way of interpreting Lewis's mimetic capacity for appropriation, subversion, and aesthetic violence as the satiric modeling of conservative behavior in general. Lewis's optical belief that humans are all "surface creatures" informs his resistance of substantive ideas of depth and free-thought in the human subject. What appears at one point *reactionary* will shift, in a certain light, to *liberal radicalism* at a different angle. My claim will be that Lewis's use of mimetic automatism makes sense of this shifting positionality which the mimetic function encourages and allows, and it coincides with Rene Girard's conceptualization of mimetic rivalry and violence. By replicating political or aesthetic automatisms in other artists, Lewis's enemy-role works to violently subvert and overcome any ideological convictions.

In the first section, I look at Lewis's *The Wild Body* (1927) and his novel *Tarr* (1918, 1928) for examples of mimetic violence predicated upon an optical automatism. By optical automatism, I refer to Roger Caillois' concept of "lyrical automatism," in which Caillois discusses the praying mantis' tendency to copy its surroundings through its use of vision and

[18] See Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge UP, 1998) 3-4; and Armstrong, *Modernism: A Cultural History* (Blackwell, 2005) 93.
[19] See Julian Murphet, *Multimedia Modernism: Literature and the Anglo-American Avant-Garde* (Cambridge UP, 2009) 123-65.

mimesis. Aligning Girard's theory of mimetic rivalry with Caillois' theory of the repetition-compulsion, I intend to open up a new layer of discourse in the study of Lewis's contradictory positionings, one in which Lewis's interest in automatism becomes more legible as a feature of mimetic desire.

In the second section, I turn to Lewis's longest work of poetry, *One-Way Song* (1933). I read *One-Way Song* as Lewis's most sustained attack on Bergsonism and the "time-cult," paradoxically by satirizing Bergsonian ideas. I read *One-Way Song* as a violent and contrapuntal verse epic that interrogates and corrodes the human reliance on organicism, romanticism, and the persistent belief in individual autonomy. Lewis's satiric verse-style thus serves as his final and lasting critique of the time-philosophy, the romantic conception of material life, and the avant-garde movement in general.

I. Wild Bodies: Mimesis and Violence in *The Wild Body* and *Tarr*

A. From Automatism to Mimetic Rivalry

Published in 1928, *Time and Western Man* is Wyndham Lewis's sustained attack on Bergson's philosophy through avatars of the "time-philosophy." In a chapter titled "'Action' and 'Life,'" Lewis disparages a series of figures that he had previously agreed with during the vorticist years of the 1910s. Calling, for instance, Georges Sorel "a disciple of Bergson," Lewis disavows his previous fascination with Sorel's revolutionary syndicalism and labels Sorel's *Reflexions sur la violence* (1908) as a text which sings "the same Bergsonian song." Sorel's critique that "our upbringing is directed towards so weakening our tendencies of violence" that "any act of violence is a manifestation of a return to barbarism"[20] had been a position which

[20] Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, Trans. T.E. Hulme (Collier Books/The Free Press, 1950) 180.

Lewis tacitly adopted for the studies of "primitive" humankind that make up the bulk of the stories in *The Wild Body*, written during the pre-WWI period.[21] By the 1920s, however, Lewis disputes the validity of Sorel's apology for revolutionary violence and writes that "all this half-century of propaganda of violence or of action" has led to ideological "traps [...] choked with millions of corpses,"[22] an interwar statement which calls into question the "*philosophy* of action" as a viable means of social change. This position runs counter to Lewis's earlier "Blast" and "Bless" mode of the *Blast* issues, in which, for example, Lewis violently blasts peacetime images like the "SENTIMENTAL GALLIC GUSH" and just as violently blesses "combativeness" and the "GREAT FLOOD OF LIFE pouring out of wound of 1797."[23]

Somehow Lewis manages to package multiple enemy-targets into the single figure of Sorel, since behind Sorel stands T.E. Hulme, who was both Sorel's most famous translator in the 1910s and an influential figure for Lewis during vorticist period.[24] Inside both Hulme and Sorel is Bergson, who Hulme translated and who was deeply influential to Sorel.[25] In a way, this Russian doll effect of packaging one personality inside another restages the implication that Lewis considers these influential figures mimetic automatons of each other, easily reproducible and capable of standing in for (or fitting into) each other. If, as Mark Antliff argues, Bergson's philosophy was rendered pliable and used to legitimize the conservative or progressive schemes of French cultural politics at the time, then Lewis performs a similar action by shrinking the

[21] In *Blast 1*, for instance, Lewis declares that "The Art-Instinct is permanently primitive," giving this instinct an automatist quality which carries "the same instinct as in Nature." See Wyndham Lewis, *Blast 1* (Gingko Press, 2009) 33.
[22] *TWM*, 203.
[23] Lewis, *Blast 1*, 13, 27.
[24] For discussions of Hulme's influence on Lewis and on literary modernism in general, see Jeffrey Meyers, "Kate Lechmere's 'Wyndham Lewis from 1912,'" *Journal of Modern Literature* 10.1 (March, 1983) 158-166, and Michael Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism* (Cambridge UP, 1984) 37-47.
[25] See Mark Antliff, *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (Princeton UP, 1993) 3-15.

complexity of Bergson's ideas down to a micro-version that he expediently replaces with any of his assigned targets.[26]

In the same chapter on "Action" and "Life," Lewis mocks the Italian futurist aesthetic as one predicated on an empty circulation of violence and action, a reasonable critique if not for the fact that Lewis based much of the design and style of the two issues of *Blast* on futurist models.[27] If Lewis was initially sympathetic to the political ideas of Sorel and to the aesthetics of futurist style, why has the Lewis of *Time and Western Man* shifted to a counter-position of blasting these same models? It helps to note that Lewis reads the futurist model as primarily a visual one, writing that it was the futurists "to whom it occurred to oppose *the living person* to the *image* or *representation* into which he or she projects himself or is projected [...]"[28] In a text pretending to combat futurists like F.T. Marinetti and Gino Severini, this is an oddly sympathetic account of futurism, since it's a view that subtly accords with Lewis' own "philosophy of the eye." Lewis describes this philosophy as the "concrete and radiant reality of the optic sense," which produces a "sensation of overwhelming reality which vision alone gives [...]"[29] In both the futurist and Lewisian sense, there is a violent "projecting" forth and "overwhelming" of material reality with the violence of a militarized automaton who is programmed to do nothing else. Indeed, Lewis cites automatism quite directly, writing that the "step from [a statue] to a living creature is a small one; and rivalry between the statue and the living puppet could be guaranteed to become rapidly acute."[30]

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[26] Antliff writes that "the enthusiasm for Bergson's life-affirming organicism could combine anticapitalist ideologies, sometimes unwittingly, with the politics of reaction," and often led to strange appropriations of Bergsonian vitalism to legitimate either fascism or socialism, fauvism or futurism, Christian monarchical traditionalism or French anarcho-syndicalism. See Antliff, *Inventing Bergson*, 3-15.
[27] See "Foreword" by Paul Edwards in *Blast 1*, v-xii.
[28] *TWM*, 203.
[29] *TWM*, 392.
[30] *TWM*, 204.

The solution to Lewis's contradictory positioning can be found in the emphasis Lewis gives to the notion of "rivalry." Evidently, Lewis considers himself the "living puppet" and the archetypal futurist a lifeless "statue," and it is helpful to remember Lewis's corrupted Bergsonian belief that people at bottom are really things, or automatons, pretending to be people. Lewis's political agenda on this question is clear enough. In *The Art of Being Ruled*, Lewis develops a political system predicated on the notion that individuality is a difficult art which most people detest or reject: "The Not-Self (and *not* the self at all) is the goal of human ambition. And not 'freedom,' or the eccentric play of the 'personality,' but submission to a group-rhythm, is what men desire."[31] In the same passage, Lewis quotes Sorel citing Bergson: "'You remember what Bergson wrote (he says) about the impersonal, the socialized, the *ready-made* [...] The pupil has all the more confidence in the formulas offered to him, and he retains them, in consequence, all the more easily, if he imagines that they are accepted by the majority of people.'"[32] The *ready-made*, as we have seen, is a feature of automatism in the arts, and it is also, in the context Sorel-qua-Bergson gives it, a feature of *scientific* automatism, as Pierre Bourdieu describes it, "the *logical* automatisms that [...] become *practical* automatisms" in the sciences through decades of formalization and repetition.[33] In the context Lewis gives to the Bergson citation, there is a third automatism at work here, a *political* automatism that most citizens, shrugging off the burden of an ethical individuality, automatically tend towards. In each case of automatism, Lewis presupposes an intrinsic lack-of-freedom most people submit to through "group-rhythm."

[31] Wyndham Lewis, *The Art of Being Ruled*, ed. Reed Way Dasenbrock (Black Sparrow Press, 1989) 149. Hereafter, *ABR*.
[32] *ABR*, 149.
[33] Pierre Bourdieu, *Science of Science and Reflexivity*, trans. Richard Nice (University of Chicago Press, 2004) 38, 40 (my emphases).

But the notion of "rivalry" also disguises a greater apparatus of feeling that drives Lewis's more generalizable theory of automatism. Lewis's use of mimesis and violence as a built-in aesthetic strategy in his critique of former models seems to prefigure a version of Rene Girard's schema of mimetic rivalry and mimetic desire. Writing on the recurrence of triangulated relationships in Fyodor Dostoevsky's works, Girard provides a useful capsule summary of his theory:

> In Dostoevski, desire has no original or privileged object. This is a primary and fundamental break with Freud. Desire chooses its objects through the mediation of a model; it is the desire of and for the other, which is nonetheless identical to a furious longing to center everything around the self. Desire is essentially torn between the self and the other, who appears more and more masterful, more autonomous than the self. Here lies the paradox of a pride identical with this desire, its inevitable failure. The model designates the desirable while at the same time desiring it. Desire is always an imitation of another desire, desire for the same object, and, therefore, an inexhaustible source of conflicts and rivalries.[34]

Looking back at Lewis's description of the rivalry between the statue and living puppet, it is possible to see in Lewis's theory of the "Not-Self" a kind of mirroring of his own anxieties regarding his lack of self and the possible deflection of seeing *himself* as a mimetic copy of figures like Bergson, Sorel, or Marinetti. What Lewis mimetically "desires" (other than being right or smarter than everyone else) is yet unclear, but Girard's theory provides a viable means of explicating the twists and turns of Lewis's contradictory positions.

