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**Physical and Psychical Spaces in Modern  
English Literature**

Fyzický a psychický prostor v literatuře  
anglického modernismu

Disertační práce

Vedoucí práce: Prof. PhDr. Martin Hilský, CSc.

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Tuto práci věnuji mým rodičům.

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## 0.1 Introduction of the Argument:

The main goal of the thesis is to explore ideas of the “Self” in relation to the spatial structures, patterns and arrangements of space and matter in selected works of Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence and Wyndham Lewis. All of these authors were active in a period which was marked by a drastic reevaluation and resulting crisis of these traditional concepts. The main subject of the following discussion is the diverse reaction of these authors on this “crisis”. The studied period is first of all focused on years 1910–1930, however, a large number of earlier texts are subjected to detailed consideration and play an important role in the argument. In its method, the argument relies on an analysis of primary texts, secondary literature and relevant philosophical, aesthetic and theoretical sources. As a part of an attempt to stay focused on the already relatively broad series of problems this thesis covers and in order to maintain the necessary degree of clarity and linearity of the argument, the thesis deliberately chooses to avoid majority of problems connected with politics, economics, gender studies, feminism, post-colonial studies or ecology. In addition to this, the discussion does not primarily rely on topics that are sufficiently and more relevantly covered in other sources, such as the discussion of personal animosities and criticism between the individual authors, however tempting and amusing such discussion might be.<sup>1</sup> Finally, in its discussion of space and place, the argument favours an engagement with philosophical, aesthetic and cosmological problems in favour of the discussion of social, urban, working, everyday or architectural spaces.<sup>2</sup>

## 0.2 Primary Texts

As the title of the thesis suggests, the argument will primarily, though not exclusively, rely on an interpretation of fiction and prose texts of Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence

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<sup>1</sup> For Lewis’ critique of Lawrence and Woolf, his personal memories and retrospective account of the discussed period see for example: Wyndham Lewis, *Paleface: The Philosophy of the Melting Pot* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1929) or *Count Your Dead! They are Alive!, or a New War in the Making* (London: L. Dickson, 1937). Other works on this topics include for example Geoffrey Wagner, *Wyndham Lewis: A Portrait of an Artist as Enemy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), Vincent B. Sherry, *Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis and Radical Modernism* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), R. W. Dasenbrock, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound & Wyndham Lewis* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive introduction to the innovations in the representation of urban, working and/or everyday spaces in Modernism see for example Andrew Thacker, *Moving through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

and Wyndham Lewis. In its focus on fiction and especially on short stories, the argument does not include systematic discussion of poetry. For this reason the thesis does not incorporate authors like T. S. Eliot or Ezra Pound. The thesis does not aspire to give an exhaustive and comprehensive reading of individual novels and short stories of the chosen authors. Instead it focuses on an analysis and discussion of selected motives that are most relevant to the discussed topic, i.e. the affinity between physical and psychical “spaces”. In case of Virginia Woolf, the backbone of the argument consists of a detailed discussion of a number of her short stories from the *Monday or Tuesday* (1921) and the later reprints of her earlier, unpublished stories in *A Haunted House and Other Stories* (1944). In addition to this, the argument brings in a number of relevant passages from Woolf’s longer fiction and classical essays, in particular the “Modern Fiction” essays (1921) and “Street Haunting” (1930).

In case of D. H. Lawrence, the argument builds up on a detailed analysis of Lawrence’s shorter fiction in my M.A. thesis and, using it as a vital background, applies the outcome of this discussion as a support for a detailed reading of a number of key passages from Lawrence’s canonical novels such as *The Trespasser* (1912), *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* (1920). In addition to this, the argument relies on a number of non-fictional texts, studies, essays and an occasional reference to Lawrence’s poems. Among Lawrence’s essays, there are two texts that are of particular importance to the presented argument: Lawrence’s writings on Etruscan painting and culture in a travelogue-collection *Sketches of Etruscan Places and other Italian Essays* (1932), which were written during Lawrence’s stay in Italy, mostly in the 1920’s and published posthumously, and Lawrence’s late essay “Introduction to These Paintings” (1928).

The third chapter introduces the complete opposite to Woolf and Lawrence – the classicist reactionary Wyndham Lewis. Starting with Lewis’ fiction, the argument draws on a detailed reading of a number of Lewis’ short stories, published either in various magazines in years 1908 to late 1920’s or reprinted in revised form in *The Wild Body* (1927) collection. In addition to this, the argument works with a number of Lewis’ critical essays and studies, especially of the 1920’s period, in particular *Essay on the Objective of Plastic Arts in Our Time* (1922), published in the second volume of Lewis’ *Tyrol*, and a book-length study *Time and the Western Man* (1928).

### 0.3 Secondary Texts

In its method the argument first of all relies on philosophical and aesthetic texts that are relevant to the studied period and that were either used and quoted by individual authors or most likely known by these. In case of Virginia Woolf, it is first of all Henri Bergson, whose fluid philosophy of consciousness and theories of heterogeneous time and homogeneous space, are generally acknowledged to play a seminal role in interpretations of Woolf's texts.<sup>3</sup> The discussion in the first chapter examines an essentially Bergsonian "instability" and fluidity of consciousness in opposition to the solidity of material objects in Woolf's treatment of the Self, showing the way Woolf's texts rearticulate Cartesian dualism.<sup>4</sup> This Bergsonian argument is expanded to a critical discussion of other relevant sources of Woolf's method: radical pragmatism and empiricisms of William James and "direct" realism of G. E. Moore's philosophy. Adhering to the aesthetic orientation of the discussion, the first chapter often alludes to theoretical principles that are connected with visual aesthetics of Impressionism as a generally acknowledged influence of Woolf's method.<sup>5</sup> All of these impulses represent a vital source of comparison to the visual strategies of Wyndham Lewis which are treated in the third chapter.

In addition to the relevance for Woolf's writing, Bergson's philosophy is also essential to the discussion of D. H. Lawrence and his relation to Italian Futurism. Of particular importance are F. T. Marinetti's and Umberto Boccioni's manifestos and works of art which, especially in case of Boccioni, explicitly refer to Bergson's philosophy.<sup>6</sup> Finally,

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<sup>3</sup> Woolf herself does not recognise Bergson's philosophy as an important source of her thought and Leonard Woolf explicitly denies it. Despite this, the relevance of Bergson's philosophy to Woolf's writing is acknowledged by a number of commentators, see for example: Martin Hilský, *Modernist* (Brno: Torst, 1995), M. A. Gillies, *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* (New York: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), especially chapter 5; or S. P. Rosenbaum, ed. *English Literature and British Philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.

<sup>4</sup> Despite Leonard Woolf's claim that Virginia Woolf was acquainted with Bergson's philosophy and though there is no direct evidence to be found in Woolf's texts to confirm her knowledge of Bergson's philosophy, the thought of the French philosopher is a generally accepted tool for interpretation of Woolf's work. For further discussion of this see: Martin Hilský, *Modernist* (Praha: Torst, 1995) 22, Rosenbaum, or a complex discussion of the critical history of Bergsonian interpretation of Woolf's work in Marry Ann Gillies, *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* (Montreal, Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996) 79–107.

<sup>5</sup> See for example: Jesse Matz, *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) or Dianne F. Gillespie, *The Sisters' Arts: The Writing and Painting of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988).

<sup>6</sup> See for example: Christine Poggi, "Introduction to Part Two", *Futurism: An Antology*, ed. L. Rainey, C. Poggi, L. Wittman (Yale: University Press: New Haven and London: 2009) 305–331; R. W. Dasenbrock,



Bergson's "Time-Philosophy" is the primary target of Wyndham Lewis' critique of the so called "Time Cult", in particular in his *Time and Western Man* (1927). This critique is also implicitly present in his anti-romantic critique of Futurism and Impressionism in the Vorticist period and post-war period. Bergson's philosophy is also systematically treated in T. E. Hulme's thought,<sup>7</sup> which serves in the argument as a support to Lewis' philosophy and aesthetics.

Besides Bergson, the argument especially in the second and third chapter relies on philosophy and aesthetics of Arthur Schopenhauer. Lawrence's debt to Schopenhauer's (and Hardy's) principles of inhuman Will and the aesthetic principles of Sublime and Beautiful is the subject of discussion of spatial structures in the first part of the second chapter. Schopenhauer's aesthetics further connects two vital sources that can be found in the background of the argument especially in the second part of the essay. First of these is the classical distinction between empathy and abstraction as it is found in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908), which on a number of occasions refers to Schopenhauer's work, and is more than relevant to T. E. Hulme's interpretation of Worringer's thought in essays like "Modern Art and its Philosophy" (1914) and "Romanticism and Classicism" (1910). Second, Schopenhauer's aesthetics is highly relevant to Wyndham Lewis' formalist and anti-vitalist aesthetics, which is at length discussed and quoted in his *Essay on the Objectives of Plastic Arts in Our Time* (1922) and again in his *Time and Western Man*.

Besides this finely interwoven web of artists and theorists, the argument works with a number of texts that are not directly used by the discussed authors but can be seen thematically relevant to the discussion. These are the philosophical poetics of Gaston Bachelard, his work on the ontological instability of the "dreaming subject" and philosophical "topology", Miroslav Petříček's discussion of the role of "frame and framework", Ludwig Wittgenstein's theory of private language and finally, theories of space and place by Jeff Malpas or E. S. Casey. Brief methodological introductions are placed at the beginning of respective chapters. Informative outlines of important

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*The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985) 48– 50.

<sup>7</sup> Hulme, originally ardent supporter of Bergson's philosophy, who even translated Bergson's *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1912), underwent a typical development in his attitude to the French thinker whom he eventually started to approach much more critically. This development may be finely illustrated on the intellectual development of his essays, starting with pro-Bergsonian "Cinders" to more classicist, conservative and religious essays such as "Humanism and Religious Attitude" or "Modern Art and Its Philosophy", all collected in an anti-chronological order in a posthumous collection *Speculations* (1924).

theories that are crucial for the progression of the argument are located in individual “Interlude sections.”

#### **0.4 Theoretical Background: A Brief Contextual Sketch**

The corrosion stable and conventional world-views of the rational positivist science, the death of the “old stable Ego’s” and the end of “Newton’s sleep” brings with it “new awareness of the complexity and depth of the reality [...] and the consequent sense of puzzlement and loss of order.”<sup>8</sup> The thesis examines the wide variety of reactions to this situation in the works of the examined authors in order to prove the essential heteronomy of opinions in what is too often understood as a homogeneous literary movement, known as Modernism. What follows is a brief sketch of the philosophical background that is implied in the argument and that is going to be explained in more detail in the discussion of individual problems. The core of the discussion focuses on affinities, analogies and reflections between two regions of reality – the region of human psychology and the region of space. The interaction between these two regions of reality is complicated by the fact that both of these categories underwent a complex series of truly revolutionary changes in the discussed period. As a part of these changes, the ideas of both space and human subjectivity turned from relatively safely defined entities into problematic and speculative notions.

#### **0.5 New Subjectivities**

The last decades of the 19th century witnessed the emergence of a number of theories which have represented a more or less direct assault on the coherence of “the discrete identity of the subject itself”<sup>9</sup>. Works such as Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859) with its evolutionary theory of Natural Selection, Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals* (1877) and *Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* (1872) with its distinction between the Dionysian and Apollonian principles, the birth of Freudian psychoanalysis in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) and *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), to name the most important impulses, contributed to the dethroning and uncrowning of the idea of the rational, self-aware subject of Cartesian design which

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<sup>8</sup> Jakko Hintikka, “Virginia Woolf and Our Knowledge of the External World”, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 38, No. 1, (Autumn 1979) 7. < <http://www.jstor.org/stable/430039>>. Accessed: 25/4/2012.

<sup>9</sup> Ryan, Judith, ‘The Vanishing Subject: Empirical Psychology and the Modern Novel’, *PMLA*, Vol. 95, No. (Oct., 1980) 867.

stood in the background of the universal classicist idea of the positivist universe “characterised by order and regularity”.<sup>10</sup>

The integrity, autonomy and rationality of the human subject, which granted the ability to objectively observe, generalize and arrange “positive” facts, stood for the previously unquestioned condition of an unproblematic existence of the machinery of positivist science, which never doubted “the reliability of [...] senses and it did not [suspect] that different people do not necessarily have identical sense impressions of the same object.”<sup>11</sup> With this being said, the discussion of this thesis relies on a Cartesian definition of the “I” of human subjectivity as “thinking substance”, which famously proposes that “I have a vivid and clear idea of myself as something that thinks and isn’t extended.”<sup>12</sup>

The autonomous and homogeneous nature of the classical Cartesian concept of the Self is first of all based on its unity and inseparability (i.e. on its substantial nature) and as such it represents the supposed seat of human identity and personality. One of the main arguments of this thesis is the claim that an alternative treatment of human subjectivity, as it is presented in the works of Woolf and Lawrence, relies on its inherent heterogeneity and multiplicity, i.e. on the “assault on its substantial nature” in name of dynamism and strife. This is achieved first of all by representing the human subjectivity in relation to its outside: to individual’s body (Lawrence), material objects (Woolf), one’s lived world (especially Lawrence) and on questioning its identity in time (Woolf). The problem of the integrity of the “I” is thereby translated into the problem of integrity of personal identity and articulated in terms of unity and multiplicity, solidity and fluidity, connectivity and discreteness. From the following discussion it is going to become clear that all of the authors (with the exception of Hulme and Lewis who represent the exact opposite of this tendency) develop an understanding of “the human” that can be described as an open and dynamic structure. According to this conception, human subjectivity is no longer constituted by an immaterial thinking substance of

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<sup>10</sup> Fleming Olsen, *Between Positivism and T. S. Eliot: Imagism and T. E. Hulme* (Odense: University of Southern Denmark, 2008) 38.

<sup>11</sup> Olsen 38.

<sup>12</sup> René Descartes, *Mediations on First Philosophy* VI, 9, trans. Jonathan Bennett. 12. April 2014. <<http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdfs/descartes1644.pdf>> My italics. More on Cartesian epistemology in section 1.2 of the following chapter.

Cartesian philosophy but by something that approaches the post-modern condition of becoming, supplementarity and exteriority.<sup>13</sup>

Historically speaking, the question of multiplicity and unity is further connected with the introduction of perspectivism and fragmentary nature of human knowledge. This is the case for example in Nietzsche philosophy, José Ortega y Gasset's texts or even in Husserl's phenomenology. As such it plays crucial role in the practice of Cubist painters, particularly Braque and Picasso, and finds its application in the multiplied space of Eliot's poetry whose composition can be compared to the collage method of synthetic cubism.<sup>14</sup> Of crucial significance is here the work of perhaps the most influential and at the same time most controversial philosopher of the era – Henri Bergson. Bergson's *Matter and Memory* (1896), widely read *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1903, translated into English by T. E. Hulme in 1912) and especially his *Creative Evolution* (1907, 1911 in English) stand for key philosophical texts of the Modernist period.

As it is going to be demonstrated, the substantial unity of stable and homogeneous entity of the “old stable ego of character” is sacrificed in favour of “luminous halos” (Woolf), heterogeneous bundles of competing psychical faculties (Lawrence, Yeats), “tones” of duration (Bergson, Woolf), conscious and unconscious (Lawrence, Woolf) or rational and instinctive parts (Lawrence). The main goal of this thesis is to illustrate the affinity between these concepts and the spatial arrangement of bodies, objects and environments in the discussed authors and draw a full picture of a Modernist “psychology in space”. As the argument hopes to demonstrate, it inevitably follows that the corrosion of the substantial unity of “spiritual” concepts such as the “Self” or personality is closely linked to and followed by corrosion of material objects.

## 0.6 New Spaces

The idea of the Self and human subjectivity is not the only parcel of reality that underwent a number of paradigm shifting revaluations that took place in or immediately prior to the discussed period. Likewise, scientific, philosophical and artistic re-

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<sup>13</sup> On the notion of supplement and supplementarity see Jacques Derrida: *On Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri J. Spivak (Baltimore, London: Baltimore University Press, 1996) 244.

<sup>14</sup> For a “Cubist” interpretation of Eliot's poetry see for example Jacob Korg, “Modern Art Techniques in the Wasteland”, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (June, 1960) 456–463.; David Tomlinson, “Eliot and the Cubists”, *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Spring, 1980) 64–81.

conceptualisation of space and time resulted into a radically altered “reflection on space and new methods of conceptualizing and utilising space in art”<sup>15</sup> in the discussed period. The emergence of Non-Euclidean geometries that questioned the fifth of Euclid’s axioms concerning the parallel lines in new representations of space such as Lobatchewsky’s hyperbolic and Riemann’s elliptical space contributed to the reassessment of the supposedly self-evident and infallible truth of Euclidean geometry and resulted in shattering of what for more than two millennia promised to be the “only true geometry of real space”.<sup>16</sup>

The development of non-Euclidean geometries helped Einstein to formulate his “relativist” idea of gravity, no longer understood as a Newtonian force but as a result of “the curvature of the space-time around particularly dense bodies”<sup>17</sup>, and underpinned his General Principle of Relativity. The results of the scientific progress, often in popularised or generalised form, inevitably started to live their own life outside the field of science and developed into a series of semi-sensational and often esoteric popularisations of new four-dimensional spaces that awaited their discovery behind the space of the everyday. The concept of four-dimensional space, popularised by personas such as Charles Hinton, was referred to and utilised not only by Italian Futurists, but also by artists such as Kupka, Duchamp and many others.<sup>18</sup>

## **0.7 Visual Arts**

All of these impulses contributed to the re-evaluation of the mechanical predictability and reassuring straightforwardness of the positivist haven of Newtonian physics and lead to the destruction of the absolute and homogeneous space of the quantitative extension and movement and its replacement by heterogeneous, qualitatively differentiated space of Modernity. The birth, or rather re-birth<sup>19</sup> of heterogeneity to

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<sup>15</sup> Stefania Michellucci, *Space and Place in the Works of D. H. Lawrence*, trans. Jill Franks (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2002) 1.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space: 1880–1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983) 132.