Mimetic desire eventually leads toward mimetic rivalry, to what Girard calls the "model-obstacle mechanism": "The more the model transforms itself into an obstacle, the more desire tends to transform the obstacles into models."[35] It is at this stage that the desired object "fades

[34] Rene Girard, *"To Double Business Bound": Essays on Literature, Mimesis, and Anthropology* (Johns Hopkins UP, 1988) 39.
[35] Girard, *"To Double Business Bound,"* 39.

away" under the pressure of a fixation on the model-obstacle, which comes to replace the original desired object: "What must be supposed is that beyond a certain threshold, the truly libidinal element of desire will in turn desert the object and become invested in the rival."[36] The stakes of using such a model (for instance, in decoding Lewis's agonistic qualities) are in "destructuring" the typical hermeneutics of suspicion in literary analysis (Freudian, psychoanalytic, Marxist, sociological) and emphasizing instead the under-examined psychosomatic dynamic of "the violent and violently denied reciprocity of the doubles, the unrecognized mechanism of mimetic desire." Whether in contention with Bergson, with Ezra Pound, with Gertrude Stein, with James Joyce, and others,[37] Lewis tends to locate, develop, and deconstruct a wide swath of models who become obstacles (or obstacles who become models) as a means of situating his own agenda from the standpoint of violent inversion and critique. Reciprocity, mimesis, and rivalry are at the heart of such an aesthetic system, and they offer a more stable view into the grotesque disjunctions, incoherences, and satiric violences of Lewis's work.

Fredric Jameson's celebrated reading of Lewis's aesthetic system offers a model similar to Girardian mimetic rivalry in the description of the "agon of the pseudo-couple," in which characters assume the role of the "merest poles" in a "relational or dialogical axis" that has direct correlates in the geometrical design of Lewis's graphic art. "Characters" are geometrical angles or shapes that respond to the lines of force that emanate from their structural dependency on a spatial orientation to an Other, a mimetic double. That these character-poles reinforce an "agon" or sphere of rivalry in which the model-obstacle assumes the shape of a "'collective' subject"

[36] Girard, *"To Double Business Bound,"* 54.
[37] "Book One" of *Time and Western Man* features chapter-length critiques of Pound, Stein, and Joyce that position them as avatars of Bergson's philosophy and the "time-mind." See *TWM*, 37-115.

bears out the "reification of a struggle arrested and transmuted into static structural dependency."[38] The irony that Lewis's excoriations of the "collective subject" are inversely reflected at the level of a mimetic doubling of the "pseudo-couple" is a significant point of my analysis. Lewis's mimetic rivals constitute the earliest narrative model for his literary approach.

Indeed, many of the stories that comprise *The Wild Body* fabricate, as Hugh Kenner describes it, "a world, hardly more than skin-deep, by a species of verbal impasto."[39] The stories invert, as if from a heightened angle of literary perception, the figures and forms Lewis was accustomed to drawing and painting as an artist. In this respect, it's important to note that when Lewis revised the sketches that would become the stories of *The Wild Body*, he wrote in a manner that inverted the process that went into his paintings. Lewis describes how his first story, "The Death of the Ankou," grew out of a painting he was making, while traveling through Brittany, of "a blind Armorican beggar. The 'short story' [that emerged while he was painting] was the crystallization o*f what I had to keep out of my consciousness while painting*. Otherwise the painting would have been a bad painting. That is how I began to write in earnest."[40] In other words, in switching from one medium to another, from the graphic imagination to the literary imagination, Lewis had to *switch automatisms*, reversing the learned automatism of painting to the "unconscious" automatism of the prose medium. This is in keeping with Lewis's reliance on a philosophy of the eye, in which sight is projective rather than receptive, while literary production turns out to be "hardly more than skin-deep" imprints of visual counters.

[38] Jameson, *Fables of Aggression*, 58-60.
[39] Kenner, *Wyndham Lewis*, 92.
[40] *CWB*, 374; see also Paul Edwards, "Wyndham Lewis's Narrative of Origins: 'The Death of the Ankou'," *The Modern Language Review* 92.1 (January, 1997) 22-35.

Just as significantly, Lewis describes this process of transmedial automatism (changing over from the practical mastery of painting to a crystallized literary unconsciousness) as a key component of the successful artist:

> But my conception of the role of the creative artist is not merely to be *a medium for ideas supplied him wholesale from elsewhere, which he incarnates automatically in a technique which (alone) it is his business to perfect*. It is equally his business to know enough of the sources of his ideas, and ideology, to take steps to keep these ideas out, except such as he may require for his work.[41]

The artist is foregrounded here as a "medium" in the same sense that Lewis's political subject is backgrounded as an "automaton" who unconsciously submits to group-rhythms. Lewis capably describes what I have earlier described as the "art of unconscious intelligence" which master craftsmen "incarnate automatically in a technique [...]"[42] But Lewis takes the extra step of admonishing creative artists from submitting to one automatism (technical, practical) while remaining oblivious of ideological automatisms (reactionary, fascist, or liberal tendencies) that contaminate not only the quality of their work, but also the politics of the work's importation.

It is important to include in this discussion Roger Caillois' concept of the "lyrical automaton," which has multiple striking parallels to Lewis's spatial-optical attitude and to Lewis's theorization of automatism. In the essay, "The Praying Mantis," Caillois discusses "the mimicry of mantises, which illustrates, sometimes hauntingly, the human desire to recover its original insensate condition [...] of returning to prenatal unconsciousness."[43] The mantis becomes a trope through which Caillois explains automatism as a mimetic function that is embedded into anthropocentric desire and rivalry. Besides its capacity to switch colors, roles, and effects

[41] *TWM*, 136 (italics mine).
[42] See Chapter One of my dissertation, "William Morris and the Automatisms of Craft".
[43] Roger Caillois, *The Edge of Surrealism: A Roger Caillois Reader*, ed. Claudine Frank, trans. Claudine Frank and Camille Naish (Duke UP, 2003) 79.

according to the environment it is placed in, the mantis is a medium whose "floral transformations, whereby the insect loses its identity and returns to the plant kingdom, complement its astonishing capacity for automatism [...]."[44] The mantis' "jointed rigidity," moreover, visibly "recalls a coat of armor or an automaton."[45] So, in function and in form, the mantis assumes a pivotal importance in Caillois's theory of automatism, which intends to establish that there "are *objective ideograms, which concretely realize the lyrical and passional virtualities of the mind in the outside world*."[46] With this formulation, we are returned to technical automatism, the art of unconscious intelligence, in the sense that there is a lyrical virtuosity involved in the performance of craft, whether through mimesis or a gradually acquired craft-knowledge. But Caillois' theory also connects to a passional, mimetic automatism that imitates its surroundings through an optical re-coordination of its own projected body. The mantis switches automatisms, or mimetic qualities, depending on its environment and spatial positioning. This version of automatism coheres with what Lewis already described when he switches from one medium to another, i.e. from the sight-based consciousness of painting to the lyric unconsciousness of literary production.

Caillois' essay, written and revised between 1934-1937, would form part of the fifth chapter of Caillois' *La Nécessité d'esprit* (*The Necessity of Mind*), which would be posthumously published in 1981. Caillois would return to the figure of the praying mantis in another essay, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia" (published in the French surrealist journal *Minotaure* in 1935). Discussing the differences between "*offensive mimicry*" and "*defensive mimicry*," Caillois attributes these functions in the praying mantis (and in other insects) to an optical

[44] Caillois, *The Edge of Surrealism*, 80.
[45] Caillois, *The Edge of Surrealism*, 79 (emphasis in original).
[46] Caillois, *The Edge of Surrealism*, 80.

orientation to the world, in one sense explaining the fascination they hold on the anthropomorphic imagination, and in another sense, channeling these zoological insights into a broader theory concerning the optical qualities of automatism beyond that of anthropomorphism: "Here the anthropomorphic objection does not hold, for the eye is the vehicle of fascination throughout the animal kingdom."[47]

Strikingly, this position dovetails with Lewis's "philosophy of the eye," in which Lewis claims that the eye is the central organ of the human imagination, since "it is in the service of the things of vision that my ideas are mobilized."[48] But the correlations do not end there, since Caillois utilizes automatism as not only the desire "*to become assimilated into the environment*," but also as a "veritable lure of space." If the eye predominates, then it is space which absorbs this projection. In Lewis's as much as Caillois' theses, vision precedes mentation, and space surpasses time. (An aesthetic correlate here would be that Lewis regards the graphic imagination as necessarily more virtuosic than a purely textual or temporalized imagination.) Caillois gives a final definition for automatism: "*depersonalization through assimilation into space*," in which "*Life withdraws to a lesser state.*" The lure of space, for mantis and human alike, constitutes an "*instinct d'abandon*."

Most appealingly, Caillois complements Lewis's anti-Bergsonian position with a formulation that would have thrilled the latter artist: automatism, at its most extreme state, refers "to *the inertia of the elan vital*," an implicit rejection of Bergsonian duration that gives more ground to the value of physico-spatial mimicry and reconstitution.[49] The mantis' drive to kill and decapitate its prey and lovers, moreover, strikes Caillois as a spatial rendition of the death-drive,

[47] Caillois, *The Edge of Surrealism*, 93.
[48] *TWM*, 8.
[49] Caillois, *The Edge of Surrealism*, 100-102; see also the "Introduction" by Claudine Frank in *The Edge of Surrealism*, 89-91.

in which the lure of space produces a desire to intervene, overcome, and eventually replace what stretches out before the mimetic organism. "For dispossessed minds, space seems to constitute a will to devour."[50] In other words, environmental space prompts mimicry, and mimicry prompts a predatory drive toward violent projection or defense. This fascination with death allegorizes the anti-Bergsonian position as a rejection of vitalism; not only space, but death too precedes and sets the conditions for life's duration. We can see how this would have attracted Lewis had he been aware of Caillois' writings.