<sup>17</sup> Michael H. Whitworth, *Relativity, Metaphor and Modernist Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 198.

<sup>18</sup> For an exhaustive coverage of the relation between new conceptualisations of space and visual arts see: L. D. Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

<sup>19</sup> In his *Povrch, skrytost, ambivalence* (Praha: Argo, 2008), Josef Vojvodík concisely argues for the affinities between the Modernist conception of space and the playfulness and “folded” nature of space in

space necessarily required the birth, or rather rebirth of different ways of conceptualisation, construction and representation of these new spaces. The pioneers in finding new ways of responding to the demands in the conceptual changes of reality were visual artists, whose revolution against the mimetic tradition, linear perspective<sup>20</sup> and classical themes can be traced back at least to 1870's and the emergence of French Impressionism, to the Post-Impressionist "reaction" of Paul Cézanne and finally to formal experiments of Cubist, Futurist and after all even Vorticist artists.

With this in mind, it comes as no surprise that one of the most characteristic features of Modernist literature is its indebtedness to visual arts which were in the vanguard of the revolutionary quest for new strategies of representation of the "new", heterogeneous qualities of Modernist spaces. Despite its ideological and artistic diversity within the Modernist "movement", there is one common feature to all discussed authors, namely, their interest in visual arts. The problem of analogy between visual arts and literature and the validity of mutual comparison between these arts has been a subject of a number of classical discussions, ranging from Simonides' "*Poema loquens pictura, pictura tacitum poema debet esse*", Horace's *ut pictura poesis* or Lessing's *Laokoon* to some modern works on the topic, such as Wendy Steiner's *Colors of Rhetoric*, Keith Sagar's work on D. H. Lawrence's visual inspiration *D. H. Lawrence: Life into Art*, Aldritt's *Visual Imagination of D.H. Lawrence* or Diane F. Gillespie's *The Sister's Arts: The Writing and Painting of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell*.

Besides the theoretical works that defend the plausibility of the connection between visual arts and literature, it is further possible to argue from a position that is particularly relevant for the authors discussed in this thesis, i.e. by pointing out not only the general *Zeitgeist* of the discussed period as stressing the direct engagement of individual authors in visual arts. Woolf's interest in visual arts can be documented on a personal level, by reading her diaries and correspondence, especially with her sister. It can also be linked to Woolf's affiliation with probably the most influential centre of visual art and theory – Roger Fry's and Clive Bell's Bloomsbury group and their Omega Workshop. It was in particular Roger Fry who through his innumerable articles and two memorable exhibitions at Grafton Galleries in 1910 and 1912 taught English

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Baroque and Mannerism. For analogical interpretation of Baroque see, Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

<sup>20</sup> See: Siegfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: A Growth of a New Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954) 431.

audience how to approach modern artists. Fry's coinage of the term "Post-impressionism", "significant form" and his discussion of Paul Cézanne were of great importance to the cultural climate of the discussed period.

Lawrence's interest in visual arts is not so loudly articulated as Woolf's and Fry's, however, it is of no less importance to his work. In particular in his essays such as *Study of Thomas Hardy* or *Introduction to These Paintings*, Lawrence pays close attention to the manifestations of the negative effects of modern life, intellectual consciousness and rejection of the physical-instinctive body in visual arts. In the former of the two texts, Lawrence also for the first time presents a systematic analysis of a *Futurist* work of art, namely Boccioni's "Development of a Bottle in Space". In *Introduction to These Paintings* Lawrence lengthily discusses his interpretation of Paul Cézanne as a champion of the lost materiality and *thing-ness* of objects. In doing so, Lawrence not only gives a philosophical commentary to his own paintings but also rejects formalist interpretations of Cézanne's work such as Fry's but also Lewis' historicising view of Cézanne as a predecessor of Cubism in *The Cubist Room*. The importance of Woolf's and Lawrence's attitude to visual art for the following discussion relies first of all on the fact that both of these artists did not develop separate philosophies or metaphysics that would apply *only* to literature or *only* to painting. The opposite being true, Woolf's and all the more Lawrence's theory of visual arts cannot be separated from their general *Weltanschauung* and cuts deep into their "metaphysics".

The connection between literature and visual art is perhaps the strongest with Wyndham Lewis who was a painter at least as much as a writer. Freeing himself from his early affiliation with the Bloomsbury clique, Lewis evolves, together with Pound, Eliot and sculptors like Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and Jacob Epstein, into one of the most significant personas of the English Avant-garde. Lewis' paintings and visual aesthetics of the Vorticist period and its post-war development are the key to his fiction as well as to his thought in general. As it is often the case with Lewis, perhaps even more important than his positive statements is his critique of other doctrines. Such is his role in the following discussion, in which his critique of the time-cult philosophies, blurred outlines of Impressionist painting, synthetic compositions of Futurist sculptures and paintings, together with his general adherence to the Classicist ideals of line, order and intellect, place him into the position of an "eternal humorist", whose art is always in opposition to the "main" current.

## CHAPTER ONE: Spaces, Shapes and Selves; Notes Towards the Problem of Dis-Continuity in Virginia Woolf's Fiction

More generally, does not the fiction of an isolated material object imply a kind of absurdity?<sup>21</sup>

In the following chapter we will formulate a number of observations which should lead us towards an understanding of the affinity between physical and psychical spaces in Virginia Woolf's fiction. For this purpose, the following analysis examines solid objects and spatial organisations of reality, and describes the way in which they become perceived, shaped and moulded by the consciousness of a perceiving subject. This discussion of the process of perception, however, will quickly evolve into an analysis of the way perception transcends its "epistemological" quality and turns its attention to the question of human existence in general. The central position in this discussion will be occupied by the interdependence between the epistemological conditions of the subject on one hand and its "ontological status" on the other.

Over the past decades Woolf scholarship has introduced a number of often contradictory theoretical as well as textual analyses of Woolf's fiction. Besides feminist, socialist or political interpretations, which are beyond the scope of this thesis, Woolf's fiction has been interpreted as standing philosophically close to the position of philosophical idealism, existentialism, Husserl's phenomenology, radical realism of G. E. Moore, empiricism, empirio-criticism, pragmatism or Bergsonism.<sup>22</sup> Setting aside the obvious theoretical problems associated with any study that endeavours to interpret a work of art using philosophical texts, this thesis tries to benefit from some of the earlier interpretations and point at what we understand as a key feature of Woolf's fiction – the instability of the human subject.

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<sup>21</sup> Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy M. Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.) 11.

<sup>22</sup> For a comprehensive summary of philosophical interpretations of Woolf's fiction see esp. S. P. Rosenbaum, 316; for a radical-empiricist early 20th century interpretation see Judith Ryan's *The Vanishing Subject: Early Psychology and Literary Modernism* but especially Judith Ryan, 'The Vanishing Subject: Empirical Psychology and the Modern Novel', *PMLA*, Vol. 95, No. (Oct., 1980) 867. For a very interesting phenomenological interpretation see a chapter on Virginia Woolf in Jesse Matz, *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics*.



The problem of instability of the human subject in Woolf's fiction includes a number of closely related aspects. First, we would like to suggest that the numerous contradictory interpretations of Woolf's fiction are not primarily caused by the fact that there is no conceptual framework behind her work, but rather, adhering to a more optimistic interpretation, we would suggest that Woolf's fiction presents a picture of the human subject as something essentially unstable and changing. Instead of following the traditional ideal of a "stable substance", Woolf's fiction implies that "people are collections of different selves"<sup>23</sup> that change in time and space. To put the matter differently, Woolf's fiction does not present "the mind" but only different states of a mind which, sometimes smoothly and sometimes suddenly and violently, pass, jump or develop from one to another, dissolve, disappear suddenly and again emerge. Importantly, these states of mind represent something more than a "mood" or "humour." Instead, they stand quite close to what might be understood as a changed ontological state of the human subject.

Though the essential "changeability" of human consciousness necessarily implies time, it also features a very important spatial dimension. Dwelling on this aspect, the argument in the following chapter focuses closely on various interactions of human consciousness with "extended substances" and shows how thought, memory and consciousness subsist, become mixed and externalised into objects or spaces. Creation of these "animated objects" and "impersonal bodies" constitutes the substrate for an intricate spatial structure that is composed of both physical and psychical constituents and an ever widening and shrinking "circle of the self."

Despite the strong emphasis that Woolf-studies often put on time and the so called "stream of consciousness", i.e. consciousness imagined in its fluidity and dynamism, Woolf's fiction is full of stable material objects. Their relation to consciousness and the way these objects play in the intricate spatial structure of Woolf's texts is at the heart of the following discussion. Woolf's classical stories such as "Mark on the Wall" or "Kew Gardens," as well as a number of comparably less famous stories such as "The Fascination of the Pool," "The Searchlight" or "Solid Objects" rely on things, objects, shapes, complex spaces and materials for their structure, theme and imagery. It is precisely these solid objects which not only provide individual stories with structural coherence but also play an important role within the story by providing solid

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<sup>23</sup> Matz 175.

counterpoints to the “fluid” consciousness. Let us start the discussion by examining two popular stories - “Kew Gardens” and “Mark on the Wall”.

### **1.1 The Problem (Dis)Continuity and the “Fiction of Isolated Objects”**

At least since Bergson, the world of art and philosophy has been preoccupied with the problem of continuous and discontinuous objects. The temporal but first of all spatial articulation of these issues is either explicitly or implicitly felt in the work of all of the artists and philosophers mentioned in this thesis. In this chapter we will focus our attention on the way the problem of continuity in space is dealt with in Virginia Woolf’s work, in particular in her short fiction. Woolf’s early “Kew Gardens” (1917) contains perhaps all of the most important aspects of this type of spatial imagination: an emphasis on “that kind of life that resides in material detail” which is at the same time an essential part of “some more essential vision”<sup>24</sup>, a keen eye for shapes and outlines, instances of sympathetic/ empathic affinity between the observer and the observed, shifting points of perspective, and an intricate and multiple spatio-temporal structure. The following argument relies on a number of problems that were addressed thought of Henri Bergson. Let us start our discussion with a brief exposition of the most important aspect of his philosophy.

### **1.2 Interlude No.1: Henri Bergson**

In vain we force the living into this or that one of our moulds. All the moulds crack.<sup>25</sup>

Henri Bergson is a philosopher of fluidity and its opposite – stability and his non-Cartesian dualism is based on changing degrees and gradations of these two qualities rather than on their sharp oppositions. Bergson’s perhaps most fundamental innovation consists in rearticulating the traditional problem of the relationship between space and time. According to Bergson, Space should be understood as homogeneous, discontinuous, allowing repetition, external, suitable for operation of intellect and use of symbols and signs (such as language). On the other hand time, or more specifically – duration, represents the true reality, graspable by intuition, unique, continuous, inner, and directly accessible. As Bergson poetically puts it:

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<sup>24</sup> Matz 174.

<sup>25</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Dover Publications, Inc.,1998) x.

There is, beneath these sharply cut crystals and this frozen surface, a continuous flux which is not comparable to any flux I have ever seen. There is a succession of states, each of which announces that which follows and contains that which precedes it. They can, properly speaking, only be said to form multiple states when I have already passed them and turn back to observe their track. Whilst I was experiencing them they were so solidly organized, so profoundly animated with a common life, that I could not have said where any one of them finished or where another commenced. In reality no one of them begins or ends, but all extend into each other.<sup>26</sup>

With this being said, one of the key themes of Bergson's philosophy is the stipulation of the essential fluidity of human consciousness, which should be approached in its sequential continuity in time, or in duration and not in static space. For example in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, which has been available in English translation since 1912, Bergson states:

Now, there are no two identical moments in the life of the same conscious being. Take the simplest sensation, suppose it constant, absorb in it the entire personality: the consciousness which will accompany this sensation cannot remain identical with itself for two consecutive moments, because the second moment always contains, over and above the first, the memory that the first has bequeathed to it. A consciousness which could experience two identical moments would be a consciousness without memory. It would die and be born again continually.<sup>27</sup>

By ascribing memory an active part in the process of perception, Bergson introduces a entirely new, dynamic conception of human subjectivity that is based on continual flux, or duration. This flux consists of a succession of states which, analogically to for example William James' psychology of the "stream of consciousness", cannot be separated because each of these states announces what follows and contains that which precedes. The successive "dynamism", or as Bergson terms it, "duration" of our subjectivity and consequently also personality in time, requires a new method which would be able to grasp it in its dynamic nature in unifying coherence. Bergson calls this method "intuition" and opposes it to the analytical method of science, a method that is connected with language, habit and space.

Intuition, which is according to Bergson the only method which is able to grasp its object (for example human personality) in its dynamic fluidity and temporality, is

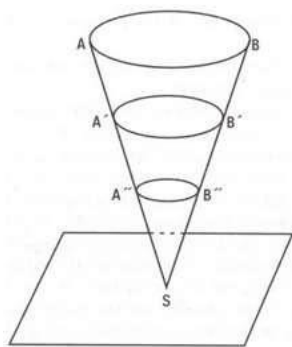
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<sup>26</sup> Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. T. E. Hulme (New York and London: The Knickerbocker Press, 1912) 11.

<sup>27</sup> Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* 12.

defined as “the kind of *intellectual sympathy* by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible.”<sup>28</sup>

Bergson further continues to explore human subjectivity as fluid and heterogeneous in respect to the role of personal memory and the way it participates on perception. According to Bergson’s position in *Matter and Memory*, there is no perceptive act which would not be “loaded” with memory and personal history and memory, which penetrates into present perception. This memory is the base of the individuality of the



perceiving subject. Every perceptive act is thus a mixture of perception and a piece of memory. The ration of these two “ingredients” (of memory and perception) is, however, not *stable* or fixed but may change in time according to our “attention to life”. According to Bergson’s *Matter and Memory*, the “mental life” of a healthy human individual being, “oscillates” between two extreme states of existence:

1) purely “sensori-motor actions” of “pure perception” *without memory*, which are oriented towards praxis and action, and 2) “hypnotic”, dream-like states of a pure memory, as remote from reality as possible. Bergson schematises these two “extreme positions” using a cone-like sketch of human mental life (fig. 1), in which the bottom slab represents the world of reality and the cone the ever-widening sphere of memory. In this scheme Bergson located a limit state of “pure perception” on the apex “S” and the dream-like existence of “pure memory” into the base “AB”. These two hypothetical liminal states mark the limits within which the “tones”<sup>29</sup> of human existence move.

In a hypothetical scenario, any subjectivity which would exist on the apex “S” would exist in a state of “pure perception”, of a “now” without any admixture of personal memory and as such it would “remind us of some sort of a robot, whose behaviour is identical with itself.”<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, any such person would represent pure non-thinking and non-consciousness and would be able to perform only actions [...] without reflection.”<sup>31</sup> This type of perception would come as an un-reflected reaction on the outside world and thus could be described as taking place outside the perceiving mind,

<sup>28</sup> Bergson, Introduction to *Metaphysics* 7.

<sup>29</sup> Bergson, *Matter* 221. See *Matter and Memory*, chapter III: “Different Planes of Consciousness”.

<sup>30</sup> Josef Fulka, ‘Bergson a problém paměti’, *Filosofie Henri Bergsona*, ed. J. Čapek (Praha: Oikoymenth, 2003) 34.

<sup>31</sup> Fulka 34.

in objects and things. On the other hand, any consciousness that would find itself exclusively on the base “AB” would exist so to say in “pure memory” and in a state of continual dreaming without any excitation by the material world. This unstable and “oscillatory” nature of human subjectivity is going to play a crucial role in our interpretation of changed states of consciousness and exteriorisations of subjectivity especially in Woolf’s fiction.

Returning to Bergson’s method of intuition, it is again important to stress its role as a unique method of reaching the dynamic and reality of the object of perception. In *Introduction to Metaphysics* Bergson provides us with the following definition of his intuitive-sympathetic method:

Once more an ideal opportunity to contrast sections from Lawrence’s and Bergson’s texts offers itself. “A COMPARISON of the definitions of metaphysics and the various conceptions of the absolute leads to the discovery that philosophers, in spite of their apparent divergences, agree in distinguishing two profoundly different ways of knowing a thing. The first implies that *we move round the object; the second that we enter into it*. The first depends on the point of view at which we are placed and on the *symbols* by which we express ourselves. The second neither depends on a point of view nor relies on any symbol. The first kind of knowledge may be said to stop at the relative; the second, in those cases where it is possible, to attain the absolute. Consider, for example, the *movement* of an object in space. My perception of the motion will vary with the point of view, moving or stationary, from which I observe it. My expression of it will vary with the systems of axes, or the points of reference, to which I relate it; that is, with the symbols by which I translate it. For this double reason I call such motion *relative*: in the one case, as in the other, *I am placed outside the object itself. But when I speak of an absolute movement, I am attributing to the moving object an interior and, so to speak, states of mind; I also imply that I am in sympathy with those states, and that I insert myself in them by an effort of imagination*. Then, according as the object is moving or stationary, according as it adopts one movement or another, what I experience will vary. And what I experience will depend neither on the point of view I may take up in regard to the object, since I am inside the object itself, nor on the symbols by which I may translate the motion, since I have rejected all translations in order to possess the original. In short, I shall no longer grasp the movement from without, remaining where I am, but from where it is, from within, as it is in itself. I shall possess an absolute.<sup>32</sup>

As we may see, Bergson compares two methods of knowledge, one absolute, internal, direct, emphatic or sympathetic and the other external, detached, partial, mediated by

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<sup>32</sup> Bergson, *Introduction to Metaphysics* 3.

symbols or signs (for example by language), and based on perspective. The first method is that of Bergsonian intuition and the second one is that of classical method of external observation. It is most instructive to compare Bergson's intuition as a philosophical method of exactness and absolute knowledge<sup>33</sup> with the epistemological certainty offered by a classical definition, represented here by the method of Cartesian *Meditations*. Here Descartes famously states that:

First, I know that if I have a vivid and clear thought of something, God could have created it in a way that exactly corresponds to my thought. *So the fact that I can vividly and clearly think of one thing apart from another assures me that the two things are distinct from one another*—that is, that they are two—since they can be separated by God. Never mind how they could be separated; that does not affect the judgment that they are distinct. So my mind is a distinct thing from my body. Furthermore, *my mind is me*, for the following reason. I know that I exist and that nothing else belongs to my nature or essence except that I am a thinking thing; from this it follows that my essence consists solely in my being a thinking thing, even though there may be a body that is very closely joined to me. *I have a vivid and clear idea of myself as something that thinks and isn't extended*, and one of body as something that is extended and does not think. So it is certain that I am really distinct from my body and can exist without it.<sup>34</sup>

Unlike Bergson, Descartes relies in his epistemology on “the fact that I can vividly and clearly think of one thing apart from another [which] assures me that the two things are *distinct* from one another” and on the fact that “I”, as a thinking non-extended substance, am clearly separated and *outside* of the perceived material object. With this being stated, it is possible to say that the argument of this thesis relies on different ways of transgressing these clear and distinct divisions of the Cartesian epistemology and present advantages and disadvantages of the Bergsonian approach. Taking one step further, it is possible to summarize the difference between the two approaches, the classical-Cartesian and Bergsonian in terms of unity and multiplicity or continuity and discontinuity. The classical pre-Bergsonian world is a world which relies on clarity, distinctness and isolated quality of discrete units (atoms, ideas, impressions), so typical for example for Locke's, Hume's or Hobbes' empiricism. This world is based on analysis of these discrete units and external observation, on keeping the boundaries between objects and subjects and not on “inserting the observer” into the object observed.

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<sup>33</sup> Fulka 15; Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Josef Fulka (Praha: Garamond, 1996) 1.

<sup>34</sup> Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* VI, 9.

As it is going to be demonstrated in the following chapters, the distinction between the two approaches is at the heart of our discussion and represents the essential difference between “intuitive-internal” approach favoured by Woolf and Lawrence and the classical “detached-external” method of Wyndham Lewis. Expressed in spatial terms of unity, discontinuity, oneness and multiplicity, the problem becomes articulated most ostensibly on the level of material objects, their continuity in space and the discussion of the clarity, sharpness and distinctness of their outline. Lawrence and Woolf’s works are going to be examined for imagery that crosses, dissolves and corrodes the clear and distinct divisions between objects and between objects and minds, using strategies that are essentially similar to the sympathetic-intuitive method that places the observer *inside* the observed object. What such method achieves, is a unified vision of an absolute dynamism of the observed object, however, at the cost of compromising ones Self-integrity and destabilisation of the rational order of things that supposedly “stand distinct” from each other.

Being fundamentally akin to Worringer’s Empathy, the “Dionysian” principle of “intuitive” knowledge is from the classicist perspective of the well disciplined, “universalist” world order, necessarily seen as chaotic, romantic, individualistic and subjective. As we will see, one of the reasons is that it exposes the nominalist nature of modern thinking in its arbitrary classification, orders and categories, which are no longer granted by God or Universal laws of positivist sciences. Thus, when Hulme writes in his “Humanism and The Religious Attitude” about the inherent error in the idea that “the discontinuities in nature are only *apparent*, and that a fuller investigation would reveal the underlying continuity”, and sets against it his desire for theories which “assert the existence of absolute gaps between one region of reality and other”<sup>35</sup>, he aims at Bergson’s philosophy and method. The question of which of the “gaps” between objects, bodies or subjectivities are arbitrary and which are “natural” and the way these problems are conceptualised in Woolf’s, Lawrence’s and Lewis’ texts is the main theme of this essay.

### **1.3 Woolf’s Poetics of Identification**

Let us now approach these problems in individual texts. As a natural extension of these phenomena, Woolf’s “Kew Gardens” is from the very beginning a story of movement

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<sup>35</sup> T. E. Hulme, *Speculations* (London: Routledge, 1960) 3–4.

and rest. The inherent dynamism of the story presents itself as early as in the very first sentence.

*From the oval-shaped flower bed there rose perhaps a hundred stalks spreading into heart-shaped or tongue-shaped leaves half way up and unfurling at the tip red or blue or yellow petals marked with spots of colour raised upon the surface; and from the red, blue or yellow gloom of the throat emerged a straight bar, rough with gold dust and slightly clubbed at the end.*<sup>36</sup>

The sentence-initial preposition, together with italicised dynamic verbs, immediately evokes the momentum of growth and of vertical movement of the flowers which acutely point away *from* the surface to the space beyond the flower bed. Due to the dynamic nature of the scene, the story quickly overflows its starting point and the narrative rapidly acquires a typically Woolf's spatial structure: a rhythmic pulsation of expansion and contraction where everything seems to be connected and smoothly passes from one thing to another. On a closer look, it is possible to see that the rhythm of alternating expansions and contractions, which covers the whole space of the scene, comprises of two poles: a) a pole of material reality, of things that are extended and solid and often presented in a close-up and b) a pole of abstract, fluid and immaterial reality, of memories, of words, but also of luminosity and translucence of colourful light and colour patches.

The rhythmic dialogue between these two poles, between the "granite and rainbow" of the story,<sup>37</sup> is playfully expressed in the following quote. The scene captures the "moment" after the focus of the narrative moves upwards from the story-central oval flower-bed (first paragraph) and focuses on the "periphery" with a figure of a man and woman approaching it. The man, keeping his distance from the woman, remains absorbed in his day-dreaming thoughts.

Fifteen years ago I came here with Lily,' he thought. 'We sat somewhere over there by a lake and I begged her to marry me all through the hot afternoon. How the dragonfly kept cycling round us: how clearly I see the dragonfly and her shoe with the square silver bucket at the toe. All the time I spoke I saw her shoe and I knew without looking up what she was going to say: the whole of her seemed to be in her shoe. And my love, my desire, were in

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<sup>36</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Haunted House and Other Stories* (London: Hogarth Press, 1967) 32. My italics.

<sup>37</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*. Vol. 4, 1931 - 1935, ed. A. O. Bell (London: Hogarth Press, 1982) 161.



the dragonfly; for some reason I thought that if the dragonfly settled on the leaf she would say ‘Yes’ at once. But the dragonfly went round and round: it never settled anywhere.<sup>38</sup>

As in Lawrence’s “The Shadow in the Rosegarden” or “The Shades of Spring”, the act of being physically present in a certain place while at the same time “mentally” occupying the same place in the past and re-living an intimate affair that once happened there is a strange type of “time travel” that unites two temporal dimensions into one spatial cluster. The equivalence of the mental and physical presence allows for both the physical and psychical aspects to equally contribute to an idea of space as a sum of all “possible worlds” and suggest a strange problem in Woolf’s fiction – the problem of continuity and discreteness (or dis-continuity) of the respective place. This problem can further be related to the subjectivity of the “time-traveller” and its Bergsonian “identity” in time in relation to memory and “present perception.”

Later in the discussion we will be able to see a number of variations<sup>39</sup> on what can be identified as a central problem not only for Woolf but for all the authors discussed in this thesis. Meanwhile, the scene in the garden quickly evolves from a descriptive to “philosophical” mode.

Doesn’t one always think of the past, in a garden with men and women lying under the trees? Aren’t they one’s past, all that remains of it, those men and women, those ghosts lying under the trees, [...] one’s happiness, one’s reality?<sup>40</sup>

As a part of his analysis of a number of opening scenes from various classical novels (including Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*) Miroslav Petříček, as if in passing, notices how an “in medias res” beginning of a book paradoxically contains simultaneous hints of continuity as well as discontinuity. Petříček develops this remark into a general observation on how this “discontinuity suddenly changes into continuity.”

Countless examples of what is typical of Virginia Woolf’s novels could be brought in from similar strategies of beginning. For example impressionism in visual arts, which discards painting in favour of colour and atmosphere, precisely because it wants to stress the

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<sup>38</sup> Woolf, House 33.

<sup>39</sup> There are in fact numerous variations of the basic dialectical pair: continuous and discontinuous, solid and fluid, one and many, limited and limitless, line and colour, separate and discreet, etc.

<sup>40</sup> Woolf, House 33.

continuity of all events. However, it is precisely because of this that it finds itself in conflict with the present “moment” and its discontinuity of the pure “now.”<sup>41</sup>

As we shall see in the following discussion, the problematic nature of “continuity in discontinuity” of the particular “now” which finds itself torn between two temporal moments while at the same time remains “united” in one location or concentrated in a point in space (a dragonfly, a buckle, a leaf) is a part of a larger cluster of problems in Woolf’s fiction. The problem is connected with the need to face the (dis)continuity of not only (purely) temporal moments (if there is such a thing) but, more substantially, of “objects” or “things”, places, space as well as of human subjectivity. This, in its nature essentially Bergsonian question of “unity in discontinuity” of moments like the one described above, is in Woolf’s story represented by a characteristic “dynamism”. This dynamism can be compared to the way in which the “impressionist temperament [of Woolf’s characters] thrives on dialectic movement”<sup>42</sup> between material and spiritual poles of reality, between “the shoe with the silver square bucket” and the dragonfly on the one hand and “my love and my desire”<sup>43</sup> on the other.

The poetic “naïveté” of what might be described as an unconscious leaning towards solid objects and material things that are momentarily at hand or close enough to provide a material store-house for one’s emotions or feelings is something we will have the opportunity to observe on a number of occasions to follow. Just a few paragraphs later, the story captures another instance in which mental states cleave or alight on “common objects” that immediately surround the thinkers. This time, the flower bed is approached by a “young man and a young woman.”

The couple stood still on the edge of the flower bed, and together pressed the end of her parasol deep down in the soft earth. The action and the fact that his hand rested on the top of hers expressed their feelings in a strange way, as [their] short insignificant words also expressed something, words with short wings for their heavy body of meaning, inadequate to carry them far and thus alighting awkwardly upon the very common objects that surrounded them, and were to their inexperienced touch so massive; but who knows (so

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<sup>41</sup> Miroslav Petříček, *Myšlení obrazem* (Praha: Herman & Synové, 2009) 98 - 99. “Pro to, co je tak patrné na románech Virginia Woolfové, by bylo možné uvést bezpočet příkladů c rámci různé strategie začínání, třeba impresionismus ve výtvarném umění, který ruší kresbu ve prospěch barvy a atmosféry právě proto, aby akcentoval spojitost všech událostí, avšak proto se také ocitá v konfliktu s „okamžikem“ a jeho diskontinuitou čistého „ted“. The working translation of Petříček’s and other texts from Czech was made by the author of this thesis and is restricted for the purposes of discussion in this thesis.

<sup>42</sup> Matz 177.

<sup>43</sup> Woolf, House 33.

they thought as they pressed the parasol into the earth) what precipices aren't concealed in them[.]<sup>44</sup>

The concentration of meaning and emotional content that is romantically but also half-mockingly imbued into the gesture of “pressing a parasol into the flowerbed” is another example of an exteriorisation of the contents of one’s mind that is very much similar to the above quoted example with the shoe buckle and dragonfly. At the same time the downward direction of this gesture counterbalances the upward movement of the growing flowers and structurally unites the scene with the opening of the story and suggests a complex (dis)continuous structure of horizontal layers. In “Kew Gardens” as well as in D. H. Lawrence’s vitalist metaphysics “the secret of life [is that] it contains lesser motions in the greater.”<sup>45</sup> Analogically, each individual pair that passes the flower bed introduces its own dynamism into the story and installs its own system of movement.

In respect to these newcomers, the flower bed becomes a stable centre around which these microcosms circulate with their own particular structures - the dragonfly circling around a shoe, one’s life imbued in a shoe, a parasol pressed into the ground and a “ponderous woman [looking] through the pattern of falling words at the flower bed standing cool, firm, and upright in the earth.”

So the heavy woman came to a standstill opposite the oval-shaped flower bed, and ceased even to pretend to listen to what the other woman was saying. She stood there letting the words slowly fall over her, swaying the top part of her body slowly backwards and forwards, looking at the flowers.<sup>46</sup>

The imagery of this scene directly connects the woman with the flowers in the flower bed and temporarily disrupts the continuity of the whole space. It is easy to see how close the scene comes to a state of complete identification of the woman with the swaying flowers. This scene marks a significant theme that recurs in Woolf’s fiction and connects early stories such as the “Kew Gardens” with similar scenes from later fiction, as for example in Woolf’s *Waves* (1931), where the multiplicity of character-voices and human subjects finds itself very close to the situation of the woman in Kew gardens: “I am green as a yew tree in the shade of the hedge. My hair is made of leaves.

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<sup>44</sup> Woolf, House 37.

<sup>45</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence* (Heinemann: London 1970) 441.

<sup>46</sup> Woolf, House 36.

I am rooted to the middle of the earth. My body is a stalk.”<sup>47</sup> Later in *Waves* this type of disembodied perception goes even further:

So the landscape returned to me; so I saw the fields rolling in waves of colour beneath me, but now with this difference; I saw but was not seen. I walked unshadowed; I came unheralded. From me had dropped the old cloak, the old response; the hollowed hand that beats back sounds. Thin as a ghost, leaving no trace where I trod, perceiving merely, I walked alone in a new world, never trodden; brushing new flowers, unable to speak save in a child’s words of one syllable,<sup>48</sup>

Such moments of identification of an individual with perceived objects, in which one’s consciousness momentarily disappears and the only thing that remains is an inhuman gaze that penetrates into the depths of matter, mark the natural development of the “dragonfly and parasol” scenes. These scenes are of great importance for our discussion of continuity and discontinuity of objects and selves and will be treated extensively in the following discussion. For now, however, it is possible to suggest that the extreme doctrine of sensation, which such scenes represent, shows a state in which the human subjects is set free from the load of the “temps perdu” and temporarily becomes identified with the object it perceives.

Returning to the discussion of the spatial arrangement of the “Kew Gardens”, we may further observe that the flower bed, besides being the centre of the story, has a structure and a “narrative” of its own. The flower bed is a place of a qualitatively diverse and more or less linear passage of time (the journey of the snail) that stands in opposition to the non-linear “temporal systems” of those who walk past it. As was pointed out, the individual flower-bed visitors are temporarily related to the flower-bed as to the natural centre of the spatial arrangement of the story. This flower-bed thus constitutes a sort of a planetary system around which the newcomers revolve for a while, tracing the oval-shaped orbit of the flower bed, perhaps even pausing for a while, and inevitably disappearing beyond the horizon of the story. From this perspective, it is interesting to observe the extent to which the flower bed “double-frames” the space of the story.

If we imagine the flower bed as a picture that is framed and whose frame is the very condition of the existence of the story’s concentric composition, its frame not only

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<sup>47</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Waves* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) 8.

<sup>48</sup> Woolf, *Waves* 239. My italics.

frames what is inside it (the snail and the flowers) but also what is outside it<sup>49</sup>, i.e. the movement of the passers-by and their impressionistic disappearance that is staged, in a typical fashion, as a loss of shape or outline and their merging with the colour-patches in the background.