Daniel Tiffany has already explored the implications of Caillois' theory for a broader understanding of the meaning of automatism in an expanded field, particularly in relation to a "philosophy of dolls" in which "automatons" like Hans Bellmer's *La Poupée* or Caillois' praying mantis arrive at an extractable theory of the lyricism of human unconsciousness.[51] I extend Tiffany's discussion of the "lyrical automaton" to a sharpened reading of Lewis's overriding desire to recode organic life as a series of optical surfaces that spatialize, rather than temporalize, relations between actors in an agon of production. Lewis's rancor toward Bergson's time-philosophy, and what he perceived as the dominant trend in literary modernism for psychologization and the "time-mind," can be understood through his adoption of an "inertia of the elan vital," which sought to restore the intellectual climate of his time to a "philosophy of the eye."

[50] Caillois, *The Edge of Surrealism,* 100.

[51] Tiffany writes that "the autonomy and 'objectivity' of unconscious processes" contribute to "the regime of analogy on which philosophical atomism is founded," but I am less interested in atomism than I am in the uses of automatism for paradoxical shifts between mediums, politics, and avant-garde forms of experimentation. See Tiffany, *Toy Medium*, 83-6.

B. Mimesis and Violence in The Wild Body

The central story of *The Wild Body*, "A Soldier of Humor," which also begins the book, neatly dramatizes Caillois' "inertia of the elan vital" as well as the Girardian model-obstacle mechanism, both of which produce not only automatisms but automatons. It is a graphically oriented story whose surfaces of engagement compound several key features of Lewis's aesthetic system that emerge throughout his other works. Besides offering up a model version of mimetic desire and mimetic rivalry, the story also constitutes a sophisticated response to Lewis's complex feelings toward mimetic violence: humor as a weapon or instrument of aggression. Lewis assumes the role of a "soldier of humor" during moments when mimetic rivalry threatens to terminate prematurely in a fixed victor/loser pattern. In Lewis's view, there is no aesthetic response more transfiguring, more unpredictable, and more disarming than laughter. Self-satire or autoreferential humiliation becomes a strategy of aesthetic reversal. Laughter-as-violence, as we have seen, is a tenet of Bergsonian vitalism that, despite all of Lewis's entreaties to the contrary, continued to be operative in Lewis's aesthetic system, albeit in complex inversions of form.

"A Soldier of Humor" begins with a graphic description of the narrator of *The Wild Body* stories, a "large blond clown" by the name of Ker-Orr. Ker-Orr's physicality is the central fact of his characterization: "My body is large, white and savage. But all the fierceness has become transformed into *laughter*. It still looks like a visi-gothic fighting-machine, but it is in reality a *laughing* machine."[52] Lewis's characterization builds up an organic machine whose graphic surface is a series of vectors that channel laughter as anthropomorphic simulacrum, a "laughing machine" for mimicking human subjectivity. (The bizarrerie of Ker-Orr's name may indeed be

[52] *CWB*, 17.

attributed to an onomatopoeic version of the guffaw.) Laughter is the alchemization of violent impulses that arise from machinic, empirical stimuli. Violence, an automatic instinct in many of Lewis's characters, is transmuted into laughter, a convulsive force of the "wild body," and it is laughter which Lewis theorizes as the critical presencing of the anthropomorphic. What electrifies the inert body into a wild body is laughter, since laughter is what disarms, disembeds, and confounds the staid rhythms of life. Ker-Orr inhabits his body in the way a sardonic imp would inhabit a gargantuan machine of physical, violent potential, an "I" that is a surface or geometrical posture programmable, or programmed by, binocular vision:

> My sense of humour in its mature phase has arisen in this very acute consciousness of what is *me*. In playing that off against another hostile *me*, that does not like the smell of mine, probably finds my large teeth, height and so forth abominable, I am in a sense working off my alarm at myself. So I move at a more primitive level than most men, I expose my essential *me* quite coolly, and all men shy a little. This forked, strange-scented, blond-skinned gut-bag, with its two bright rolling marbles with which it sees, bull's eyes full of mockery and madness, is my stalking-horse. I hang somewhere in its midst operating it with detachment.[53]

Ker-Orr is an organic machine that plays off others as a reflection or mirror-image of its own anthropomorphic properties. It accomplishes this in the form of an active *ressentiment* disguised as an aggressively combative humor which dissembles as much as it reveals. Merely in inhabiting its gross wild body, Ker-Orr mocks others through a mobilization of carnivalesque humor and cultured inversions. His body seeks enemies, "hostile *me*s," or what Girard would term mimetic doubles, as a way of verifying its own mechanic prerogatives. Utilizing satirical warfare and violent laughter, Ker-Orr's body intends to disturb other organic machines into a recognition of their own ludicrous anthropomorphism. This ritual is in keeping with Lewis's

[53] *CWB*, 17.

Bergsonian pronouncements on the comic: people are actually machines or "gut-bags" who pretend to be special human organisms. It is with this in mind that Ker-Orr designates himself a "soldier of humour" on the war campaign of attacking Bergsonian vitalism, even if, paradoxically, Ker-Orr is himself a walking vitalist philosophy who plans to "show you myself in action, maneuvering in the heart of the reality."[54] Bergson, of course, based his vitalist philosophy at the level of the body-in-action, "maneuvering in the heart of the reality," and conceived of the body's *elan vital* as a graphic assemblage or "aggregate of images."[55] But Lewis does not acknowledge this purloinment from what is, on closer view, a concealed model-obstacle mechanism.

Eventually Ker-Orr finds his enemy, his mimetic double, in the figure of an "implacable" Frenchman named Monsieur de Valmore. They meet in a "vortex of strenuous and burlesque encounters," the "volcanic soil" of the north coast of Spain. Even before encountering the enemy, Ker-Orr, on his campaign of satiric warfare, seeks out any figure of mimetic violence/desire, "to make war on it and to cherish it like a lover, at once." The scene is a late-night dinner at the Fonda del Mundo, where Ker-Orr has arrived from Paris, a pension peopled by an "abundance of cheap beings [...] of the same meridional order as the wine and food." Staff and waiters are undifferentiated from the geometrical aliveness of the setup of tables, dishes, and implements. Out of this graphic assemblage—a picture plane of stationary and action-infused abstractions that sometimes speak the language of humans, sometimes the language of things—the anomalous organic-machine of M. de Valmore emerges:

> He was dressed with sombre floridity. In his dark purple-slate suit with thin crimson lines, in his dark red hat-band, in his rose-buff tie, swarming with cerulean fire-flies, in his stormily flowered waistcoat, you felt that his taste for the

[54] *CWB*, 19.
[55] Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer (Zone Books, 2002) 10-25.

> violent and the sumptuous had everywhere struggled to assert itself, and everywhere been overcome. But by what? That was the important secret of this man's entire machine…[56]

The secret to M. de Valmore's "machine," we learn, lies in the Frenchman's predilection for the "sublime," a term of censure for Lewis, particularly in a character so thoroughly mechanical and yet preposterously sensual in habit. Ker-Orr's *ressentiment* is aroused, and he can't help but rebuke this quality in the Frenchman when the latter charitably attempts to befriend his fellow late-night diner, the only two still eating at that time of night. Kerr-Orr, responding to the Frenchman's stray, feckless observation, "*Il fait beau ce soir*," summarily contradicts him, "Not at all. It's by no means a fine night." This contradiction is an immediate marker of what Max Scheler describes as an automatic *ressentiment*, a nearly unconscious tendency to negate others through an internalized "thirst for revenge."[57] Ker-Orr confesses, "I cannot say why I contradicted him in this fashion. Perhaps the insolent and mystical gage of drollery his appearance flung down was the cause."

A social game of what Pierre Bourdieu would call cultural positioning and position-taking ensues,[58] in which the Frenchman, learning that Kerr-Orr is, in fact, an Englishman, adopts an "american" posture, one which deflects and defies Kerr-Orr's englishness. Abandoning what Kerr-Orr recognizes as a hereditary "Midi" behavior, M. de Valmore transitions to "the tongue of New York," a move that platforms a miniature culture war between the two: Who has the greater appetite? Who can speak more languages, flawlessly, in their native accent? Who can wear the most masks? Who is the worldliest? These unspoken questions arise from a mimetic

[56] *CWB*, 23.
[57] See Max Scheler, *Ressentiment*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Marquette UP, 1994)
[58] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (Columbia UP, 1993) 29-73.

rivalry that inverts M. de Valmore's affectations with the mirror-image of Ker-Orr's oppositional logic: "I renewed my tactics, he his. Subject after subject was chosen. His volte-face, his change of attitude in the argument, became less and less leisurely. But my skill in reversing remained more than a match for his methods. At length, whatever I said he said the opposite […]"[59] This interplay is at the heart of Lewis's enemy-politics, a *ressentiment* that counteracts, as in a mimetic system of checks and balances, the fluctuations of another's response system.

M. de Valmore, a naturalized "american citizen," had "brought away from the United States [...] an american accent of almost alarming perfection." This carefully acquired possession strikes Ker-Orr as a fragmentation of the Frenchman's racial/national identity attributable to an inherently "romantic" posture. Lewis sees in M. de Valmore's "american posture" the universal capacity of organic machines to adopt, manufacture, and feign national identity at the level of language, since language, in Lewis's system, is based on a purely external, graphic plane of engagement. National and racial identity are as much a fiction as that of the human organism pretending to be anything but a ludicrous ensemble of humors and organs. This is one reason why Lewis insists in his writing practice on de-capitalizing "american" and "french" as mere adjectives rather than, as he claims they are in English usage, substantive ontologies of character.[60] In this sense, authentic "accent" manifests the essential artifice of the Wild Body, an ensemble which puts on a showcase of human affect as the false semblance of identitarian fixity.