Thus one couple after another with much the same irregular and aimless movement passed the flower-bed and were enveloped in layer after layer of green blue vapour, in which at first their bodies had substance and a dash of colour, but later both substance and colour dissolved in the green-blue atmosphere. How hot it was! So hot that even the thrush chose to hop, like a mechanical bird, in the shadow of the flowers, with long pauses between one movement and the next; instead of rambling vaguely the white butterflies danced one above another, making with their white shifting flakes the outline of a shattered marble column above the tallest flowers the glass roofs of the palm house shone as if a whole market full of shiny green umbrellas had opened in the sun; and in the drone of the aeroplane the voice of the summer sky murmured its fierce soul. Yellow and black, pink and snow white, shapes of all these colours, men, women, and children were spotted for a second upon the horizon, and then, seeing the breadth of yellow that lay upon the grass, they wavered and sought shade beneath the trees, dissolving like drops of water in the yellow and green atmosphere, staining it faintly with red and blue. It seemed as if all gross and heavy bodies had sunk down in the heat motionless and lay huddled upon the ground, but their voices went wavering from them as if they were flames lolling from the thick waxen bodies of candles.<sup>50</sup>

The difference between the clearly demarcated line of the oval bed and the vagueness or haziness of the colourful vapours and shadows introduces an important distinction between the solid and the fluid and calls to mind the classical distinction between line and colour in visual arts, in which:

[T]he preference for line or colour indicated different, even opposing, artistic aims: the adherence to line was understood as a expression of the desire to make an objective statement about the reality portrayed; the predilection for colour, on the other hand, was understood as indicating the wish to reproduce the reality as it appeared to the senses, without the intermediacy of inquisitive, discriminating observation.<sup>51</sup>

The impressionistic quality of representations that dissolve the boundaries between objects becomes here a gesture performed from a position of uninterested detachment of

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<sup>49</sup> Petříček 100.

<sup>50</sup> Woolf, House 38 - 39.

<sup>51</sup> Mosche Barasch, *Modern Theories of Art: From Impressionism to Kandinsky*, Vol. 2 (New York: New York University Press, 1998) 19.

pure observation, without any form of expectations, without any pre-established social, epistemological, linguistic or gender pre-classification, or, to allude to the Bergsonian formulation of the problem, without memory. These states are reminiscent of Bergson's hypothetical state of "pure perception," i.e. perception without the addition or influence of memory, which in this context becomes the carrier of individuality. Importantly, "pure perception"<sup>52</sup> brings the perceiving consciousness dangerously close of the perceived object, or, literally, places the perception within them. As Josef Fulka in his most instructive study on Bergson's notion of memory points out:

From the previous discussion we have found out that the impersonal (neosobní) perception, the perception in its pure state, is more a part of the things perceived than of ourselves (naší osoby). Because it is deprived of all traces of its individual character, it would cause us (in case it actually exists) to see things *where they find themselves* rather than in us.<sup>53</sup>

This problem of the exteriorisation of human subjectivity announces some of the more general aesthetic and philosophical problems posed by other modernist writers, especially those connected with the conservative, "commons sense" position, such as Wyndham Lewis, late T. E. Hulme, and perhaps even W. B. Yeats. As will be argued in the chapters to follow, the criticism of these artists will focus primarily on the impact of these impressionistic "effects" - the effects of sunlight, reflection, colourful shadow and the rejection of white light. All of these effects are used in full force in Wolf's descriptions and contribute to the overall image of a "pure vision," albeit at the cost of the loss of the dividing line between objects and objects and selves.

Through the use of regular shifts of perspective from the microcosm of the flower bed to the macrocosm of the walking pairs, the story juxtaposes a number of mutually connected spatial systems or units that embed different time-flows. In this respect, the spatio-temporal structure of the story stands very close to Joseph Frank's classical discussion of "the spatialization of form" in modernist prose. In his *The Idea of Spatial Form*, Frank offers the following analysis of a country fair scene from Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*:

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<sup>52</sup> On the problem of "Pure perception" see especially pages 69 - 73 in the respective edition of Bergson's *Matter and Memory*.

<sup>53</sup> Josef Fulka, 'Bergson a problém paměti,' *Filosofie Henri Bergsona*, ed. J. Čapek (Praha: Oikoymenth, 2003). 27. The working translation of Fulka's text was made by the author of this thesis and is restricted for the purposes of discussion in this thesis.

This scene [the market scene] illustrates, on a small scale, what we mean by the spatialization of form in a novel. For the duration of the scene, at least, the time flow of the narrative is halted; attention is fixed on the interplay of relationships in the immobilized time-area. These relationships are juxtaposed independently of the progress of the narrative, and the full significance of the scene is given only by the reflexive relations among the units of meaning.<sup>54</sup>

Adhering to the main points of Frank's analysis, Woolf's text analogously juxtaposes "units of meaning" (individual scenes), however, without halting the "interplay of relationships in the immobilized area." Instead of freezing the flow of the narrative, Woolf's text relies on simultaneous existence and juxtaposition of regions with a different flow of time, or in other words: "heterochronies".<sup>55</sup> As the attention of the story focuses on the people who pass the flower bed, the time in the flower bed passes at its own (very slow) pace while, at the same time, the garden as a whole lives its life against the background of the murmuring city with its "motor omnibuses". As the author herself puts it some eleven years later in her biographical novel *Orlando*, the heterogeneous nature of time is for Woolf something quite natural and represents a recurrent topic in her fiction.

[A] conclusion which, one cannot help feeling, might have been reached more quickly by simple statement that 'Time passed' (here the exact amount could be indicated in brackets) and nothing ever happened. But Time, unfortunately, though it makes animals and vegetables bloom and fade with amazing punctuality, has no simple effect upon the mind of man. The mind of man, moreover, works with equal strangeness upon the body of time. An hour, once it lodges in the queer element of human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or a hundred times its clock length; on the other hand, an hour may be accurately represented on the mantelpiece of the mind by one second. This extraordinary discrepancy between time on the clock and time in the mind is less known than it should be and deserves fuller investigation.<sup>56</sup>

Keeping in mind the well known distinction between the qualitative and quantitative ideas<sup>57</sup> of time, it is important to point out that the heterogeneous nature of time cannot be treated separately from the analogically heterogeneous nature of space. Going

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<sup>54</sup> Joseph Frank, *The Idea of spatial Form* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1991) 33.

<sup>55</sup> Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias," trans. Jay Miskowiec, 21. Oct. 2010 <<http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html>>, non. pag.

<sup>56</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) 94 - 95.

<sup>57</sup> See: Kern 1 - 4.

beyond the Bergsonian treatment of time and space and drawing out the implication of Foucault's discussion of the topic, it is possible to say that each heterotopia is also a heterochronia. Even for Foucault,

[h]eterotopias are most often linked to slices in time - which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies. The heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time.<sup>58</sup>

The absolute break with the traditional time, which is the standardized time of Big Ben as in *Mrs. Dalloway* or the habitual time of everyday routines and rituals, is granted in "Kew Gardens" by the complex spatio-temporal structure of the story in its triple-concentric "heterotopic" structure (London – Kew Gardens – flower bed) but also by the temporally limited halts and stops in the dynamic flow of the story. All of these moments illustrate not only the space-based multi-temporality of the story's structure but also attest to the qualitative rather than quantitative understanding of time as flowing "differently" in different places. As we have tried to demonstrate, these individual regions of qualitatively different time are centred in Woolf's texts around the axis of the flower bed and connected with some firm materiality, such as the shoe bucket. The way in which these "solid objects" concentrate contracted memories, emotions, feelings and other "stuff of thought," is illustrated in an exemplary way in the equally story famous story, "Mark on the Wall" (1919).

#### 1.4 Solid and Fluid

"I shall have to write a novel entirely about carpets, old silver, cut glass and furniture."<sup>59</sup>

Analogically to "Kew Gardens," the spatial structure of "The Mark on the Wall" is essentially concentric, or to be more precise – double-concentric. The text likewise adheres to a loosely cosmological structure, although it differs from "Kew Gardens" in that the role of the material centre of the story, from which the story emanates and to which it returns, is much more concentrated than the flower bed - a mark on the wall. Contrary to the "Kew Gardens," where the movement of the focal point shifts from the flower bed to individual visitors who pass by it and eventually "dissolv[e] like drops of

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<sup>58</sup> Foucault, *Heterotopias non. pag.*

<sup>59</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Letters II*, ed. Nigel Nicolson (London: Chatto & Windus, 1981) 281.



water in the yellow and green atmosphere”<sup>60</sup>, “The Mark on the Wall” offers a structure of two centres: the mark, a solid material pole, and the narrator, an observing subject and her “train of thought”<sup>61</sup>. These two poles effectively set the framework of the whole story and illustrate “[h]ow readily our thoughts swarm upon a new object, lifting it a little way, as ants carry a blade of straw so feverishly, and then leave it.”<sup>62</sup>

The mark itself can be interpreted as having a number of related functions. In the first place, it becomes a solid and fixed external reference point to the fluidity and instability of human consciousness. As such, it rhythmically reappears in the text and surfaces from the waves of fluid thoughts as something towards which the contemplating consciousness always cleaves to in order to escape from itself. The dialectics of liquid thoughts and their external reference points in material reality announces what we consider a key theme in Woolf’s fiction - the dynamic dialectics of solid and fluid. As we hope to demonstrate, this dialectics is in Woolf’s fiction closely related to the discussion of the problematic position of the human subject and as such it is relevant not only to Woolf’s fiction but to all of the authors discussed in this thesis. Let us consider these problems in the context of the following text:

Indeed, now that I have fixed my eyes upon it [mark on the wall], I feel that I have grasped a plank in the sea; I feel a satisfying sense of reality which at once turns the two Archbishops and the Lord High Chancellor to the shadows of shades. Here is something definite, something real. *Thus, waking from a midnight dream of horror, one hastily turns on the light and lies quiescent, worshipping chest of drawers, worshipping solidity, worshipping reality, worshipping the impersonal world which is a proof of some other existence than ours.* That is what one wants to be sure of. [...] Wood is pleasant to think about. It comes from a tree; and trees grow, and we don’t know they grow. For years and years they grow, without paying any attention to us, in meadows, in forests, and by the side of rivers – all things one likes to think about. [...] I like to think about the tree itself: first the close dry sensation of being wood; then the grinding of the storm; then the slow, delicious ooze of sap. I like to think of it, too, on a winter’s night standing in the empty field with all leaves close-furled, nothing tender exposed to iron bullets of the moon, a naked mast upon an earth that goes tumbling, tumbling, all night long.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Woolf, House 39.

<sup>61</sup> Woolf, House 46.

<sup>62</sup> Woolf, House 40.

<sup>63</sup> Woolf, House 47. My italics.

As we may observe, Woolf describes a universe in which wood is pleasant to think about, solid things are safe to turn to and the impersonality of a cupboard, offering an escape from the complexity of inter-subjective as well as intra-subjective relations, is reassuring as well as potentially dangerous. As will be argued in more detail in the next section of this chapter, the mark, as well as other “solid objects,” plays an important role in Woolf’s conceptualization of human consciousness and subjectivity. This role consists in destabilising the supposed coherence of is what in the western philosophical tradition typically referred to as “subject” in a loosely Cartesian sense<sup>64</sup> and undermines the idea of human subjectivity as a “fixed, indivisible, and permanent whole (I think, therefore I am) [which] has underpinned existing notions of consciousness and reason.”<sup>65</sup> As part of this effort, our discussion will focus on specific states of heightened perceptive intensity in which the perceiving subject stumbles on the verge of collapse and mixes itself with what it perceives.

In her well known criticism of the so called Edwardian authors, published in a thematically closely related series of essays “Modern Fiction” (1919), “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown” (1923) and “Character in Fiction” (1924), Woolf reproaches the old generation of authors for paying too much attention to material and social aspects of reality while neglecting the life of the consciousness. Despite this critique, Woolf develops in her fiction an original version of “materialism” which overcomes the Edwardian neglect of non-material aspects of human existence only at the cost of replacing it with a different, equally de-humanizing type of materialism. The instability, which results from Woolf’s innovative approach to consciousness of the human subject, is to be found in a number of connected motives in Woolf’s fiction.

First, there is a “Bergsonian thesis”, according to which human consciousness cannot be described as a single, stable and homogeneous “entity” but rather as transitioning between “divers tones of mental life” so that “our psychic life might be lived at different

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<sup>64</sup> Despite the fact that considerable attention has been paid to the issue of the weakened position of the self in Woolf’s fiction, as far as we know none of the studies, has dealt systematically with the specific state of consciousness of merging with material reality and/ or identification with perceived objects. Works relevant for this topic are for example Judith Ryan’s *The Vanishing Subject: Early Psychology and Literary Modernism* but especially Judith Ryan’s ‘The Vanishing Subject: Empirical Psychology and the Modern Novel.’ As will be argued, Ryan does not explicitly cover the specific instances of blending from the perspective used in this thesis. Further, Ryan’s interpretation of Woolf’s theory of perception based on Mach’s radical empiricism and James’s pragmatism create a number of problems that the Ryan in her account does not consider. All of these points are covered in the final section of the chapter.

<sup>65</sup> Anthony Elliott, *Psychoanalytic Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers 1994) 6.

heights, now nearer to action, now further removed from it, according to the degree of *our attention to life*.”<sup>66</sup>

A similar reading is advocated by Jesse Matz who in his *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics* relates Woolf’s deliberate choice not to provide her readers with a conclusive treatment of human subjectivity and her reserved attitude towards philosophy to Woolf’s statement that “human mind, as opposed to the critical one, varies.”<sup>67</sup> Woolf herself formulates a very interesting statement on the dynamic nature of the unity of the human subject, or “Self” in her 1927 short story-like essay “Street Haunting”. In this essay Woolf discusses the dynamic nature of human subjectivity on the background of the classical problem of unity of the self in time and the idea of the self as heterogeneous a mixture. Stopping for a while in her “quest for an ink pencil,” Woolf writes:

But what could be more absurd? It is, in fact, on the stroke of six; it is a winter’s evening; we are walking on the Strand to buy a pencil. How, then, are we also on a balcony, wearing pearls in June? What could be more absurd? Yet it is nature’s folly, not ours. When she set about her chief masterpiece, the making of man, she should have thought of one thing only. Instead, turning her head, looking over her shoulder, into each one of us she let creep instincts and desires which are utterly at variance with his main being, so that we are streaked, variegated, *all of mixture*; the colours have run. Is the true self this which stands on the pavement in January, or that which bends over the balcony in June? Am I here, or am I there? Or is the true self neither this nor that, neither here nor there, but something so varied and wandering that it is only when we give the rein to its wishes and let it take its way unimpeded that we are indeed ourselves? Circumstances compel unity; for convenience’s sake a man must be a whole. The good citizen when he opens his door in the evening must be banker, golfer, husband, father; not a nomad wandering the desert, a mystic staring at the sky, a debauchee in the slums of San Francisco, a soldier heading a revolution, a pariah howling with scepticism and solitude. When he opens his door, he must run his fingers through his hair and put his umbrella in the stand like the rest.<sup>68</sup>

Instead of being clearly separated from the Non-I, the self is treated as a “mixture” of different “colours” and of different *outside* influences. From the conventional unity of this aggregate, the self (in a rather postmodern gesture) radiates to its “own outside,”

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<sup>66</sup> Bergson, *Matter* xiv.

<sup>67</sup> Matz 175.

<sup>68</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Selected Essays* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) 182 - 183. My italics.

distracted by desires and “choked with observations.”<sup>69</sup> The idea of human subjectivity Woolf gives in her essay addresses very similar questions to those discussed so far this chapter. In Woolf’s account, individual moments in the linear existence of the self are placed next to each other in a sequence and their substantial unity and belonging to “oneself” is questioned. Perhaps it is this “multiplicity in unity” of the self which motivates Woolf’s occasional multiplication of sentence-subjects. The following extract from *Mrs. Dalloway* is a very good example of this strategy which translates a metaphysical principle onto the level of syntax. Each deliberately and from the stylistic perspective redundant “she” represents a slightly different “self” from the next “she” of the supposedly “identical” subject:

She reached the Park gates. She stood for a moment, looking at the omnibuses in Piccadilly. She would not say of anyone in the world now that they were this or that they were that. She felt very young; at the same time unspeakably aged. She sliced like knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on.<sup>70</sup>

The unnecessary multiplication of subjects in the extract above contributes to the feeling of the successive existence of the human subject in time Woolf discusses in “Street Haunting”. It is very interesting to compare this problem of the unity of a self, which is unable to accommodate the temporal multiplicity of its successive states, with Bergson’s dynamic account of consciousness. The changes that each individual “she” undergoes while perceiving things create a new, slightly modified “she.” In *An Introduction to Metaphysics* Bergson offers a formulation that explicates Woolf’s multiplication of “shes”:

Now, there are no two identical moments in the life of the same conscious being. Take the simplest sensation, suppose it constant, absorb in it the entire personality: the consciousness which will accompany this sensation cannot remain identical with itself for two consecutive moments, because the second moment always contains, over and above the first, the memory that the first has bequeathed to it. A consciousness which could experience two identical moments would be a consciousness *without memory*. It would die and be born again continually. In what other way could one represent unconsciousness?<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Jacob’s Room* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) 96.

<sup>70</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 7.

<sup>71</sup> Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. T. E. Hulme (New York and London: The Knickerbocker Press, 1912) 12 - 13. My italics.

As it will be argued, dwelling on the problem of unity and multiplicity as well as on the problem of (dis)continuity of the self, Woolf's fiction relies on the duality of two terms or notions, whose essential character needs to be emphasized: the duality of the solid and the fluid or the continuous and discrete. The interaction between these two notions and their respective effect on the "quality" of human subject and its coherence acquires a crucial importance in Woolf's treatment of human perception but also of her treatment of the security and integrity of human subject.

### 1.5 A Very Remarkable Piece of Iron

Tomorrow I'll get some interesting objects from the rubbish dump, including broken lamp-posts...discarded buckets, baskets, kettles, soldiers' mess-tins, oil-cans, wire, lamp-posts, stovepipes [...]. I'll no doubt dream of it tonight.<sup>72</sup>

One of the instances in which this instability of the human subject manifests itself most acutely, is the existence of peculiar mental states in which the consciousness overcomes the Cartesian duality and mixes itself with material objects, subsists in them or becomes completely exteriorized and identified with its object. Such states of "in-humanity" can be understood as Woolf's specific interpretation of the unconscious and lead towards a state in which, as Woolf enigmatically puts it: "an object *mixes itself* so profoundly with the stuff of thought that it *loses its actual form* and *recomposes itself* a little differently in an ideal shape which haunts the brain when we least expect it."<sup>73</sup>

This quote is drawn from Woolf's peculiar short story called "Solid Objects." Drawing towards an idea of human consciousness as a mixture, this story will serve as an interesting starting point of our study of Woolf's prose as capturing an extreme affiliation of mental and material spaces. Begun in November 1918 and published some two years later in *The Athenaeum*, "Solid Objects" is a seemingly simple story of a young man named John who happens to find a small "lump of glass" on a beach, keeps it for momentary pleasure and eventually develops a kind of habitual "obsession" for discovering, collecting and pathologically accumulating objects that are similar to it. Despite its undeniable comic qualities, the text cannot be reduced to a description of a disturbing obsession or mental disorder.

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<sup>72</sup> Van Gogh's letter to Anthon van Rappard. 27 October 1882. "The Letters of Vincent van Gogh," <<http://vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let275/letter.html>>non. pag. 1/2/2014.

<sup>73</sup> Woolf, House 88.

Far from this, “Solid Objects” is a romance of many dimensions. It is, as Judith Ryan insists, a story of “naked perception” and a “weblike structure of the consciousness [and] its subsistence in the object.”<sup>74</sup> Moreover, it provides an interesting insight into the ontology of the human subject and the way it is embedded in material reality. Woolf’s account of the process of perception in which an “object *mixes itself* so profoundly with the stuff of thought”<sup>75</sup>, however pathological it may seem, is highly relevant to our interpretation of strategies of representation in “Solid Objects” but also in Woolf’s texts in general. This claim can be supported by at least two following arguments: it shows that human consciousness cannot be accounted for as a homogeneous and stable. Further, it shows that human consciousness is essentially anchored to material reality.

The “mixture” or “re-composition” takes place on a number of different levels. Taken figuratively, like Van Gogh, who couldn’t sleep because of broken lamp-posts and other junkyard collectibles, John’s consciousness gives him no rest because it “mixes itself” with material objects in order to synthesise reality in new, different and perhaps even rather unexpected ways. Illustrating the ambiguous “fluidity of objects [and the way] they decompose and recombine themselves as the object[s] of a new fascination”,<sup>76</sup> each piece of matter John adds to his collection, being “nothing but a glass,” invites his consciousness to “mix itself” with it by the limitless potential to represent almost anything. Paradoxically, these “hard, concentrated and definite objects”<sup>77</sup> become, very much like the mark on the wall, the starting point of such a complex horizon of possibilities precisely because of the fluidity of meanings they promise to signify. In other words, their status is somewhere between a “unified object” and an object that exists as a nexus of connectivity – continuous and discrete at the same time.

The introduction of an ex-meaningful fragment into a new set of relationship (i.e., making it a part of John’s collection) certainly represents a process which at the same time imposes some “changes” on the perceiving subject and so the “violence” which John performs on “his” fragments is in no way inferior to the “violence” these fragments perform on his “mental integrity.” Thus the desire and determination to

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<sup>74</sup> Ryan, Judith, *The Vanishing Subject* 867.

<sup>75</sup> Woolf, *House* 81.

<sup>76</sup> Bill Brown, ‘Thing Theory,’ *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 28. No. 1 (Autumn, 2001) 3.

<sup>77</sup> Woolf, *House*, 83.

“posses objects”<sup>78</sup> drive John to “haunt the places which are most prolific of broken china, such as pieces of waste land between railway lines, sites of demolished houses, and commons in the neighbourhood of London”<sup>79</sup>.

Almost grotesquely, but at the same time with a sense of calm detachment, Woolf’s “Solid Objects” seems to suggest that the attractiveness of these “solids” represents a serious threat to one’s psychological integrity. In Woolf’s fiction, solid objects function as if they had a will of their own. They try to “steal” the awareness of the fascinated consciousness by luring it outside its owner’s mind into the region of material impersonality where it dwells, as Woolf puts it in “Street Haunting,” “wandering unimpeded” by our social selves. The extremity of this situation as portrayed in “Solid Objects” is already heralded in similar scenes in “Kew Gardens” (the woman who temporarily became a flower) as well as in “the close dry sensation of being wood”<sup>80</sup> in “Mark on the Wall”.

This theme is advanced one step forward in the following section from *Mrs. Dalloway*, which not only reminds us of “how readily our thoughts swarm upon a new object”<sup>81</sup>, but also shows how solid objects, not unlike wild animals, prey upon the consciousness of those who are careless enough to look at them, only because they are simply “too exciting”:

[Septimus] began, very cautiously, to open his eyes, to see whether the gramophone was really there. But real things - real things were too exciting. He must be cautious. He would not go mad. First he looked at the fashion papers on the lower shelf, then, gradually, at the gramophone with the green trumpet. Nothing could be more exact. And so, gathering courage, he looked at the sideboard; the plate of bananas; the engraving of Queen Victoria and Prince Consort; at the mantelpiece, with the jar of roses. None of these things moved. All were still; all were real.<sup>82</sup>

Unfortunately, John, the main hero of “Solid Objects,” was not as careful with *his* “solid objects” as Septimus. As the narrative culminates, the “orphaned pieces” of broken matter in the story express not only John’s desire and determination to posses objects but also illustrate the way in which these objects posses John. Their possibility to carry

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<sup>78</sup> Woolf, House 84.

<sup>79</sup> Woolf, House 83.

<sup>80</sup> Woolf, House 47.

<sup>81</sup> Woolf, House 40.

<sup>82</sup> Woolf, *Dalloway* 120.

*any* meaning and reflect the sum total of the possible relations John imagines them to have, illustrates the eventually unlimited repertoire of actions John is willing to undertake in order to find another piece into his collection.

So John found himself attracted to the windows of curiosity shops when he was out walking, merely because he saw something which reminded him of the lump of glass. Anything, so long as it was an object of some kind, more or less round, perhaps with a dying flame deep sunk in its mass, anything--china, glass, amber, rock, marble--even the smooth oval egg of a prehistoric bird would do.<sup>83</sup>

John's now rather obsessive hobby eventually makes him completely abandon his social life, neglect his friends, lose his parliament campaign and turn his house into a rubbish dump. All of this, however, is more than compensated to John by the discovery of:

a very remarkable piece of iron - It was almost identical with the glass in shape, massy and globular, but so cold and heavy, so black and metallic. [...] As his eyes passed from one to another, the determination to possess objects that even surpassed these tormented the young man. He devoted himself more and more resolutely to the search.<sup>84</sup>

Deep beneath the portrait of one human drama, "Solid Objects" is a story of the solid and the fluid. The dialectics of these two key notions provides the dynamics which works within Woolf's epistemology and represents Woolf's original contribution to an essential theme in modernist aesthetics and philosophy. Bergson's theory of consciousness, intuition, and continuity of movement, Futurist development of objects in space, adoration of speed and new technological sensitivities, fluid objects of impressionist paintings, Anti-Time Cult philosophy of Wyndham Lewis or reactionary conservatism T. E. Hulme - to name only some of the most prominent examples - are all fundamentally engaged in the discussion about the significance of solidity and fluidity, stability and instability, relativity and discreteness, unity or multiplicity - not only of objects, but also of consciousness, personality or individuality.

As an integral part of this rhetoric of solidity and fluidity, the process of sensation, which in Woolf's texts always holds the foundations of human subjectivity, can be described in a number of Woolf's stories as a mixture, or more precisely, as a re-composition of the material reality through the workings of the consciousness. This mixture stands for a process in which both the perceiving mind and the perceived object

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<sup>83</sup> Woolf, House 83.

<sup>84</sup> Woolf, House 84.



undergo a small degree of change in order to recompose themselves into a new whole. Besides her famous “world seen without a self”<sup>85</sup> and besides her rejection of the “the damned egotistical self”<sup>86</sup>, Woolf famously articulates her ideas on the instability of the human consciousness in her equally famous “impressionist” definition of life in “Modern Fiction”:

An ordinary mind in an ordinary day receives a myriad impressions – *trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel*. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, and as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the ascent falls differently from the old; [...] Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, *this* unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible?<sup>87</sup>

Supposing that the “this” in the penultimate line refers to “consciousness” rather than “life” (it is also quite possible that for Woolf the two are more or less identical), the text presents a very original characterisation of “consciousness” - varying, unknown, complex, displaying aberrations, uncircumscribed, or, in another word – *fluid*. Interestingly enough, Woolf speaks here of mixtures and demands representation of consciousness “with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible.” In this respect it is important to note that “Modern Fiction”, written in 1919 and published in 1921, belongs to the same period in which Woolf wrote “Solid Objects” –a story about “mixing objects with the stuff of thought”.

With the key words being “as little [...] as possible”, we might speculate that, despite being “alien and external,” solid objects play some constitutive or unifying role in human subjectivity “that would not be located in the conventional self.”<sup>88</sup> Without the reference to something impersonal and solid, human consciousness would regress into solipsism, or, to use Woolf’s famous reproach to Dorothy Richardson’s novels: a “helter-skelter of flying fragments”<sup>89</sup> without any unity. Accordingly, a limited addition

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<sup>85</sup> Woolf, *Waves* 239.

<sup>86</sup> Woolf, *Diary II* 14.

<sup>87</sup> Woolf, *Selected Essays* 9. My italics.

<sup>88</sup> Judith Ryan, *The Vanishing Subject* 191.

<sup>89</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. III., ed. Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1994) 11.

of “solid things” would be necessary for the fluid consciousness to function. However, since any excess of the “solid” component leads to an impersonal, inhuman or mechanical existence such as John’s, “as little as possible” in this definition stands for “as much as necessary and not more”. The difference between the degrees of the material admixture can be clearly seen by comparing John’s pathological affinity with solid objects and Orlando’s momentary need to “attach his floating heart to something hard” while day dreaming:

He sighed profoundly, and flung himself — there was a passion in his movements which deserves the word — on the earth at the foot of the oak tree. He loved, beneath all this summer transiency, to feel the earth’s spine beneath him; for such he took the hard root of the oak tree to be; or, for image followed image, it was the back of a great horse that he was riding, or the deck of a tumbling ship — it was anything indeed, so long as it was hard, for he felt the need of something which he could attach his floating heart to; the heart that tugged at his side; the heart that seemed filled with spiced and amorous gales every evening about this time when he walked out. To the oak tree he tied it and as he lay there, gradually the flutter in and about him stilled itself; the little leaves hung, the deer stopped; the pale summer clouds stayed; his limbs grew heavy on the ground; and he lay so still that by degrees the deer stepped nearer and the rooks wheeled round him and the swallows dipped and circled and the dragonflies shot past, as if all the fertility and amorous activity of a summer’s evening were woven web-like about his body.<sup>90</sup>

The fluid consciousness, more generally called “stream of consciousness”, requires a mixture of solid objects in a certain ratio. This material component is not only a safe material anchor for thoughts, but can also “communicate an impersonal dimension which can be terrifying but can also provide a context for a source of relief from human activity.”<sup>91</sup> As Dianne F. Gillespie puts it, “isolated and framed, solid objects are impersonal, transcendent, and as such, reassuring.”<sup>92</sup> Consequently, retaining their “as little as possible” quality, solid objects are a safe external reference point and a counterweight to the fluidity of one’s consciousness anchored in the impersonal, as in the following passage, in which Mrs. Ramsay, just like John, muses about finding a “full drop of solid matter”<sup>93</sup> amidst water and sand.

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<sup>90</sup> Woolf, Orlando 18 - 19.

<sup>91</sup> Dianne F. Gillespie, *The Sisters’ Arts: The Writing and Painting of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988) 236.

<sup>92</sup> Gillespie 236.

<sup>93</sup> Woolf, House 80.

As summer neared, as the evening lengthened there came to the wakeful, the hopeful, walking the beach, stirring the pool, imaginations of the strangest kind- of flesh turned to atoms which drove before the wind, of stars flashing in their hearts, of outwardly the scattered parts of the vision within. In those mirrors, the minds of men, in those pools of uneasy water, in which cloud forever and shadows form, dreams persisted; and it was impossible to resist the strange intimation which every gull, flower, tree, man and woman, and the white earth itself seemed to declare (but if you questioned at once to withdraw) that good triumph, happiness prevails, order rules, or to resist the extra ordinary stimulus to range hither and thither in search of some absolute good, some crystal of intensity remote from the known pleasures and familiar virtues, something alien to the processes of domestic life, single, hard, bright, like a diamond in the sand which would render the possessor secure. Moreover softened and acquiescent, the spring with their bees humming and gnats dancing threw her cloud about her, veiled her eyes, averted her head, and among passing shadows and fights of small rain seemed to have taken upon her knowledge of the sorrows of mankind.<sup>94</sup>

The preference for impersonal structures and arrangements such as John's collection, the oval-shaped flower bed, or even the mark on the wall, can be seen as standing close to the art of still-life. Woolf herself was well acquainted with this discipline of visual arts, not only through famously attending a number of modern art exhibitions and through her close relationship with Roger Fry and Clive Bell, but primarily through the paintings of her sister, Vanessa Bell. As Diane F. Gillespie argues in *Sister's Art*, both sisters had a keen eye for material objects and their arrangement into compositions which naturally "emphasize the nonhuman realm of objects that contains and transcends complicated human activities"<sup>95</sup> and replaces them with impersonal patterns. John's collection of solid objects immediately offers itself as an interesting analogy. Similarly to Lily and Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, both Virginia and Vanessa, using their respective art forms, examined the flux of life through a stand-still:

What was the meaning of life? That was all - a simple question; one that tended to close in on one with years. The great revelation had never come. The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead, there were little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark; here was one. This, that, and the other; [...] Mrs. Ramsey making of the moment something permanent (as in another sphere Lily herself tried to make of the moment something permanent) - this was the nature of a revelation. *In the midst of chaos*

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<sup>94</sup> Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1990) 116 - 117.

<sup>95</sup> Gillespie 228.

*there was shape; this eternal passing and flowing (she looked at the clouds going and the leaves shaking) was struck into stability. Life stand still here, Mrs. Ramsay said.*<sup>96</sup>

This passage closely adheres to the duality of solid and fluid which we have established in our discussion of “Solid Objects”: shape - chaos, permanent - passing, dynamic - stable, continuous - discrete. Importantly, the way in which “still lifes become [...] in Woolf’s writing landscapes closely related to mental states”<sup>97</sup>, transcends a mere relation of analogy or likeness between two discrete or unmixed components. Woolf often goes one step further and represents consciousness as *literally* mixed with its object. Mental states are not *merely* illustrated by or juxtaposed with objects or simply presented through the subject’s reaction towards these. In the following extract from Woolf’s story called “A Simple Melody”, this relation clearly goes far beyond a merely analogical or even symbolic relation.

### **1.6 Woolf’s Ponds**

Thought not very well known, “A Simple Melody” is a remarkable short story which Woolf began to write early in 1925. From the special perspective required by our analysis, “A Simple Melody” is a very important text at least for three reasons. First, it is a story of an intricate spatial organisation, second, it develops the theme of peculiar states of mind connected with the fascination with material objects and finally, it charmingly develops the crucial dynamic of what is continuous and at the same time discreet. “A Simple Melody” is a story of a man who, while being bored at a high-society party, projects himself into a landscape-painting that hangs on the wall of the party-room. This story symbolically portrays a heath-landscape of Norwich with a pond and a nearby group of women taking a walk.

It was a very beautiful picture. Like all landscapes it made one sad, because the heath would so long outlast all people; but the sadness was so elevated - turning away from Mrs Merewether, George Carslake gazed at the picture - arose so plainly from the thought that it was calm, it was beautiful, that it should endure.<sup>98</sup>

The “sympathetic identification” of Mr Carslake, the main protagonist of the story, with this painting is of a slightly different kind than those we have encountered so far, for

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<sup>96</sup> Woolf, Lighthouse 142. My italics.

<sup>97</sup> Gillespie 240.

<sup>98</sup> Virginia Woolf, The Complete Shorter Fiction (London: Vintage Books, 2003) 196.

example in the “Kew Gardens” or in *To The Lighthouse*. Rather than straightforwardly relying on a concept of identity between the perceiver and the perceived, the sympathetic appreciation of the painting in this story takes the form of a multiplication of the perceiver’s subjectivity, which temporarily exists in two places at the same time, i.e. standing in the corner of the party room while at the same time walking in the picture. It is important to note the similarity of this concept with Woolf’s “Bergsonian” discussion of the unity of the self in time and space in “Street Haunting”.