Eventually M. de Valmore and Ker-Orr's dialogic encounter escalates from mimetic desire to mimetic violence, in what can be described as a brief rehearsal of Lewis's Blast/Bless

[59] *CWB*, 28.

[60] Lewis also has optically sensitive reasons for decapitalization. In the second issue of *The Enemy* (1927), Lewis writes that the "use of capitals and lower case departs from current english usage" because, graphically speaking, his eye is "offended by the spectacle of a host of capital letters sticking up on a page, and drawing the eye to words that do not seem to call for this emphasis or singularity more than those around them." See Lewis, *The Enemy: A Review of Art and Literature, No.* 2, ed. David Peters Corbett (Black Sparrow Press, 1994) ix-x.

modus in *Blast*. The Frenchman "blasts" England ("He repeated 'England' as though that word in itself were [...] an unanswerable question"), while the Englishman mimics this blasting with his own reversal: "'...how about the South of France, for that matter—the south of France! the South of France! The bloody Midi, your home-land, you poor bum!' I gnashed my teeth as I said this."[61] The gnashing of teeth, as Bernard Lafourcade notes, is a trait of Lewis's graphic conceptualization of the "Tyro" figure, a phase of artistic production that resulted in "a series of pictures coming under the head of satire," and which would culminate in a solo exhibition, "Tyros and Portraits," at the Leicester Galleries in April 1921.[62] The Tyro phase formed the basis for Lewis's other short-lived journal, *The Tyro* (1921-22), dedicated almost exclusively to reproductions of artworks and art criticism, and of which only two issues were published. Tyros, according to Lewis's definition in the first issue of the journal, are "immense novices [who] brandish their appetites in their faces, [and] lay bare their teeth in a valedictory, inviting, or merely substantial laugh."[63]

Evidently, Ker-Orr, who Lewis conceptualized in the first iteration of the story in 1911, and in its revised form in 1927, is at once a prehistory of and continuation to the Tyronic figure. M. de Valmore, Ker-Orr's mimetic double, also squares with Lewis' classification: "This sunny commotion in the face, at the gate of the organism, brings to the surface all the burrowing and interior broods which the individual may harbor [...] Some of these Tyros are trying to furnish you with a moment of almost Mediterranean sultriness, in order, in this region of engaging warmth, to obtain some advantage over you." Whether in the figure of M. de Valmore or in Ker-

[61] *CWB*, 28.
[62] *CWB*, 353.
[63] *CWB*, 354.

Orr, the Tyro is typified by a violent disruption of surface ("commotion in the face") that brings to the fore a demonic smile or diabolical laugh as a weaponized instrument of satiric dissection.

The Tyro, as such, is a permutation of the Wild Body, and it doubles as a totemic figure of violent desire, a concept which Lewis would explicate in the essay, "Inferior Religions," included at the conclusion of *The Wild Body*, but originally published in September 1917. "The fascinating imbecility of the creaking men machines" in their elemental nature constitute "inferior religions" (i.e. minor totems of religious or stupefying emotion) that, following the Girardian schema of mimetic desire/violence, are magnetized or "fascinated by one object, for instance; one at once another vitality." The Tyro "bangs up against it [the mimetic rival or model-obstacle] wildly at regular intervals, blackens it, contemplates it, moves round it and dreams. He reverences it: it is his task to kill it. All such fascination is religious."[64] Lewis conceives of the "sublime" (what Ker-Orr recognizes in M. de Valmore's peculiar sensual nature) as a species of religious stupefaction which infuses the organic machine with a "wildness" that attracts, disarms, unsettles, and eventually clashes with other co-constituted bodies on the basis of mimetic desire. The "primitive people" of Brittany and Northern Spain who Lewis encountered during his travels in 1908-1911, and on whom he based *The Wild Body*'s "studies in a savage worship and attraction," constitute "types of humanity" who in their mechanical, habit-driven automatism disprove the notion of human autonomy. In Lewis's eyes, each body, reduced to a primitive form of automatism, is an assemblage of organs and humors that coordinate the greater apparatus of the Wild Body.

In treating these characters as ethnographic studies, Lewis's disquisitions on "inferior religions" and "generic puppets" fall in line with Rene Girard's writings on the role of sacrificial

[64] *CWB*, 149.

violence in ancient tribal culture: "At the height of the sacrificial crisis man's desires are focused on one thing only: violence. And in one way or another violence is always mingled with desire."[65] Girard analyzes ancient Greek mythological representation, but it is precisely this reduction of violence to the articulation of sacred figures, and the identification of mimetic doubles, that Lewis dramatizes in his "carefully selected specimens of religious fanaticism," who represent "violent individualities" for whom "all difference is energy."[66] Mimetic desire, such as in that of M. de Valmore and Ker-Orr, begins as the search for agreement and equivalence ("Il fait bien ce soir"), and ends, when this equivalence is complicated by difference ("difference is energy"), with the gesturing toward mimetic violence, a *ressentiment* aroused by the clash of humors that pretend at anthropomorphic and cultural supremacy (e.g. who is more "english"? who is more "american"?).

Lewis's contribution to the model-obstacle mechanism is that of the Tyronic figure who uses laughter as the inversion of violence, in which sacrificial violence is either subverted or sublimated by the model-obstacle of the mimetic function. In Lewis's parlance, this would equate to the declamation: "I *see* you are pretending at being a man, in particular an 'american,' and I laugh at this, mock it, anatomize it, leave it open to ridicule. You are nothing but a mimetic machine made of organs."

There is one other Tyronic text which exemplifies the mimetic rivalry at the heart of M. de Valmore and Ker-Orr's dialogic encounter. In the second issue of *The Tyro* (1922), Lewis published a brief dialogue, "Tyronic Dialogues--X. and F.", in which the personae of X. and F. trade ideas on the nature of the Tyro, which they come to recognize as the source of their shared automatism. The scene follows the typical Lewisian agon in which a "pseudo-couple" is

[65] Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Bloomsbury, 2013) 163.
[66] *CWB*, 150.

developed from the spatial orientation of two oppositional forms. X. responds to F., and vice versa, because they are mimetic doubles situated in a geometrical constriction. One cannot exist, or speak, without the other in its presence, being that they share reciprocant angles on a plane of psychological refraction. Describing a scene of bodies similar to the restaurant scene in "A Soldier of Humour," in which friends and acquaintances of X. and F. blend and "literally seem to have grown into each other," X. offers a summary account of the graphic postures and habitual actions to which Tyros seem to be frozen in:

> X. -- [...] In the evening I met Z.D.G. and D.T. in the restaurant. D.T. was already blind. So *he* was an unmixed automaton. [...] By hard times, no doubt, everyone has been driven into any automatic unconscious life they can find; for their vitality announces peremptorily that no more adventures, risks or efforts can be allowed. People, also, for this programme, are thrown outwards on each other more and more--driven out of themselves; for in themselves imagination or effort awaits them. That this has always characterised people, and especially civilized people, that it is, in fact, life, is indisputable. But I should be inclined to assert that our time could provide the student of such phenomena with as good a specimen as he could wish.
>
> F. -- You make me uncomfortable, X. I feel that my words, as I utter them, are issuing from a machine. I appear to myself a machine, whose destiny it is to ask questions.
>
> X. -- The only difference is that I am a machine constructed to provide you with answers. I am alive, however. But I am beholden for life to machines that are asleep.[67]

The conclusion of this remarkable dialogue between X. and F emblematizes several distinct categories in Lewis's aesthetic system. X., who Bernard Lafourcade identifies as an early version of Lewis's conceptualization of "the Enemy," acts as a surrogate for Lewis's "ethnographer" role. X. is explicitly there to decipher, anatomize, narrate, and depict the respective automatisms

[67] *CWB*, 369-70.

of other “Tyros” and “creaking men machines,” and contribute to the theoretical corpus of the organic machine, the swarming Wild Body. There is undoubtedly a vicious ethnocentric streak of racialization at work here, one which works to regard those peoples outside of civilized european models as “primitive” and reducible to “any automatic unconscious life they could find.” Indeed, in the dialogue above, X. notes that it is “civilized people” who are especially subject to the “cultured” automatisms of the civilizational process.

In any case, X. responds to F. as an enemy and as a model: F.’s relationality to X. is a pictorial sphere or agon, one in which geometrical proximity determines the organic functions and respective automatisms of one point in the grid (X.) to the other (F.). Lewis’s drawing of X. and F. indicates this tightness in composition. In the same way that X. is compelled by life’s “vitality” to examine and dissect “machines that are asleep,” F. is compelled to be a perpetual interlocutor for X., alternating between contention or agreement, but always in some “structural dependency” upon the reverse-angle Tyronic pole. The mimetic doubling or “pseudo-couple” of X. and F. does not quite build up to mimetic violence, such as what occurs at the conclusion of “A Soldier of Humour,” but it does indicate the tensions latent in such a doubling, particularly in X.s observation that the civilizational automatisms in people are what throw them “outwards on each other more and more—driven out of themselves” into a violence of form. This formulation draws out what I indicate by an *automatism of violence*: mimetic rivalry recurs, inevitably, to violence. The double awakens its rival to the startling realization that their relation is mimetic rather than original, and a breakdown of form ensues.