It often happened to George Carslake; there was nothing strange about it - this sense of being in two places at once, with one body here in a London drawing-room, but so severed, that the peace of the country, its uncompromising bareness and hardness and spirit, affected that body. He stretched his legs. He felt the breeze on his cheek.<sup>99</sup>

This scene relies on simultaneous existence of an individual in two spaces, one physical, the other mental (or artistic), that are united by the person of the perceiver. It is surprising to note that Michel Foucault does not include the other-space of a painting in his list of heterotopias in his “Of Other Spaces,” since the action that takes place in the picture and its pseudo-idyllic setting is clearly symptomatic of a heterotopos that stands in sharp contrast to the artificial social space and “time” of the ongoing party.

The two spaces, that of the picture and that of the party, are contrasted at least on two points. First, both places have their own special language, or discourse. Throughout the story, the main character constantly stresses the artificial, un-natural and mannerist character of the party-talk as well as the desperate behaviour or appearance of other party guests, whom he imagines to be as bored and repulsed as he is. The guests are talking “silly nonsense,”<sup>100</sup> they are “not listening to each other”<sup>101</sup> or suffer silently, like the character named Stuart Elton, “standing alone lifting a paper knife in his hand and looking at it in a strange way.”<sup>102</sup> Necessarily based on social convention and a code of behaviour, this type of discourse simply “produces dissimilarity” between people, and fails to capture the simplicity and almost scarcity of “little simple talk” that would be shared by people in a “natural” condition” – for example while walking on the heath (i.e. in the picture).

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<sup>99</sup> Woolf, Complete Shorter Fiction 199.

<sup>100</sup> Woolf, Complete Shorter Fiction 199.

<sup>101</sup> Woolf, Complete Shorter Fiction 195.

<sup>102</sup> Woolf, Complete Shorter Fiction 196.

All human beings were very simple underneath, he [Mr Carslake] felt. Put Queen Mary, Miss Merewether and himself on the heath; it was late in the evening; after sunset; and they had to find their way back to Norwich. Soon they would all be talking quite naturally. [...] They would be talking about the way; how far it was; and whether this was the sort of country they liked; also, if they were hungry; and what they would have for dinner. That was natural talk.<sup>103</sup>

The Rousseauesque distinction of the two types of discourse implies the over-complicated nature of human relationship and turns to the painting, which in this respect resembles a still-life rather than a landscape painting, as a means of a withdrawal from the ever increasing demands posed by the over-complexity of human relationships, social conventions and mechanical language that fails to capture the essential aspects of human existence and traps reality “into the words”<sup>104</sup>. The image of heath is typically associated with the landscapes of Thomas Hardy, whom Woolf knew very well and portrays in the story a mechanism that “sets the human consciousness within the vast, uncomprehended and incomprehensible morality of nature or life itself”<sup>105</sup> and thereby, paradoxically, contributes to a solution of what seems to be a one of Woolf’s cardinal topics - the difficulty or even impossibility of human communication, or, in Woolf’s own metaphor, of “fitting one’s mind to other people’s”<sup>106</sup>.

From this perspective, the simplification of human relationships to what is “natural” or “essential” is a tendency that can be found behind all of the stories concerned with the relationship of one’s subjectivity with the perceived material object. Despite its bizarre and hyperbolic character, John’s collection of “solid object” may be interpreted in terms of an escape to the impersonal, stable world of objects that would not only help John to stabilize his existence (in this respect “Solid Objects” is an extreme case) at the cost of a withdrawal from social interaction. Articulating the same problem in a different way, the momentary standstill and sympathetic identification of the woman in “Kew Gardens”, and the conscious withdrawal of the narrator from the world of action by not coming to look closer in “Mark on the Wall”,<sup>107</sup> represent the same escape from “the

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<sup>103</sup> Woolf, Complete Shorter Fiction 195 - 196.

<sup>104</sup> Woolf, Complete Shorter Fiction 197.

<sup>105</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 419.

<sup>106</sup> Woolf, Complete Shorter Fiction 198.

<sup>107</sup> As the narrator herself puts it: “I want to think quietly, calmly, spaciouly, *never to be interrupted, never to have to rise from my chair*, to slip easily from one thing to another, without any sense of hostility or obstacle. I want to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard and separate facts” (Woolf, House 42; My italics).

human” (i.e. the social, the articulated, the regulated, the clear-cut, the fixed) and depict a move towards impersonal objectivity and perhaps even unification with material objects.

As a part of his meditation on what it would feel like to be in the painting rather than at the party, George imagines himself and other characters walking on the heath and, importantly, swimming in the pond. The pond, which is a crucial element in the landscape scenery, becomes for him a symbol of this new, simple and natural understanding – a rebirth. As such, it becomes a sort of alternative “equal ground” on which he and other party guests can meet and which would act as a sort of a topographical objective correlative.

Perhaps one was a little brutalized by the open air. Thirst brutalized; a blister on the heel. When he [George] was walking there was a *hardness* and freshness about things: no confusion; no wobbling; *the division* at least between the known and the unknown *was as distinct as the rim of a pond - here was dry land, here water*. Now a curious thought struck him - that the waters possessed an attraction for the people on earth. When Stuart Elton took his paper knife or Mabel Waring looked about to burst into tears, and that man with the tooth brush moustache glared, it was because they all wished to take to the water. But what was the water? Understanding, perhaps. There must be someone who is so miraculously endowed, so fitted with all the parts of human nature, that these silences and unhappinesses, which were the result of being unable to fit one’s mind to other people’s, were all rightly understood. Stuart Elton dived in: Mabel dived. Some went under and were satisfied; others came gasping to the top. He [George] was relieved to find himself *thinking of death as a plunge into a pond*; for he was alarmed at the mind’s instinct, when unguarded, to rise into clouds and Heaven, and rig up the old comfortable figure, the old flowing garments and mild eyes and cloud like mantle. In the pond, on the other hand, were newts, and fish and mud. The point about the pond was that one had to create it for oneself; new, brand new. No longer did one want to be rapt off to Heaven, there to sing and meet the dead.<sup>108</sup>

It is very interesting to observe the unexpected way in which the story (and this scene in particular) develops the theme of impersonality and a sort of transcendence of material reality which we have already observed in the previous stories. “A Simple Melody” clearly favours the impersonal, down-to-earth realm of the heath landscape to the helter-skelter of human interaction. Importantly, the key to telling the two apart is the clearness and visibility of divisions, of dividing lines between things, between land and

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<sup>108</sup> Woolf, Complete Shorter Fiction 198. My italics.

water or between the known and the unknown. The story relies on imagery and mood that echo Hardy's or Lawrence's landscape imagery rather than the impressionist representation of landscape and reality more typical of Woolf's art, for example in "Kew Gardens," numerous passages in *To the Lighthouse* and throughout *Waves*. The heavy materiality of the muddy pond becomes a symbol of death by drowning as opposed to "mind's instinct [...] to rise to clouds [...] and there to sing and meet the dead"<sup>109</sup>. This brings the story close to D.H. Lawrence and his typical "waters scenes," such as "The Water Party" in *Women in Love*, the flood scene in *The Rainbow* or, perhaps most acutely, the pond-wading scene in "The Horse-dealer's Daughter".<sup>110</sup> The water, however, also testifies to the inherent ability of our conscience to radiate beyond the reach of our centralized self and to multiply one's experience, according to the diverse needs of the "selves" within the mind:

Come, come! I'm sick to death of this particular self. I want another. Hence, the astonishing changes we see in our friends. But it is not altogether plain sailing, either, for though one may say, as Orlando said [...] these selves of which we are built up, one on top of another, as plates are piled on a waiter's hand, have attachments elsewhere, sympathies, little constitutions and rights of their own, call them what you will (and for many of these things there is no name) so that one will only come if it is raining, another in a room with green curtains, another when Mrs Jones is not there, another if you can promise it a glass of wine — and so on; for everybody can multiply from his own experience the different terms which his different selves have made with him — and some are too wildly ridiculous to be mentioned in print at all.<sup>111</sup>

Similarly to John's sympathy for materials in "Solid Objects," George's sympathy for nature and his anti-social behaviour puts him into a position of a "dark horse" and a "queer fish"<sup>112</sup>. Though both John and George are observed from the position of ironic distance, George's situation clearly does not go as far as John's. Ironically, both John and George can be seen as being aware of some type of esoteric, impersonal knowledge of the materiality of non-human things, objects and landscapes. As both stories show, this knowledge is, or at least threatens to be, a reductive one, precisely because it grants "understanding" only at the cost of reducing and simplifying of what is essentially "human" to something inhuman. Once more, this change takes place by the process of

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<sup>109</sup> Woolf, Complete Shorter Fiction 198.

<sup>110</sup> All of these scenes will be discussed in the following chapter.

<sup>111</sup> Woolf, Orlando 294.

<sup>112</sup> Woolf, Complete Shorter Fiction 201. My italics.



mixture, in this case of “gallons of air and grains of colour” and “human thoughts and emotions”:

He [George] thought *at once of the lark, of the sky, of the view*. The walker’s thoughts and emotions were largely made up of these outside influences. *Walking thoughts were half sky; if you could submit them to chemical analysis, you would find that they had some grains of colour in them, some gallons or quarts or pints of air attached to them. This at once made them airier, more impersonal*. But in this [party] room, thoughts were jostled together like fish in a net, struggling, scraping each other’s scales off, and becoming, in the effort to escape, - for all thinking is an effort to make through escape from the thinker’s mind past all obstacles as completely as possible: all society is an attempt to seize and influence and coerce each thought as it appears and force it to yield to another. So he could see everyone engaged. But it was not, strictly, thought; it was being oneself, that was here in conflict with other beings and selves. Here was no impersonal colouring mixture: here walls, lights, the houses outside, all reinforce humanity, being themselves expression of humanity. People pressed upon each other; rubbed each other’s bloom off, or, for it told both ways, stimulated and called out an astonishing animation, made each other glow. Whether pleasure or pain predominated, he could not say. On the heath, there would be no doubt about it.

The influence of the heath environment goes as far as mixing of the material particles of air and colour with the walker’s thoughts. Interestingly, this dissolution of subjectivity takes place when George thinks “at once of the lark, of the sky, of the view.” What seems to be a bit more than a poetic metaphor stands in fact for another instance of the close affinity between the regions of physical and psychical spaces in Woolf’s fiction.

As it was foreshadowed, from a certain perspective, the walker’s mind, mixing itself with what it perceives, can be considered very problematic. One of the side-effects of Woolf’s strategy of mixtures and material influences that press upon human subjectivity and replace parts of it with “impersonal colouring mixtures” is the loss of the classical, “properly human” homogeneity and integrity of the human subject. The title of the story, “A Simple Melody,” already suggests that the escape from the complexities of humanity can only take place at a risk of reducing “the human” to what is in the story referred to as a simplicity or sincerity of natural thoughts. To put the matter perhaps a bit crudely, George’s walk on the heath is sincere since it reduces the over-complexity of social reality to a blister on a heel or, in other words, yet another intrusive collection of “solid objects”. The straightforward nature of these material counterparts to the fluidity of human mind, which Woolf describes in her fictions as moments of extreme

proximity between the perceiving subject and the perceived objects, thus becomes both remedy and poison.

The theme of water and ponds in conjunction with a mixture of mind and matter is also present in another of Woolf's lesser known short-story sketches - "The Fascination of the Pool". Written in 1929, this appropriately named short story once more adheres to the material sympathy for water. The story depicts an unnamed character sitting in front of a pool and meditating on those who sat there and looked into the pool in the past. With symbolic clarity, the dark and seemingly limitless depth of the pond blatantly contrasts with a white placard that floats on the water-surface and announces the sale of a nearby farm.

The centre of the water reflected the white placard and when the wind blew the centre of the pool seemed to flow and ripple like a piece of washing. One could trace the big red letters in which Romford Mill was printed in the water. A tinge of red was in the green that rippled from bank to bank. But if one sat down among the rushes and watched the pool - pools have some strange fascination, one knows not what. The red and black letters and the white paper seemed to lie very thinly on the surface, while beneath went some profound under-water life like the brooding, the ruminating of a mind.<sup>113</sup>

The picture of the pool in this particular story once more harks back to the impressionistic mood of dissolving colours, reflections, depths and surfaces. In its openly symbolic structure, the secrets of the pond are safely embedded in the underwater life, both beyond and beneath the floating signifier that sails on the surface, dissolved, dislocated, pointing towards nothing, and stressing the inadequacy of the standard forms of human communication. Unlike the pond in "A Simple Melody", the scenery here is not brutalizing and impersonal but at the same time, it does not favour distinct, clear cut divisions. Being rather poetic and mellow, the scene nevertheless makes use of very similar imagery: a thin line of appearances on the surface and a profound life brooding underneath. Holding on to its poetic qualities, what had formerly suggested a prevalingly realistic description of the pond takes an unexpected "esoteric" turn. Day-dreaming on a bank of the pond, the main heroine, overcome by the spirit of the place, notes the following:

Many, many people must have come there alone, from time to time, from age to age, dropping their thoughts into the water, asking it some questions, as one did oneself this

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<sup>113</sup> Woolf, Complete Shorter Fiction 220.

summer evening. Perhaps that was the reason of its fascination - that it held in its waters all kinds of fancies, complaints, confidences, not printed or spoken aloud, but in a liquid state, floating one on top of another, almost disembodied. A fish would swim through them, be cut in two by the blade of a reed; or the moon would annihilate them with its great white plate. The charm of the pool was that thoughts had been left there by the people who had gone away and without their bodies their thoughts wondered in and out freely, friendly and communicative, in the common pool. Among all these liquid thoughts some seemed to stick together and to form recognisable people - just for a moment.<sup>114</sup>

What seemed to be a mere metaphorical representation of a “profound under-water life [pictured as] the brooding, the ruminating of a mind” transforms into another instance of a mixture of mind and matter, this time in a sort of reverse - not materials subsisting in thought but liquid thoughts subsisting in the pond water. Consistently with the rhetoric of fluid and solid, the disembodied thoughts freely compose and recompose themselves, as they are “cut in two by the blade of a reed”. Although not so structurally complex as “A Simple Melody” the story has a typical concentric structure with a material core that, similarly to the above discussed “Kew Gardens” or “Mark on the Wall”, contains within itself a compressed multiplicity of thoughts, images and memories.

Using a similar strategy, the pool, like the silver shoe buckle, the dragonfly or the painting of the heath, becomes a material container or a battery within which thoughts, memories or emotions unfold and evolve. Containing in its depths stories of “the man who had been to the Exhibition; and the girl who had drowned herself and the boy who had seen the fish; and the voice which cried alas alas!”<sup>115</sup>, the pool becomes a strange topos that condenses the multiplicity of temporal events in one location and replaces their temporal succession with spatial arrangement of depth. Significantly, Woolf here once more transcends the Bergsonian idea of space as homogeneous, quantitative multiplicity and ascribes to it the fluid and dynamic qualities Bergsonian metaphysics reserves for time qua duration.

The qualitative multiplicity of space that concentrates compressed memories and “thoughts [that] come and cover one another”<sup>116</sup> and interacts with the subjectivity from the outside is a recurring theme of Woolf’s fiction. Be it pieces of glass, snails,

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<sup>114</sup> Woolf, Complete Shorter Fiction 221.

<sup>115</sup> Woolf, Complete Shorter Fiction 221.

<sup>116</sup> Woolf, Complete Shorter Fiction 221.

dragonflies, pictures, trees or ponds, all of these material and impersonal objects become “reverie companions of the dreamer”<sup>117</sup> that directly influence his *cogito*. As Gaston Bachelard poetically puts it in his analysis, while daydreaming the “cogito of the dreamer:”

is easy; it is sincere, it is linked very naturally to its complementary object. Good things, soft things offer themselves in complete innocence to the innocent dreamer. And the dreams (*songes*) accumulate in front of a familiar object. [...] Easy certainties come to enrich the dreamer. A communication of being develops in both directions between the dreamer and his world. A great dreamer of objects [...] knows those hours when reverie becomes animated in an undulating ontology. An ontology with two united poles reverberates its certainties.<sup>118</sup>

Adhering to an interpretation that sees these instances of changed states of mind in Woolf’s fiction as standing very close to what might be described as a state of a dream or a reverie, it is possible to paraphrase with Bachelard that the idea of human existence should be understood as closely coexisting with its material pole, moments of material security, and stretched in the dialectical dynamism between the subject and its object. Additionally, drawing our conclusion from the last two stories, Woolf’s texts indeed manifest a sort of positive or friendly naivety, openness and in fact innocence.

The way individual characters approach the objects of their fascination but also the way these objects “offer themselves” to the imagination of their dreamers is typical for Woolf and her poetics. This quality becomes even more visible when contrasted with Lawrence’s often very antagonistic universe or the “Tyronic” smirk of Lewis’ stories which will be discussed later in this thesis. The naivety that has been attributed to Woolf’s fiction should not be understood in a generic, potentially derogatory sense but as a manifestation of an attitude that can be understood as a part of a planned rejection of pre-established social and linguistic structures of the world, a rejection of an uncritical acceptance of “the hypothesis of the world”.

As Bachelard points out, this model of mutual dependence of the dreaming consciousness and the dreamed object “equalizes the dreamer and the object”<sup>119</sup> in a process in which “[t]he reverie dreamer’s diffuse cogito [receives from the object of its

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<sup>117</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, trans. Daniel Russell (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970) 162.

<sup>118</sup> Bachelard, *Reverie* 162 - 163.

<sup>119</sup> Bachelard, *Reverie* 154.

reverie a tranquil confirmation of its existence.”<sup>120</sup> In this context, Bachelard systematically talks about a special kind of dreaming which he calls a “sub-human” reverie. This type of dreaming, understood as a special vegetative state of mind, can be interpreted as something that is very closely connected with the special kind of “inhuman humanity” we have identified as the core of Woolf’s new materialism.

Another variation on the topic of in-human or sub-human day-dreaming are Woolf’s stories that rely more heavily than the stories discussed so far on the simultaneous multiplication of spaces by reflection. Besides “The fascination of the Pool”, typical examples of these stories are “The Searchlight” or, more importantly, “The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection.”

### 1.7 Woolf’s Mirrors: The Problem of Surfaces and Depths

“People should not leave looking-glasses hanging in their rooms.”<sup>121</sup>

Published in 1929, “The Lady in the Looking-Glass” depicts yet another “short significant scene”<sup>122</sup> from the life of an individual that examines a very close relationship with material objects. Reminding us of Septimus’ mortal fear of looking at a dangerously real gramophone in the extract from *Mrs. Dalloway*, “The Lady in the Looking-Glass” introduces an analogous indoor drama of an indiscreet mirror that “freezes” reality and an anthropomorphised gang of animated house objects contrasted with it. The story introduces a new variation on the familiar duality of solid and fluid: movement and stillness.

The house was empty, and one felt, since one was the only person in the drawing-room, like one of those naturalists, who, covered with grass and leaves, lie watching the shyest animals - badgers, otters, kingfishers - moving about freely, themselves unseen. The room that afternoon was full of such shy creatures, lights and shadows, curtains blowing, petals falling - things that never happen, so it seems, if someone is looking. The quiet old country room with its rugs and stone chimney pieces, its sunken book-cases and red and gold lacquer cabinets, was full of such nocturnal creatures [...] like a human being. Nothing stayed the same for two seconds together. But outside, the looking-glass reflected the hall table, the sunflowers, the garden path so accurately and so fixedly that they seemed held

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<sup>120</sup> Bachelard, *Reverie* 166.

<sup>121</sup> Woolf, *House*.

<sup>122</sup> Woolf, *Diaries III* 157.

there in their reality unescapably. It was a strange contrast - all changing here, all stillness there. One could not help looking from one to the other.<sup>123</sup>

Playfully punning on the old idealist dilemma about what happens to the world when the observer turns around or closes his eyes, Woolf's story, comparing curtains to otters, paradoxically attributes life and change to inanimate objects and stillness to their images fixed in the mirror. On the most obvious level, the spatial organisation of the story relies on the simultaneous existence of two heterogeneous types of space - the space on the "sham" mirror, with its fixed time and intolerance to human imagination, and, in opposition to it, the space of the room with "transient and perishing" otter-like curtains.

[S]ince all the doors and windows were open in the heat, there was a peaceful sighing and ceasing sound, the voice of the transient and perishing, it seemed, coming and going like human breath, while in the looking-glass things had ceased to breathe and lay still in the trance of immortality.<sup>124</sup>

Significantly, Woolf works in the story with a *fixed* linear perspective from which the narrator, seated in the "depths of the sofa"<sup>125</sup> looks into the mirror. This perspective only increases the degree of stability of things reflected in the mirror. Woolf's use of the linear perspective is not a common in strategy in her texts, with one important exception - the already discussed "The Mark on the Wall." In "The Mark on the Wall", the narrator is also comfortably seated most of the time. "Surrounded by solid furniture"<sup>126</sup> and not thinking for a moment about standing up and checking the stained wall herself, the narrator looks at the mark from one fixed point and does not move around the perceived object. Further, both "The Mark on the Wall" and "The Lady in the Looking-Glass" deal with a number of closely related epistemological issues: the nature and conditions of "truth" and the contrast between dynamic and static images, solid and fluid reality, fixed objects and fluid thoughts and imagination.

In addition to the role played by the fixed perspective, the epistemological conditions of both stories are directly affected by notions of reflection. Curiously enough, the role of these reflections and of the "looking-glasses" seems to be a little different. The narrator

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<sup>123</sup> Woolf, House 87.

<sup>124</sup> Woolf, House 87.

<sup>125</sup> Woolf, House 86.

<sup>126</sup> Woolf, House 41.

of “The Mark on the Wall”, meditating about “dressing up a figure of [herself] in [her] own mind,” observes the following:

[I]t is curious, how instinctively one protects the image of oneself. [...] It is a matter of great importance. Supposing the looking-glass smashes, the image disappears, and the romantic figure with the green of forest depths all about it is there no longer, but only that shell of a person which is seen by other people - what an airless, shallow, bald, prominent world it becomes! A world not to be lived in.<sup>127</sup>

In this extract, Woolf introduces two types of reflection. The first is the image in the looking-glass, in fact a self-image, which seems to be positive, something that makes the world more interesting or worthwhile to live in. This is set against the second type of “reflection”, which is a “shell of a person *seen* by other people.” Considering Woolf’s imagery and her arguments, it is tempting to say that the difference between these two types of reflection, which is at the same time a difference in representation, is analogical to Woolf’s famous distinction between Edwardian and Georgian writers from her famous 1920’s essay series.

As we face each other in omnibuses and underground railways we are looking into the mirror; that accounts for the vagueness, the gleam of glassiness, in our eyes. And the novelists in the future will realize more and more the importance of these reflections, for of course there is not one reflection but an almost infinite number; these are the depths they will explore, those the phantoms they will pursue, leaving the description of reality more and more out of their stories, taking a knowledge of it for granted.<sup>128</sup>

The influence of these strange reflections covers the clear-cut reality of standard, opaque things in “Mark on the Wall” is a part of the more general discussion of the arbitrary nature of language. This is connected with the way this series of reflections replaces the supposedly factual and “solid” truth of “leading articles and cabinet ministers” and disintegrates the supposed “thing itself, the standard thing, the real thing, from which one could not depart save at the risk of nameless damnation.”<sup>129</sup>

This approach relies precisely on juxtaposing the “perspectivist” interpretation of reality, based on a series of reflections, with the fixed reality of the arbitrary “things themselves”. From a more general point of view, the distinction between these two orders of reality closely resembles an old philosophical problem or of choosing the

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<sup>127</sup> Woolf, House 43.

<sup>128</sup> Woolf, House 44.

<sup>129</sup> Woolf, House 44.

criteria for the way in which we classify/divide the reality of “myriads of impressions” that fall on us every day and shape this chaos into the moulds of species and genera of positivist science, into social and linguistic systems and other arbitrarily pre-conditioned forms of our perception.

In short, the observer is choked with observations. Only to prevent us from being submerged by chaos, nature and society between them have arranged a system of classification which is simplicity itself; stalls, boxes, amphitheatre, gallery. The moulds are filled nightly. There is no need to distinguish details. But the difficulty remains - one has to choose.<sup>130</sup>

As we have tried to demonstrate, this problem is inherent in Woolf’s fiction on a number of levels and manifests itself by the constant fluctuation between the poles of the solid and the fluid, the structured and the loose, the discrete and the continuous, the outlined and the coloured, the artificial and the simple, the material and the immaterial, the physical and the psychical. This series of problems forms an integral part of the general discussion of the continuity and discontinuity of things, shapes and selves, and the way Woolf balances the two extremes - a stale world of “standard things” and an absurd anti-order of Foucault’s “Chinese encyclopaedia.”<sup>131</sup>

Returning to the discussion of “Mark on the Wall” and “The Lady in the Looking-Glass”, it is possible to observe that contrary to the multiple reflections of ourselves in the eyes of the others and contrary to the reflection of the self-image in “Mark on the Wall”, the mirror in “The Lady in the Looking-glass” reflects or reveals the stable core of “facts”, i.e. the emptiness of the main heroine, Isabella Tyson.

She [Isabella Tyson] stood by the table. She stood perfectly still. At once the looking-glass began to pour over her a light that seemed to fix her; that seemed like some acid to bite off the unessential and superficial and to leave only the truth. It was an enthralling spectacle. Everything dropped from her - clouds, dress, basket, diamond - all that one had called the

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<sup>130</sup> Woolf, Jacob’s 91

<sup>131</sup> To illustrate the problem of classification in his *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault famously comes up with a bizarre fictional classificatory system that points out the arbitrary nature of our classificatory system - a “certain Chinese encyclopaedia,” according to which “animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) *et cetera*, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off” look like flies”. In the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thinking, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *in this way* (Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, trans. Tavistock/Routledge (London and New York: Routledge, 2002) xvi.



creeper and convolvulus. Here was the hard wall beneath. Here was the woman herself. She stood naked in that pitiless light. And there was nothing. Isabella was perfectly empty. She had no thoughts. She had no friends. She cared for nobody. As for her letters, they were all bills. Look, as she stood there, old and angular, veined and lined, with her high nose and her wrinkled neck[.]<sup>132</sup>

The woman “herself” - the hard wall beneath the imagination, the snail on the wall, the crystal in sand, represent a different, hard and solid order of reality that is juxtaposed with the reflections of imagination which are, like “the convolvulus itself [,] trembling between one’s eyes and the truth”<sup>133</sup>. “The fact and vision”<sup>134</sup> - these two orders of reality, but also two different approaches to reality, exist simultaneously in Woolf’s texts next to each other in a relationship of mutually supportive supplementarity.

Considering the characteristic quality of Woolf’s fiction, the relationship of these two attitudes towards reality that fluctuate between states of uncompromising opposition and indifferent juxtaposition, raise an important question of reality and simulacrum, or an image and its original. Woolf occasionally refers to the images in her fiction as “half phantoms”<sup>135</sup> or describes her characters as “will-o’- the- wisps”<sup>136</sup>. However, in the reversed epistemology of “The Lady in the Looking-glass”, the difference between “reality” and “image” is decided by a very specific means - by the golden rim or frame of the looking glass. With the “difference between reality and image being that reality is not en-framed”<sup>137</sup>, this golden rim introduces a clear-cut dividing line between the space of petrified “facts”, i.e. objects reflected in the mirror, and the imaginary scenes that materialize after the heroine leaves the looking-glass reflection and is no longer directly seen by the narrator (who is still fixed in her comfortable chair). Notably, given the special logic of the story, the made up images come to be seen as more natural than the reality reflected in the mirror.

Half an hour ago the mistress of the house, Isabella Tyson, had gone down the grass path in her thin summer dress, carrying a basket, and had vanished, sliced off by the gilt rim of the looking-glass. She had gone presumably into the lower garden to pick flowers; or as it seemed more natural to suppose, to pick something light and fantastic and leafy and

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<sup>132</sup> Woolf, House 92.

<sup>133</sup> Woolf, House 87.

<sup>134</sup> Woolf, Diary V 298.

<sup>135</sup> Woolf, House 44.

<sup>136</sup> Woolf, Selected Essays 35.

<sup>137</sup> Petříček 38.

trailing, travellers' joy, or one of those elegant sprays of convolvulus that twine round ugly walls and burst here and there into a white and violet blossoms.<sup>138</sup>

Following the logic of the narrator's perspective, Isabella is cut in half, together with "the long grass path leading between the banks of tall flowers", by the golden rim of the mirror precisely at the moment when she leaves the space of facts, i.e. the space that is reflected in the mirror and that can be seen from the limited perspective of the narrator fixed on the sofa, and enters the area or space of modality that is controlled by imagination rather than sight. This space transcends the mirror image and opens itself to an account of truth that favours story-telling. Strictly speaking, with the "omniscience" of the narrator limited to her fixed sofa-perspective, anything could happen to the main heroine after she was cut-off by the edge of the mirror.

Accordingly, when referring to the slice of reality which the mirror does not show, the narrator (who cannot see her) inevitably "supposes" and "presumes", or in other words: "places [Isabelle] in the centre of all sorts of different scenes"<sup>139</sup>. As if the play was more important than its result, the unknown seems always closer to life than the known. As Woolf's narrator confesses in "An Unwritten Novel": "If I fall on my knees, if I go through the ritual, the ancient antics, it's you, unknown figures, you I adore; if I open my arms, it's you I embrace, you I draw to me - adorable world!"<sup>140</sup>

The importance of the rim or frame understood as a dividing line between two heterogeneous spaces or structures or worlds, i.e. between the "adorable world" of limitless possibilities and reflections and the world of dry and standardized facts "not to be lived in"<sup>141</sup>, can be observed in all the stories discussed so far. The most obvious example of a frame (rim) that divides two heterogeneous spaces is the edge of the flower bed in "Kew Gardens," where, as was suggested, the edge divides two regions of different flow of time and of different degrees of detail and solidity, and functions as the oval shaped centre of a relative stability in the dissolving world of colours. Moreover, the rim, understood as a dividing line, can be traced in all stories that feature a reflection of the water surface, i.e. "The Fascination of the Pool" and "A Simple Melody".

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<sup>138</sup> Woolf, House 87.

<sup>139</sup> Woolf, Collected Essays 44.

<sup>140</sup> Woolf, House 26.

<sup>141</sup> Woolf, House 43.

The complex relationships of “reality” and its image in stories like “The Fascination of the Pool”, “A Simple Melody” and “The Lady in the Looking-Glass”, enhances the ambiguity of the continuity or discontinuity between the two regions. Commenting on the ambiguity that results from the process of en-framing, Miroslav Petříček concludes that:

If the picture, the foundation of which is the frame, allows what is framed to be in some way distinguished from the external environment and if the edge, understood as a frame, also organises that which is en-framed, it consequently follows that every picture separates the legible from the unintelligible. However, a picture, understood more narrowly and in a more explicit sense, i.e. a picture which seems to be in an analogical relation to reality, a picture which depicts reality, mirrors or imitates it, is in this sense remarkably ambiguous: being the other (separated by the frame) it is not reality itself (relationship of discontinuity), being analogical, i.e. representing reality, it connects to it and is related to it (continuity). And so another strange situation takes place: a frame or a framework is a barricade against the unintelligible which surrounds the things represented in the picture. This border, however, mustn't be insurmountable.<sup>142</sup>

The continuous/ discontinuous spatial arrangement of structures that rely on this ambiguous permeability of the edge testifies to the general ambiguity and paradoxical nature of Woolf's semi-interconnected universe in which individual objects and selves exist as separate but at the same time not entirely discrete entities, spaces or images.

## 1.8 Green & Blue

“Suppose one thing should open up from another - [...] doesn't that give the lightness & coolness I want: doesn't that get closer & yet keep form & speed, & enclose everything, everything? My doubt is how far it will include the human heart[.]”<sup>143</sup>

The state in which human consciousness or thoughts contain particles of matter represents an image we have been tracing from the very beginning of our discussion. At

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<sup>142</sup> Petříček 39. My translation. Jestliže tedy obraz, jehož základem je rám, dovoluje zarámované nějak odlišit od vnějšího prostředí a jestliže rám ve smyslu rámce takto oddělené rovněž již nějakým způsobem i organizuje, znamená to, že každý obraz vyděluje srozumitelné z nesrozumitelného. Avšak obraz v užším, doslovnějším smyslu, tj. takový, který se zdá být v analogickém vztahu ke skutečnosti, který skutečnost zobrazuje, zrcadlí, či napodobuje, je v tomto ohledu pozoruhodně dvojnásobný: jakožto jiný (oddělený rámem) není skutečností samou (vztah diskontinuity), jakožto analogický, tj. zpodobňující, na realitu navazuje, souvisí s ní (kontinuita). Tak vzniká zvláštní situace: rám či rámeček je hráz proti nesrozumitelnému, jímž je obklopeno to, o čem „máme obraz“. Avšak tato hráz *nesmí být nepřekonatelná*.

<sup>143</sup> Woolf, Diary II 13

this point it is possible to assert its central role in the discussion of Woolf's in-human humanism. The existence of these states brings us back to the original problem of our discussion: the problem of mixing of objects with the "stuff of thought," potentially resulting in the impersonality and the "loss of the human heart" and ultimately, in the problem of the coherence and unity of objects and selves.

A very interesting interpretation of this problem can be sought in what is generally acknowledged as an important inspiration for Woolf and in fact the whole Bloomsbury group: G. E. Moore and his famous essay *Refutation of Idealism* (1903).<sup>144</sup> In this text Moore argues in favour of a distinction between what he calls "consciousness" and "its subject". Moore states:

We have then in every sensation two distinct elements, one which I call consciousness, and the other, which I call the object of consciousness. This must be so if the sensation of blue and the sensation of green, though different in one respect, are alike in another: blue is one object of sensation and green is another, and consciousness, which both sensations have in common, is different from either.<sup>145</sup>

As a part of his argument against the dominant philosophy of Cambridge idealism, Moore introduces in *Refutation* a doctrine of what is described by recent commentators<sup>146</sup> as "naive" or "direct" realism. By proposing that "we have no reason

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<sup>144</sup> G. E. Moore, 'Refutation of Idealism,' *Mind, New Series*, Vol. 12, No. 48 (Oct., 1903) 433 - 453. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2248251>. 30. 3. March 2011. For G. E. Moore influence on Woolf's see for example S. P. Rosenbaum's essay 'The Philosophical Realism of Virginia Woolf' (Rosenbaum 316 - 357).

<sup>145</sup> Moore 444.