“A Soldier of Humour” ends with a climactic cafe scene in which Ker-Orr, after having gone through a series of socio-cultural humiliations at the hands of his enemy, M. de Valmore, fortuitously comes across a trio of “americans,” named Taffany, Blauenfeld, and Morton, old

friends of Ker-Orr's with whom he quickly plots to have his revenge enacted on the United States-idolizing Frenchman. Ker-Orr describes the situation to the three Americans (whose indiscriminate seriality closely resembles the "threewomen who all walked / in the same dress" in Mina Loy's "Giovanni Franchi"[68]), and they readily assent to locate, excite, and attract M. de Valmore with their american "authenticity." Ker-Orr's plan is for his American friends to develop a brief but intense camaraderie with him, only to wait for the triumphant staged entrance of Ker-Orr, whose more intimate alliance with the Americans is intended to provoke envy in the Frenchman's renewed gaze at Ker-Orr.

The psychic humiliation of M. de Valmore, upon seeing his enemy approach the table and ingratiate himself with the American trio, creates a graphic spatialization that suggests the scope of one of Lewis's vorticist paintings:

> My enemy pulled himself together as though the different parts of his body all wanted to leap away in different directions, and he found it all he could do to prevent such disintegration. An attempt at a bow appeared as a chaotic movement, the various parts of his body could not come together for it. It had met other movements on the way, and never became a bow at all. An extraordinary confusion beset his body. The beginning for a score of actions ran over it blindly and disappeared.[69]

The violence that besets M. de Valmore's body marks it at once as an organic machine that futilely mimes at cultural presencing but cannot process the graphic boundaries of its own figural place in the picture composed by Ker-Orr's counter-mimesis. Indeed, the Frenchman's body is imprinted with "a score of actions" that respond, quite automatically, to Ker-Orr's emergent precedence, which seems to say: "I am closer to 'americanism' than you are; this shadowplay staged for your benefit has been a simulation of your own mimetic drive; you are a machine and

[68] See Chapter Two of my dissertation, "Mina Loy and the Automatisms of Reproduction".
[69] *CWB*, 45.

nothing more." The conclusion of the story terminates in M. de Valmore's complete disappearance from the scene of humiliations. One mimetic rival has violently supplanted its double: "During the next two days I on several occasions visited the battlefield, but Monsieur de Valmore had vanished."

C. Violence and Mimesis in Tarr

The cafe scene in "A Soldier of Humour" is almost directly replicated in Part VI, "Holocausts," of Lewis's novel *Tarr*, in which Frederick Sorbert Tarr, Otto Kreisler, and Soltyk, three painters in the Parisian scene of the 1910s, develop a more intricate, triangular mimetic rivalry. The complex history of *Tarr*'s composition, begun as a "long story" around 1908, would place it within the locus of the earliest sketches and vignettes (1908-1915) that would become the stories contained in *The Wild Body*. As such, the aesthetic origins of *Tarr* are directly related to the philosophical thought and impulses of the Lewis of the pre-vorticism period. According to Paul Edwards, the germ of *Tarr* (which might have begun life as a possible inclusion in *The Wild Body*) probably contained only Parts II and VI of the eventual novelized version, sections which focus almost exclusively on Otto Kreisler's characterization and the aforementioned cafe scene. In this respect, it is noteworthy that in Lewis's revisions of the 1918 version(s)[70] of the novel, re-published in 1928 in a longer version, the primary incidentals of this mimetic triangle are largely left intact.

[70] First published in an abridged serialized form in *The Egoist* from 1916-17, *Tarr* was afterward published in June 1918 in the United States by Alfred A. Knopf, and in July 1918 in the U.K. by the Egoist Press. The "1918 version" of the novel is thus divided between two variant forms, the English and the American editions, with substantive differences in typography, spelling, and punctuation between them. Paul O'Keefe notes that Lewis based his extensive revision and expansion of *Tarr* for the 1928 version on the 1918 American edition, the latter of which forms the basis for his Black Sparrow Press edition of the novel (see Paul O'Keefe's "Introduction" and "Afterword" to *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, 5-6, 361-85). The history of Lewis's multiple and extensive revisions to all of his literary works, beginning with *Tarr* and *The Wild Body*, is essentially the history of a visual artist trained to regard each of his compositions as subject to the pictorial requirements of incessant framing and reframing.

Kreisler, an organic machine or passionate "automaton," for whom "womenkind" and sex are a "theater" of operations, comes to resemble a more heightened version of the easily-offendable sensualist M. de Valmore. Tarr, on the other hand, appears as a mimetic double of Ker-Orr, insofar as both are constituted by an abstract relationality to Lewis himself, the observer who hangs "somewhere in [their] midst operating [them] with detachment." This description recalls Caillois' formulation of the "lyric automaton" as a split in which the "body and mind [...] become dissociated; the subject crosses the boundary of his own skin and stands outside of his senses."[71] Kreisler constitutes himself as a lyric automaton adjusting to the Parisian avant-garde scene, and he is eventually driven by the "lure of space" to violences of varying degrees; Tarr, on the other hand, adjusts himself as a self-aware automaton who uses Kreisler as a model-obstacle to situate himself within the same space of relations.

The mimetic object of desire which initially binds Tarr to Kreisler is Bertha Lunken, Tarr's "official fiancée," a German woman who Lewis's misogyny reduces to a sexual conduit for the two male artists. In the same manner that Tarr and Kreisler represent two poles of artistic acumen—the former an intellectual, abstract machine (similar to X.) and the latter a sexually-driven, "passionate" machine (similar to F.)—Bertha's receptive, docile nature is complemented by Anastasya Vasek, a Russian "New Woman" who uses her "swagger sex" as an instrument of humor-warfare. Fredric Jameson's useful ordering of the four characters in a Greimas square highlights the carefully constructed four-fold semiotic flow between heavily-gendered, dialectical subjectivities that fit into Lewis's worldview.[72]

[71] Caillois, *The Edge of Surrealism,* 100.
[72] Jameson, *Fables of Aggression*, 99.

Like Ker-Orr, Tarr remains Lewis's "showman," with whom he "associate[s]...with all he says on the subject of humour."[73] Indeed, in a cancelled section of the "Prologue" to the 1918 edition published by *The Egoist*, Lewis notes in the character of Tarr a certain "inaptitude for life, and the *arrière* character of his commoner appetites."[74] The "*arrière* character" corresponds to what Martin Puchner describes as the "rear-guard" qualities of Lewis's bellicose, inverse positionality to the avant-garde,[75] and in *Tarr* it is marked by a supercilious position-taking that mocks the "bourgeois bohemians" of the Parisian art scene. Kreisler's modus performs the opposite, confusing what Lewis calls his "sex-instinct" for a false aesthetic intelligence that only manages to contort itself into a vivid *ressentiment*, this time in the strict sense Scheler gives it, as a repressive unconscious envy and hostility toward others.

Both suffer from an "inaptitude for life," but their internal mechanisms function differently, along the lines of the Tyros X. and F. Tarr absorbs and diminishes his humiliations through the recognition of his own satirical automaticity; he is a self-aware machine "constructed to provide [...] answers" and narrate the organic machine's artifices and stratagems. Kreisler, on the other hand, mistakes his Bergsonian involvement in space-time as the holistic, inescapable fact of his own embodiment. The wild body Kreisler inhabits is reduced to an unconscious automatism that seems to alternate between a Freudian sex-drive or death-drive, between "oceanic feeling" and the dismal boundedness of material subjectivity. Culture becomes a "romantic" matter of life and death for Kreisler, who can only respond through mimetic violence. Whereas for Tarr, culture is a simulation model for anthropomorphic tendencies which only

[73] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Edition*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Black Sparrow Press, 1990) 15. Hereafter *Tarr 1918*.
[74] *Tarr 1918*, 360.
[75] See Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes* (Princeton UP, 2006) 1-7.

become observable, manageable, and narratable through a satiric relation to "vitalism" and "life".

These antinomies are played out in Chapter 8, Part V ("A Megrim of Humour") of *Tarr*, where Tarr, concerned with Kreisler's odd disappearance from the usual Paris cafes he frequents, seeks out and confronts Kreisler in the latter's apartment. The German, offended by the Englishman's sudden intrusion into his living quarters, proceeds to threaten and eventually humiliate Tarr: "'Heraus, Schwein!' shouted Kreisler, in a sort of incredulous drawling crescendo, shooting his hand towards the door and urging his body like the cox of a boat: like a sheep-dog he appeared to be collecting Tarr together and urging him out."[76] Shocked and discomfited by the German's sudden violent manner, Tarr remains rooted to the spot, prompting Kreisler to flourish "an old dog-whip in his hand" and crack it menacingly at the Englishman: "'Ah you go? Look at this!' He cracked the whip once or twice. 'This is what I keep for hounds like you! Crack!' He cracked it again…"[77] Tarr is forcibly evacuated from the scene, and feeling the burn of deep insult, cannot overcome the injury to his ego with his usual appetite for laughter:

> His unreadiness, his dislike for action, his fear of ridicule, he treated severely in turn: he laughed at himself: but it was no good. At last he surrendered to the urgency of his vanity: plans for retrieving this discomfort came crowding upon him. He would go to the Cafe as usual on the following evening, sit down smilingly at Kreisler's table as though nothing had happened: in short, he would altogether endorse the opinion that Kreisler had formed of him. And yet why this meanness, even assumed? His contempt for everybody else in the end must degrade him: for if nothing in other men was worth honouring, finally his own self-neglect must result, like the Cynic's dishonourable condition.[78]

[76] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr* (1928), ed. Scott W. Klein (Oxford World's Classics, 2010) 207. Hereafter, *Tarr 1928*.
[77] *Tarr 1928*, 208.
[78] *Tarr 1928*, 209.

Lewis's characters are not usually capable of resorting to direct violence as a solution to these agonistic struggles. Humor thus becomes weaponized as the manifestation of a superior intelligence, or at least, of a transcendence of the impasse of mimetic rivalry. Violence mimicking violence generates a circularity of form that uselessly returns to the supremacy of the initial aggressor (Otto Kreisler). The model-obstacle cannot be resolved in either the acquisition of the originary object of desire (Bertha Lunken), nor in the destruction of the mimetic rival. Lewis's literary recourse is to supplant the model-obstacle through a vigorous satirization of events or what might be described as a graphic deterritorialization of fixed opponents and permanent oppositions. Mimetic rivalry disappears when the circular desire for mimesis is uprooted and transmuted into aesthetic inversion. For Lewis, as much as for his puppet-forms in Ker-Orr and Tarr, aesthetic inversion adopts the stratagem of "self-neglect," in which a degrading position is circumvented through self-satirization, an inversion of direct violence that is "like the Cynic's dishonourable condition," a misanthropy that does not hesitate at assigning itself the same cruel lens of critique. As Hal Foster notes of another of Lewis' mimetic doubles, Marinetti, the "rhetoric of violence" at work here is "[s]adistic on the surface" but "masochistic underneath," desiring to "explode in his autotomic fantasies."[79]

Tarr's motivations for seeking out Kreisler fall in line with the Girardian model-obstacle mechanism. Knowing that the German was now seeing Bertha on more than friendly grounds, Tarr comes to regard Kreisler as an "'obstacle'" which has to be "eluded" so that Tarr could "get back into position again."[80] The return to position, as in a war campaign of humors, takes place in the following section, Part VI, where Tarr locates Kreisler in the Cafe des Sports Aquatiques, flanked this time by a Russian artist by the name of Bitzenko. Carrying out his plan of

[79] Hal Foster, *Prosthetic Gods* (MIT Press, 2004) 126.
[80] *Tarr 1928*, 205.

encountering Kreisler "as though nothing had happened," Tarr sits directly at Kreisler's table, half-expecting the German to resume his earlier aggressions. Instead, Tarr is surprised to find himself in the German's line of sight directed at another table, one where "a group of eight or ten young men" who "looked rather german, but smoother and more vivacious" sat. Springing up quite suddenly (and scaring Tarr in the process, who "mechanically moved his hand upwards from his lap [...] to ward off a blow"), Kreisler heads over to the other table and commences to slap Soltyk in the face, a hapless "Pole" with whom, we learn via flashback, Kreisler had initiated yet another triangulated mimetic rivalry. This latter mimetic rivalry also has a woman at its core, Anastasya Vasek, the desired object between Kreisler and Soltyk. The model-obstacle immanent in Soltyk is not merely anchored to his presumed dalliances with Anastasya (as Kreisler imagines them), but also to the relative success as an artist Soltyk seems to obtain in the novel's chronotope, instigating Kreisler's boundlessly "german" *ressentiment*.

In any case, the triangulated mimetic rivalry between Kreisler, Tarr, and Bertha is, much to Tarr's bemusement, *re-mimicked* and substituted by Kreisler's violent rivalry with Soltyk over Anastasya. A double mimesis ensues which leaves Tarr feeling, "as he watched the man Kreisler had struck, [that] he seemed to be watching himself."[81] This distantiation from his own scene of humiliation and from the mimetic rivalry he found himself conducted into by Kreisler's violent automatisms, conjures a vortex of semblances and doublings in Tarr's eyes, a gyre in which Kreisler effectively seals his automatic desire for mimetic violence and self-extinction as the sublimation of his failures as an artist in the Parisian scene of the 1910s.

The agonistic struggles depicted in "A Soldier of Humor" and *Tarr* crystallize many of the key intellectual features of Lewis's work as a whole. Besides substantiating a mimetic rivalry

[81] *Tarr 1928*, 215.

model that would be employed in practically the majority of Lewis's fiction, it also brings to the foreground Lewis's ideas on the automaton nature of his characters, which are revealing of his greater ideas on the human body as an organic machine. Paradoxically, the Lewisian hero manifests as a body that, at its most wild, appears to be controlled from within by a disinterested intellect who uses irony, sarcasm, cynicism, and *ressentiment* as mental weapons. Violence jars this intellect into action or it silences the body into counter-mimetic automatisms. For Lewis, the human organism is nothing more than a machine that dissembles or obscures the ludicrous fact that it considers itself an autonomous and specialized personality. Violence, as we have seen, is a method of provoking or disrupting this illusion of the autonomous body, either through direct force or through the satiric imposition of mimetic self-awareness. In Lewis's aesthetic system, violence is not necessarily an act or event restricted to ascendant lines of force, but a posture or attitude that severs the correlation between the human body and its muscular belief that it is more than a thing or automaton.

II. *One-Way Song*: Automatism as Verse-Satire

Lewis's *One-Way Song*, published by Faber and Faber in 1933, represents the culmination of what I have been narrating as Lewis's compositional mode of satiric mimesis. *One-Way Song* is also Lewis's only major work of poetry to have been published in his lifetime, and one which has oddly escaped the interest of mainstream scholarship on Lewis. Such an indifference to the work, even in his own lifetime, was met by Lewis as proceeding from the mistaken notion that the public did not consider him a poet but a novelist and painter who suddenly began to write poetry—and this erroneous view prompted him to explain otherwise:

> Many people have enquired how it was that I, novelist, pamphleteer, sociologist and so on, suddenly took it upon my head to produce a volume of verse. The

> answer is very simple: I was in the first place, and for years, when young, a writer of verse. One fine day I took it into my head to write a novel. So the enquiry, if at all, should be framed the other way round.[82]

Lewis's apprehensions regarding his vocational status and abilities as a poet may be sourced in his anxieties concerning his role as a transmedial artist who works to prevent the material from other mediums spill over into his painting or writing. In the case of his poetry, Lewis was likely anxious about his being judged as a prose-stylist incapable of writing verse with the experimental flourish of contemporaries like Eliot or Pound. Indeed, *One-Way Song* is written in what Lewis calls "verse-satire," and it is formally closer to the style of Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift than to the verse experimentation of H.D. or Mina Loy. Lewis returns, yet again, to the roots of the comic in his adoption of verse-satire, "in which class *One-Way Song* would [...] be found," as it "belongs to the comic muse." Lewis is more-than-usually voluble in setting down the general argument and shape of *One-Way Song*, which I submit here in lieu of my own summary:

> This considerable poem of two thousand lines is in fact a series of four pieces. *The Song of the Militant Romance* is a lyrical statement of the Romantic attitude in art. There is no counterbalancing statement of the Classical attitude. But in the body of the long succeeding piece, *If So the Man You Are*, a number of Boileau-like verses [...] effect, without comment, the necessary contrast. In *If So the Man You Are* it is mainly in the portion given up to the apology and denunciation put into the mouth of 'The Enemy' [...] that these Boileau-like couplets are to be found. Throughout this chain of poems the expression is dramatic: that is to say it is invariably a person, or a variety of persons, speaking.[83]

Although Lewis brings up one of his favorite debates, the question of the "Romantic" attitude versus the "Classical" attitude, I am less interested in this question—developed as it is under the considerable influence of T.E. Hulme and T.S. Eliot—than I am in the return of Lewis's "Enemy" character, who seems to transgress the binary code of these two regimes of modernist

[82] Wyndham Lewis, *Collected Poems and Plays*, ed. Alan Munton (Routledge, 2003) 208. Hereafter, *CPP*.
[83] *CPP*, 207.

politics. "The Enemy" is at once a major figure in Lewis's storehouse of characters, a politics of mimetic rivalry based upon the model-obstacle mechanism, and a spatial positioning in a field of cultural production. It is also the title of Lewis's last self-edited run of literary journals, *The Enemy*, which ran for three issues starting in 1927.[84]

Lewis has, up to this point, bragged about his intellectual transcendence of the dyadic split in politics (between fascism and socialism) and the split between aesthetic regimes (between avant-gardism and classicism). And it is the figure of the Enemy which allows Lewis a paradoxical freedom in presenting himself as a conservative when he finds himself in a smugly progressive milieu or reinventing himself as an avant-gardist when critiquing reactionary positions. The Enemy, as Lewis makes clear, is a "invariably a person, or a variety of persons, speaking," as it were, from a political position that changes according to whoever it happens to be in diametrical relation with. The first issue of *The Enemy*, in fact, uses a passage from Plutarch's *Moralia* as an epigraph for the project as a whole, and it explains what the enemy-position fulfills for the eternal antagonist: "'A man of understanding is to benefit by his enemies… He that knoweth that he hath an enemy will look circumspectly about him to all matters, ordering his life and behavior in better sort. [...] Thine enemy [...] watcheth continually, spying and prying into all actions.'"[85]

More importantly, I read the figure of the Enemy as an extension of Lewis's theory of automatism, sourced in the germ of Bergson's theory of the comic. The Enemy, aware of his own automaton nature, finds it either comedic or infuriating when others don't arrive at the same conclusion. The Enemy presents himself as the enemy of all sanctimonious, "romantic" belief

[84] See SueEllen Campbell, "The Enemy Attacks: Wyndham Lewis versus Ezra Pound," *Journal of Modern Literature* 10.2 (June, 1983) 247-256.
[85] Wyndham Lewis, *The Enemy*, Volume 1, ed. David Peters Corbett (Black Sparrow Press, 1994) x.

systems that take stock in the idea that people are not *things* but people, not *automatons* but autonomous subjects. The Enemy, moreover, packages multiple voices in one, and serves as the mouthpiece of character-types who switch from one personality to another, so long as it befits the role of adversary to a counter-position. Only the savviest automatons, through a studied and transmedial automatism, can accomplish this code-switching with such alacrity and violence, since they share in the replaceable, automaton nature of human character. Hence, the Enemy "[spies] and [pries] into all actions."

The critical literature on *One-Way Song* is surprisingly scarce,[86] and yet I close out this study with this work because I claim that *One-Way Song* is the most revealing of Lewis' compositional method, not merely for being overlooked, but also in establishing the significance that automatism and violence held upon his artistic imagination. As Lewis himself reports, "these verses proceed from the same impulse as that which produced *The Apes of God*, or *The Wild Body*, and in part *The Childermass*. In manner, dramatization and technical intention, it belongs to that group of works."[87] For such a formal stylist as Lewis, it is surprising that the verse-satire, aside from its satiric content, would share technical parallels with his more famous novels. On the one hand, *One-Way Song* is thoroughly *conservative* in its formal technique, and when compared to his novels and prose-works, strikingly reactionary and bland. Metrically speaking, the couplets commit too readily to the anticipation of their self-imposed rhyme-scheme, and their intended ingenuity is lost in the technical anxiety of closing the gap. Lewis's *One-Way Song* thus

[86] I include a recent article by Ivan Phillips, which makes a point of this critical scarcity while pointing at itself as an intervention in the scarcity. See Phillips, "Enemy Lines: Form, Politics and Identity in Wyndham Lewis's *One-Way Song*," *The Wyndham Lewis Annual*, Vol. XII (2005) 59-79, *Academia.edu*. https://www.academia.edu/1049091/Enemy_Lines_Form_Politics_and_Identity_in_Wyndham_Lewiss_One-Way_Song.
[87] *CPP*, 207.

stands out as a blusteringly reactionary piece of work that seems more content with defying conventions of literary modernism than with actual prosodic achievement.

On the other hand, it's precisely this conservatism so evidently at play on the surface-level of the poem, in its couplet-form and trifling rhyme-scheme, which returns us to Lewis's theory of automatism. The poem employs such a metrical redundancy and machinic obsession with fulfilling the formal requirements it sets out for itself that we approach the condition of metrical automatism of the sort I examined in the poetry of William Morris.[88] From a technical angle, Morris remains a better poet than Lewis, but the technical automatisms that had driven the Victorian poet to write long books of rhythmic prosody can be glimpsed in Lewis's dogmatic metrical form.

One-Way Song, I argue, is about automatism as an aesthetic system that cultivates a politics of the Enemy and fuels forms of aesthetic and political violence. The first section, *Engine Fight-Talk*, makes the connection to machinic automatism clear in both its imagery and prosody:

> I said (and I always say these things with the same voice)
> 'Say it with locomotives! Mark well that animal puff!
> Each man-jack of them marked it, every man-jack--all were boys.
> 'If you must, say it with locofocos! Radical Tammany stuff!
> Hot and heavy! As if you meant it! Don't stick at a rough house--real rough!'
>
> But at 'radical', magical vocable, claps crashed forth of stunning applause,
> Through rattle-proof, that straightway shattered my heavily pillared doors!
>
> 'Say it' said I 'with half-machines!' And then, sublimely hoarse
> With horrid pleasure they said it, with puff-puffs--roars upon roars.
> The place was soon congested as with a fog of escaping steam.
> I gazed in through it at the team-work proudly, of my loud responsive team.[89]

[88] See Chapter One of this dissertation, "William Morris and the Automatisms of Craft".
[89] *CPP*, 21.

The scene is that of a schoolmaster giving a pep talk to a classroom of students. In Lewis's notes for a reading given at Harvard University in 1940, he notes that the schoolmaster's "*subject* is his soliloquy about his pupils. His attitude to his class is full of violence and contempt. [...] If you ask 'What is it all about?' it is the schoolmaster explaining to you [...] how marvellously [sic] he handles his class."[90] The lines then are self-aware in the same sense that Ker-Orr, as we have seen, is self-aware of his automaton-nature and that of the unaware "inferior religions" he encounters (or fights) with. The self-awareness breeds contempt for others who are seduced by his rhetoric of violence, in this case, a classroom of young male pupils. If the students are themselves the *subject* of the schoolmaster's subject (along the lines of a *becoming-subject*), then the lecture on automatism (or what might be termed a *becoming-machine*) turns out to be a rousing success. For Lewis, political subjecthood entails an "art of being ruled," of recognizing the human tendency toward "group-rhythms," and of adjusting for the overlap between human and machinic functions.

The political awakening to subjecthood crafts a violence of form that produces newly wound-up automatons or "half-machines." Lewis's theory of the political subject, prey to ideological automatisms of one kind or another, manifests here as a sensitivity to rhetorical flourish. Indeed, at the mention of the "magical vocable" *radical*, the students are triggered and respond almost automatically, thoughtlessly, with claps and cheers. In the manner of a florid demagogue, the schoolmaster infuses the students with rhetorical violence, and he skillfully harangues and persuades his "loud responsive team" to accept their automaton-nature as a principle on which to cultivate a responsible political subjecthood.

[90] *CPP*, 208-9.

In the "Physics of the Not-Self," a companion essay to the 1932 revision of *Enemy of the Stars*, Lewis explains that "the human mind in its traditional role of the enemy of life" is "an oddity outside the machine." Although Lewis applies this to the action of *Enemy of the Stars*, the statement is a general principle that can be extended to all of his works. Like the reversal of Bergson's theory of the comic that began this chapter, Lewis's pronouncement says the *opposite* of what we are led to believe it is saying: *human life is ennobled by its becoming a machine*. Lewis's theory of the comic makes this reversal clear: people are comedic precisely because they forget they are machines and act as if they are something other than "gut-bags." Hence, human life is an oddity, a series of accidents and violences, whose functioning is closer to a malfunctioning. It is in this sense that Timothy Morton writes that to "be a person is to be worried that you might not be one," since "to be a thing is to be a malfunction" in the seemingly highly-functioning order of things.[91]

Lewis is unequivocal about his belief that humans should aspire to the high-functioning ethic of machinery rather than to vitalism or romantic organicism. In *The Caliph's Design*, published in 1919, Lewis admonishes the futurists for worshipping machines without seeing "the possibilities that lie in this new spectacle of machinery; of the *use* it can be put into art." Lewis goes as far as to claim that if "the world *would only build temples to Machinery* in the abstract then everything would be perfect."[92] Only four years earlier, in the second issue of *Blast*, Lewis instructs that "You can establish yourself either as a Machine of two similar fraternal surfaces overlapping. [...] Any machine then [sic] you like: but become mechanical by fundamental dual repetition. For the sake of your good looks you must become a machine."[93] This is a position that

[91] Timothy Morton, "Mal-Functioning," *The Yearbook of Comparative Literature*, Vol. 58 (2012) 105, 107.
[92] Wyndham Lewis, *The Caliph's Design*, ed. Paul Edwards (Black Sparrow Press, 1986) 57-8 [emphasis in original].
[93] Wyndham Lewis, *Blast 2* (Black Sparrow Press, 1981) 91.

T.E. Hulme had also adopted,[94] and Julian Murphet notes, referring to Hulme and Lewis, that in the British avant-garde regime of the time "it is not merely that steel machinery is the 'environment' of the new art which makes the 'idea of machinery' so 'solid and inevitable'; it is rather that, in the technical horizon of second-industrial-revolution capitalism, this 'idea' has become so entrenched in the modus operandi of British life that it is effectively naturalized."[95]

Lewis, however, goes further than Hulme or other contemporaries in outrightly declaring that "'men' are undoubtedly, to a greater or less extent, machines. And there are those amongst us who are revolted by this reflection, and there are those who are not." By 1934, in the essay collection *Men Without Art*, Lewis had still not forgotten the point-of-origin of his aesthetic system:

> Men are so palpably machines, their machination is so transparent, that they are *comic*, as we say. And all we mean by that, is that our consciousness is pitched up to the very moderate altitude of relative independence at which we live—at which level we have the illusion of being autonomous and 'free.'[96]

The return to the comic—in other words, the return to seeing humans as comic actors oblivious to their intrinsic automaton nature—is the primary argument of *One-Way Song*. On multiple occasions, Lewis arrives at comic effects through a series of negations that mimic the human denial of their own automaticity:

> I'm not the man that lifts the broad black hat.
> I'm not the man's a preux, clicheed [sic] for chat.
> I'm not the man that's sensitive to sex.

---

[94] Hulme writes that what "the Nominalists call the grit in the machine, I call the fundamental element of the machine," an ambiguous statement that I interpret in two ways: the "cinders" that Hulme cynically believes all matter eventually becomes is part of the machine process; the machine accelerates the empirical realization that "all is cinders." On the other hand, I also read the statement as indicating the significance of friction or "grit" in the functioning of society. If society is a machine, then the presence of friction or antagonism ("the grit in the machine") becomes a principle of life. In other words, mal-functioning is also part of everyday functionalism. See T.E. Hulme, *Selected Writings*, ed. Patrick McGuinness (Carcanet, 2003) 24.

[95] Murphet, *Multimedia Modernism*, 131.

[96] Wyndham Lewis, *Men Without Art*, 95.

I'm not the fair Novello of the Waacs.
I'm not at breaking wind behind a hand
Too good. I'm not when hot the man that fanned
His cheek with a mouchoir. I'm not that kind.[97]

The stanza, from the section titled *If So the Man You Are*, alternates between signs of class and markers of vulgarity, in effect parodying the human pretension to specific forms of "gentlemanliness" through negation. Lewis, in typical enemy-mode, produces these assignations through a steady accretion of everything the speaker is *not*. This anaphora plays on the irony of the section title ("If So the Man You Are"), which mocks the consistency of class-personality as well as the anthropocentric notion of what "being a man" entails.

In a separate segment, "Enemy Interlude," Lewis's persona of "the Enemy" emerges, "cloaked, masked, booted, and with gauntlets of astrakan," and "shouts" down the previous speaker: "Am I too dangerous, that no man can let / This 'wild beast' out, but keep it as a pet?" The allusion to the Wild Body suggests a feral quality which the Enemy readily adopts: "I am a sort of savage beast—" But Lewis, not content with this positioning of outsider, uses the Enemy's voice to filter out his greatest misgivings for his own career. Lewis-as-the-Enemy is at once "he / For whose benefit *unmentionability* / Has been invented," the "english author 'known in Germany,'" but whose "agents write / 'Your Hitler book has harmed you' – in a night, / Somewhat like Byron – only I waken thus / To find myself not famous but infamous."[98] The "Hitler book" in question is an eponymous study of the sources for Hitler's popularity, which was disastrously received and cost Lewis an enormous loss of respect from his readers and contemporaries.[99] Lewis thus envisions himself as famous in Germany but disrespected in the

[97] *CPP*, 37.
[98] *CPP*, 47.
[99] See "Appendix: Hitler as Victim" in Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression*, 183ff .

anglophone world, and it is only through the Enemy's self-disclosing apologetics that he feels himself restored and vindicated.

But the Enemy cannot survive for long without an oppositional pole to respond to. A "heckler" emerges to question the Enemy's interlude, and Lewis describes a "snooty tit-for-tat" between the two agonistic rivals:

> 'Are you the man that was the person sent
> To trip up our puppets with your argument?'—
> 'If so I was the man I'd not look twice
> At all the tortured cohorts of your mice!'— [100]

The argument between the two, pursued at a quick metrical clip, clatters to a conclusion with the Enemy emerging victorious, having subjected the heckler, and the massed audience with him, to a litany of insults directed at their anthropocentrism. Once the Enemy exits the scene, the (nameless) satiric speaker returns, declaring "I scratch the Enemy's back, do overtime, / And he with no less vigour scratches mine. / I call him Friend and he calls back at me / 'Friend'. He is a gentle Enemy!" The odd hypocrisy at work here suggests that The Enemy is needed, somehow, to counterbalance social tensions. Friends, after all, make the best enemies.

But I want to conclude this study by focalizing on the central motif of "backness" versus "frontness," previewed in the image of scratching the Enemy's back. Lewis means this figuratively (providing favors, complaisance), but also, weirdly, he means it in a literal sense. In the titular third section, *One-Way Song*, Lewis begins with an invocation to "frontness":

> Let me sing the song of the Fronts! Exhort me now to sing
> Of those bold Fronts that are the screens of Everything.
> [...]
> I would set all things whatsoever front to back,
> All that go upright--by these tactics show
> How the bold Fronts depend upon this knack

[100] *CPP*, 55.

Of nature's--how our one-way bodies grow--
Always Eyes-front! Creatures of Progress! suited
Only for one-way travel, in Time bodily rooted.

Try and walk backwards: you will quickly see
How you were meant only one-way to be!
Attempt to gaze out of your bricked-up back:
You will soon discover what we One-ways lack!
Endeavor to re-occupy the Past:
Your stubborn front will force you to stand fast![101]

I quote this section at length because it captures the essential message of the titular poem. On the one hand, "One-way" literally signals the organic form of the human body: humans, with binocular vision set in front of their face, cannot face backward, nor do their bodies allow them to look backward when they are facing forward. On the other hand, the significance of "one-way" is figurative rather than literal: human vision, seeing only what's ahead of it, cannot, or should not, dwell on what is behind them. In other words, Lewis's character admonishes those who "Endeavor to re-occupy the Past." This approximates to what Lewis had critiqued as the Romantic attitude in art, in which a nostalgia for past trends or lost origins overwhelms the vision, blurring any consciousness of what's present or at-hand. This is organic reductionism in a nutshell.

But here is where Lewis's inveterate need to contradict his own positionings seems to undermine his previous philosophical assertions. Is Lewis, filtered through the speaker's voice, vouching for an organicist position that directly contradicts his usual anti-vitalist, automatist beliefs? Is Lewis arguing for a conservative return to organic form and disavowing the desired ethic of becoming-machine? The following lines seem to posit this as a possibility:

Only machines reverse—
All that has mind may not go arsieverse! [sic]

[101] *CPP*, 67.

> Creatures of Fronts we are--designed to bustle
> Down paths lit by our eyes, on stilts of clockwork muscle—
> And furthermore this clockwork works clockwise,
> Forward on vectors traced out by our eyes.[102]

Recalling, however, that the poem is professedly satiric, and that it intends to play with the conflictual values of "backs" and "fronts," as much as it does, at the level of its metrical form, with classical form and romantic content, the position-taking may be considered disingenuous and ironic. The speaker, after all, had "scratch[ed] the Enemy's back," an idiomatic phrase that stresses a common interest between the two, but one which also insinuates that the speaker is unreliable and might be at odds with the Enemy. If the speaker seems to be against the idea that humans are machines, then perhaps, in his counter-position to the Enemy, he is playing a contrapuntal role, for the sake of arriving at Lewis's desire for a transcendence of binary values. Indeed, only a few stanzas later, the speaker confesses:

> I'm all for Backs then (though it is Fronts I sing)—
> All for them inasmuch as frontness does spring
> From this belatedness, just as in mirrors all
> That you perceive springs from their mercury wall--[103]

What is the message here? Lewis seems to suggest that the traditional Bergsonian position, in which past and present converge in a vortex, is one which might still accommodate some room for Lewis's philosophy of the eye. The Enemy's back is what is scratched, but it is also an indication that the speaker is, temporally speaking, behind the avant-garde positioning of the Enemy. The Enemy is literally and figuratively *advanced* in argument, and the speaker, who implicitly adopts a Bergsonian perspective, is literally and figurally *behind* the Enemy in positioning. The Bergsonian, after all, is one who is invested in "thinking backwards," that is, in

[102] *CPP*, 67.
[103] *CPP*, 74.

joining up the memory of the past with a forward-moving intuition for the present.[104] Lewis develops a surprisingly complicated picture here: the Enemy is in front of the Bergsonian (his back faces him), in the same way that one's mirror image is in front of you gazing back. For those who carry a belief in the self or in the psychological consistency of personality, the capacity to gaze backwards on themselves is vital, as in a Lacanian mirror stage. Lewis's "Physics of the Not-Self," however, condemns this belief as an illusion, in the same sense that the mirror is an illusion founded upon a material basis ("mercury wall"). There is no self, only performance, only violence. What is ahead of someone is always someone else's back, an Enemy one must confront, scratch the back of, or inevitably surpass.

In other words, I read this section as a metrical essay on spatialization, literally and figuratively, in which one's back or front orientates the political or aesthetic positions of the speaker. Caillois' "lure of space" emerges here as a driving force for Lewis's *One-Way Song*, which satirizes the Bergsonian position, but also, interestingly, makes peace with it through an adoption of Bergsonian images that are inverted or reversed through the trope of "fronts" and "backs." The Bergsonian makes peace with the Enemy through a mimesis of the Enemy's positions. The Enemy performs the same courtesy through a sensitive, though measured, confession out of character for someone so invested in depersonalization.

In the end, Lewis paints a picture of yet another pseudo-couple, another mimetic rivalry, that terminates in the image of the Enemy and the Bergsonian gazing at each other in a mirror, as one and the same automaton.

[104] See F.C.T. Moore, *Bergson: Thinking Backwards* (Cambridge UP, 1996) 54ff.

CODA

At the conclusion of Humphrey Jennings' *Pandaemonium*, an imaginative history of the "Coming of the Machine," Jennings excerpts the conclusion of William Morris's *A Dream of John Ball*, in which " 'hooters', one after the other […] call the workers to the factories…"[1] Jennings' text montages together literary and textual fragments, with minor edits and commentaries throughout, that stretch from 1660, with John Milton's description of the construction of "pandaemonium," to 1886, with William Morris's description of the hooters calling the workers to the factories. Jennings' book documents the origins and effects of the Industrial Revolution, and its use of William Morris as a bookend for conceptualizing how automatism and automation saturated the British cultural milieu is instructive. My dissertation, although not as ambitious as Jennings' wide-spanning work, also uses William Morris as a bookend, this time as a starting point for thinking through how such an image—factory workers responding to the call of the hooters with Pavlovian automatism—presages the complex evolution automatism would undergo in the twentieth-century.

My dissertation begins in 1850 and ends in 1930, but these are arbitrary years for what is a slippery scale of overlapping questions regarding automatism and the notion of a British avant-garde. If William Morris actualizes a starting point for thinking about how automatism arose from technological and industrial forms of production, then Mina Loy and Wyndham Lewis, who continued Morris's transmedial work in the British milieu through a channeling of their literary art into graphic fields, broadened automatism into wide-ranging aspects of cultural production. Loy's struggle with masculinist avant-gardes furnished contrapuntal techniques of visualization and satirical mimesis that eventually led to striking ideas about spiritual evolution,

[1] Humphrey Jennings, *Pandaemonium, 1660-1886: The Coming of the Machine as Seen by Contemporary Observers*, eds. Marie-Louise Jennings and Charles Madge (London: Icon Books, 2012) 356

telepathy, and eroticized interdependent production. Lewis's rejection of standardized avant-gardism and his skepticism at the notion of temporalized subjectivity drove him to adopt mimetic strategies of counter-production and violent inversion. In the work of these three figures, the rejection and critical appropriation of dominant aesthetic trends produced novel forms of experimental art or radical political awakening. My dissertation proposes that at the heart of each of these intriguing developments, automatism functions as a useful diagnostic for distinguishing the respective contributions of Morris, Loy, and Lewis to their cultural milieu. More importantly, my dissertation aims to augment conventional notions of automatism and expand what we mean by words like "automatic," "automaton," and "automat."

Ultimately, this dissertation is about the possibility of rethinking automatism as less of a feature of conservative thought and more as a possibly under-acknowledged source of radical politics or experimental form. If automatism signifies *the repetition and (re)production of the same*, then this dissertation intends to raise questions about how this repetition can also constitute divergences in a dominant aesthetic regime. Do production and reproduction involve the same function in a given cultural field? Is violence a source of boundary-making that imposes laws as much as it violates them? Is masterful or virtuosic labor, ultimately, a kind of systematic adoption of machinic capabilities? Although my dissertation cannot claim to answer all these questions, the study of Morris, Loy, and Lewis, respectively, might furnish answers to this dialectic by offering close-readings of works which have not been read under the lens of automatism.

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