<sup>146</sup> In his article on Moore's philosophy Aaron Preston summarizes the difference between classical realism and Moore's direct idealism in the following way: "Most proponents of sense-data construed them as mental entities responsible for *mediating* our sensory experiences of external objects. For example, in perceiving a stop-sign, what one is immediately conscious of is some set of sense-data *through which* are conveyed the stop-sign's size, shape, color, and so on. The stop-sign itself remains "outside the circle of ideas," or rather, sense-data, and we are thus aware of it only indirectly. In its usual form, sense-data theory is a form of representationalism *consistent with indirect realism, not direct realism*. Moore initially accepted this representationalist view of sense-data; but he was not long content with it, since it seemed to leave the commonsense view of the world open to skeptical doubts of a familiar, Cartesian variety. Consequently, he modified sense-data theory to make it a form of direct realism, just as he had previously done with proposition theory. His strategy in both cases was the same: by making the purported *mental-mediators identical with external objects, he would eliminate the need for a mediator and make external objects directly available to consciousness*. Thus, for a period of about fifteen years, Moore attempted off-and-on to defend a view according to which sense-data were identical to external objects or parts of such objects. For instance, a sense-datum could be identical to the whole of an object in the case of a sound, while for visible objects, which always have "hidden" sides (the underside of a table or the back side of a coin, for example) a single sense-datum could be identical to only a *part* of the object's surface." ( Woolf" (Aaron Preston, 'George Edward Moore (1873 – 1958),'

for supposing that there are such things as mental images at all”<sup>147</sup>, Moore discards the “middle ground” between our consciousness and objects and considers objects as directly available to the mind. Regardless of the philosophical validity of this argument, Moore’s version of direct realism is very close to the extreme states of consciousness in Woolf’s fiction which we have discussed above. Thinking of Woolf’s little sketch “Blue & Green,”<sup>148</sup> it is very tempting to speculate that Woolf may have read or heard about the following lines in Moore’s *Refutation*:

*Whether or not, when I have the sensation of blue, my consciousness or awareness is thus blue, my introspection does not enable me to decide with certainty: I only see no reason for thinking that it is. But whether it is or not, the point is unimportant, for introspection does enable me to decide that something else is also true: namely that I am aware of blue, and by this I mean, that my awareness has to blue a quite different and distinct relation. It is possible; I admit, that my awareness is blue as well as being of blue: but what I am quite sure of is that it is of blue; that it has to blue the simple and unique relation the existence of which alone justifies us in distinguishing knowledge of a thing from the thing known, and indeed in distinguishing mind from matter. And this result I may express by saying that what is called the content of a sensation is in very truth what I originally called it-the sensation’s object.*<sup>149</sup>

By pointing out this analogy we do not wish to propose that Woolf exclusively follows Moore’s theories of perception in her texts. As it was argued, any such claim would provide only a reductive picture of Woolf’s “fluid” theory of perception and human subjectivity. Instead, we would like to claim that Moore’s direct realism, which is a theory formulated in texts that were well known and often discussed among the members of the Bloomsbury circle, closely resembles Woolf’s representation of special states of mind that are “transfixed by the intensity of perception.”<sup>150</sup> In these states, the consciousness mixes itself with and/or penetrates the material objects it perceives and in

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*Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. My italics, Non. pag. 22. Jan. 2014. <[www.iep.utm.edu/moore/](http://www.iep.utm.edu/moore/)>. See also: Tom Baldwin, ‘George Edward Moore,’ *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. 15. Dec. 2013. <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moore/>>.

<sup>147</sup> Moore 449.

<sup>148</sup> The analogy between Moore’s idea of the consciousness explained by using the example of perception of blue and green, and Woolf’s ‘Blue & Green’ is suggested for example in Rosenbaum’s chapter on Woolf’s “philosophy” in *English Literature and British Philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.

<sup>149</sup> Moore 451. My italics.

<sup>150</sup> Woolf, Lighthouse 20.

which, to use Moore's words, our introspection cannot decide "[w]hether or not, when I have the sensation of blue, my consciousness or awareness is thus blue."<sup>151</sup>

The impossibility of our introspection or self-reflection to ascertain whether the perceived object remains in its traditional location, i.e. "outside" the subject's mind or whether, perhaps under some special circumstances, some parts of the object *physically* enter *into* the perceiving consciousness or become one with it, abolishes or at least seriously weakens the ontological difference between subject and object. This in turn violates the supposedly clear cut conception of human consciousness as en-framed *inside* the subject and spills it to the material outside. The consciousness consequently becomes a product of external forces over which it has no control. As we have observed, this "exteriorisation" usually takes place under psychologically or perceptively intense situations. Temporary states of ontological insecurity, extreme visual sympathy, instances of object-inspired day dreaming, moments of pure perception, all compromise the cogito of the dreamer that is "less lively than the thinker's cogito. [...] The dreamer's being is a diffused being [...] and] escapes the punctualization of the *hic* and the *nunc*."<sup>152</sup>

### 1.9 Woolf's "Radical Empiricism"

The interpretation of Woolf's mixed states that relies on Moore's philosophy of direct realism might be further extended to states in which the interaction of consciousness and its object exceeds the state of mixture and reaches a state of a complete identity. For instance in the following passage from *To the Lighthouse* Woolf writes:

Losing personality one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir; and there rose to her lips always some exclamation of triumph over life when things come together at peace, this rest, this eternity; and pausing there she looked out to meet that stroke of Lighthouse, the long steady stroke, the last of the three, which was her stroke, for watching them in this mood always at this hour *one could not help attaching oneself to one thing especially of the things one saw; and this thing, the long steady stroke, was her stroke. Often she found herself sitting and looking, sitting and looking, with her work in her hands until she became the thing she looked at – that light for example.*<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Moore 451.

<sup>152</sup> Bachelard, *Reverie* 167.

<sup>153</sup> Woolf, *Lighthouse* 54 - 55. My italics.

At first sight, it would seem that Moore's proposition that introspection is unable to decide whether the sensation itself is "blue" or "of blue" offers a sufficient key for understanding these extreme states of human consciousness. Yet further reflection would suggest a different interpretation.

Within the context of our previous discussion, Woolf's claim that "no perception come[s] amiss"<sup>154</sup>, i.e. a claim that introduces a descriptive rather than normative classification of the importance of impressions, gives us a gist of Woolf's idea of the act of perception which is devoid of a pre-existing classificatory principle. Accordingly, all perceptions as well as the relations which perceiving consciousness establishes between them, may be understood as of equal importance as the perceptions themselves. Quoting William James' *Principles of Psychology*, Judith Ryan convincingly argues that Woolf in this respect finds herself very close to the tradition of turn the century empirical psychology in which:

The connections made by the experiencing mind, the way in which it fills out the gaps in its bundles of observations, occupy the same level of validity as the observations themselves: the connections may not be "real" in the common sense of the term, but (quoting William James) 'any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as 'real' as anything else in the system.<sup>155</sup>

According to Ryan's empiricist interpretation, this constant dynamic interchange between the perceiving mind and solid material reality triggers a continuous process of questioning of the subject-object barrier. This process transforms reality into a flow of reciprocal subject-object feedback loops and introduces a feeling of unification of the individual with the perceived object, its projection into material reality and a feeling of being inside and outside at the same time:

She [Mrs Dalloway] would not say of anyone in the world that they were this or that. She felt young; and at the same time unspeakably aged. She *sliced like a knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on*. She had a perpetual sense, as she watched the taxicabs, *of being out, far out to the sea alone*[.]<sup>156</sup>

The process of "slicing through things," becomes symptomatic of the tendency for ontological levelling of the subject and perceived objects. Under such circumstances,

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<sup>154</sup> Woolf, *Collected Essays* 9.

<sup>155</sup> Ryan, *Vanishing Subject* 859.

<sup>156</sup> Woolf, *Dalloway* 7.

the subject is reduced to something that “constructs itself from the impressions it perceives and the relations it creates.”<sup>157</sup> Capturing the world where the difference between observers and the objects observed cannot be decided, where the observer and the thing observed become one and the only thing left is the process of perception itself, Woolf’s radically empiricist narrative becomes directly responsible for “unmasking the fictitious division into subject and object, world and self”<sup>158</sup> and has significant de-humanizing consequences: loss of the autonomy and wholeness of the human subject, decentralisation and destabilisation of human identity, exteriorisation of one’s mental states and their subsistence in objects.

Despite a number of interesting insights, Ryan’s “empiricist” interpretation is not entirely satisfactory. First of all, as has been pointed out, it is reductive to think that Woolf’s fiction describes *one* state of mind, *one* perceptive disposition of *one* state of *one* subject-object relationship. In this aspect Woolf’s fiction is essentially Bergsonian in that it typically represents different “intensities” of human consciousness, or what Bergson calls: “divers tones of mental life” and expresses the fact that “our psychic life might be lived at different heights, now nearer to action, now further removed from it, according to the degree of *our attention to life*”.<sup>159</sup> Consequently, it is very problematic to subsume Woolf’s prose under one explanatory paradigm. Second, as we have shown, Ryan’s explanation relies on the levelling of the subject-object or world-self dichotomy and on placing these two categories into the no-man’s land of sense-impressions, where all impressions are equal and thus the self and material things are equal. This account, however, does not seem to add anything substantial to our understanding of the dynamic states of mixture of consciousness and material objects which no empiricist philosophy is likely to concede.

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<sup>157</sup> Ryan, *Vanishing Subject* 861.

<sup>158</sup> In her thesis Ryan further adds that the psychologists of radical empiricism, like Woolf herself “recognized the dependence of our concept of self on the principle of intentionality; they explored the relationship between the actual discontinuity of sense perception and our imagined view of it as an uninterrupted flux; they showed the interpenetration of what we commonly believe to be discrete; they stressed the equal importance of thought and things. Reduced to its basic tenet, empiricism states that all we can know are sense impressions, thoughts, and feelings, bundled together as “elements” (Mach’s term) of our total view of things. The “self” is merely a pragmatically convenient category of thought. Woolf’s phrase “the word seen without a self,” by eliminating the observing “self” but not the actual act of observing, aptly describes the literary equivalent of this “elementaristic” view.” (Ryan, *Vanishing Subject* 858)

<sup>159</sup> Bergson, *Matter and Memory* xiv.



Finally, Ryan's selection of William James and Ernst Mach seems to be rather unfortunate, not because of the validity of individual theorems of their respective philosophies but because of the overall orientation of their philosophies. Both James' radical empiricism and Mach's empirico-criticism are sometimes labelled as two forms of pragmatic, life oriented philosophies.<sup>160</sup> The pragmatic orientation which both thinkers share eventually establishes the main criteria of truth as *pragmatically* defined, i.e. defined primarily by its usefulness. The "judge" of the usefulness of our impressions or ideas about the external world is, however, the human subject and its practical, life-oriented needs – that is, so to say, "the damned egotistical Self."<sup>161</sup> As Blecha neatly summarizes:

James wanted to point out that the synthesis as well as the conjugations, all the connections which give certain structure to the sense material, are results of the operation of our needs and represent a state which resulted from our life and our particular interests. [...] *We* are the ones responsible for these unities and multiplicities [of impressions], and they become the result of our effort to maintain our life and improve our living conditions. [...] The radicalisation of empiricism thus first of all goes hand in hand with its increasingly relativist nature because there indeed remains nothing that would not be processed by the life- and eventually priority- interests of *subject*.<sup>162</sup>

Consequently, in such interpretation the subject is not weakened but, as opposed from what Woolf as well as Ryan wanted to point out, radically reinforced. As we will see in the discussion to follow, the need for dynamic and heterogeneous conceptualisations of human subjectivities and lived spaces is something that is not confined to Woolf's "Bergsonian" accounts. The following chapter extends these problems to the work of D. H. Lawrence and Italian Futurism.

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<sup>160</sup> Ivan Blecha, *Proměny Fenomenologie* (Praha: Triton, 2007) 16 - 18. My translation.

<sup>161</sup> Woolf, *Diary II* 14.

<sup>162</sup> Blecha 18. My translation.

## **CHAPTER TWO: “The Shape of Existence”, or: The Affinity between Physical and Psychological Spaces in D. H. Lawrence’s Fiction**

In the previous chapter we have presented an analysis of the work of Virginia Woolf in which we have focused our attention on the characteristic way in which human subjectivity interacts with the material universe and replaces the Cartesian duality with a complex affinity between the physical and the psychological. As was demonstrated, this discussion issued out of the changing position of what is traditionally referred to as “human subject”. This entity could no longer be seen as a stable, autonomous whole that retains its identity and individuality in time, but rather exists as a succession of varying states of mind and in an interaction with the outer world. By analysing a number of Woolf’s theoretical as well as poetical texts we have shown that this instability of human subjectivity is represented in Woolf’s fiction as a movement between two extreme poles of reality: (a) the supposedly “human” “helter-skelter” of the “stream of consciousness” and (b) the “in-human”, material world of “solid objects”. We have also pointed out that human “subjectivity” is “constructed” precisely through a mixture of the two and have shown the risks involved if one of these components takes the upper hand.

The following discussion offers an analysis of a similar series of problems in the works of D. H. Lawrence.<sup>163</sup> Analogically to the discussion of Woolf’s texts, the central questions are: the unstable character of human subjectivity, individuality and autonomy of human existence in relation to the in-human forces of matter. The argument brings together an analysis of the spatial arrangement of Lawrence’s fiction with a discussion of the corresponding variety of states of “human” consciousness. Not unlike Woolf, Lawrence’s work also relies on a complex but above all dynamic idea of subjectivity in *becoming*. In the case of Lawrence, human psyche represents a result of two main psychological impulses or wills - (a) the desire or will to merge with the greater whole,

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<sup>163</sup> For a discussion Lawrence’s aesthetics in the context of European avant-garde movements see: Gregory L. Ulmer: “D. H. Lawrence, Wilhelm Worringer and the Aesthetics of Modernism”, *The D. H. Lawrence Review* (Vol. 10, No. 2, Summer 1977).

or to “dissolve”<sup>164</sup> and (b) the will of an individual organism towards the maximal or “full achievement of itself”<sup>165</sup>.

As we propose to demonstrate, the occasional imbalance of these two psychological drives necessarily leads to the “modernist” representation of human subjectivity as inevitably tending towards one of the two extreme states of its existence: (a) the state of complete disintegration, which is often described as “dissolution” of the human body, but also of human subjectivity and individuality and its merging with the circumambient cosmos, and, on the other hand, an attempted to fix one’s being in (b) the state of maximal stability, security, individuality and autonomy of individual human existence. It will be argued that these two psychological poles, which are in certain respects very similar to the two poles of human subjectivity in the Bergsonian interpretation of Woolf’s representation of consciousness, become in Lawrence’s fiction systematically articulated through a “Worryingean” attitude of the human subject towards the environment in which he lives. The term “environment” should be understood very broadly as a set of relationships through which man shapes his attitude towards the surrounding nature, world, universe or cosmos in the most general sense. For these reasons, the following argument will examine spatial structures and arrangements of Lawrence’s stories and seek for examples, correspondences, affinities and spatial articulations of the relationship between these structures and the two psychological drives whose struggle constitutes the human psyche.

The suggested interpretations of the above described phenomena rely first of all on the following sources: the philosophy and aesthetics of Arthur Schopenhauer, the “non-Cartesian dualism”<sup>166</sup> of Henri Bergson and the aesthetics of Italian Futurism. The following paragraphs serve to explain the formal and methodological reasons for this choice and at the same time serve as a short but necessary introduction into the main argument.

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<sup>164</sup> Phoenix 419, 678.

<sup>165</sup> Phoenix 403.

<sup>166</sup> Ondřej Švec, ‘Bergsonův nekarteziánský dualismus,’ *Filosofie Henri Bergsona*, ed. Jakub Čapek (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 2003) 47 -64.

## 2.1 Methodological and Theoretical Introduction

As D. J. Schneider fittingly notes, the importance of Schopenhauer's work for Lawrence's development was so crucial that "a major part of Lawrence's work can be read as a development from the Schopenhauerian antithesis of *will* and *idea*"<sup>167</sup>. As far as we know, Lawrence read Schopenhauer's most important work, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Representation, 1819) in 1905 and 1906 and was deeply struck by it.<sup>168</sup> Besides the classical themes of Schopenhauer's philosophy such as the inherently dual nature of reality, which on one hand explains reality "phenomenally" as a mere "idea, or object for a subject", and on the other as "will, which proved to be that which this world is besides being idea"<sup>169</sup>, or the teaching of the "immortality of man"<sup>170</sup>, which man achieves as "de-personalised" part of nature, the presented argument relies on yet another aspect of Schopenhauer's thought – the category of the Sublime and the Beautiful. As an extension of the focus on extreme and liminal states of human existence, the role of these categories is examined in connection with the essentially "romantic" nature of scenes that capture human confrontation with vastness, limitlessness and homogeneity of natural phenomena such as seas, oceans, cliffs, visions of overwhelming spaces or other regions of transgression.<sup>171</sup>

In addition to this, the analysis draws on the influence of Italian Futurism. As we know from his correspondence<sup>172</sup> and his analysis of Boccioni's sculptures in his *Study of Thomas Hardy*, Lawrence was relatively well acquainted with a number of Futurist manifestos, poems or works of arts, in particular the works of F. T. Marinetti, Umberto

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<sup>167</sup> Daniel J. Schneider, "Schopenhauer and the Development of D.H. Lawrence's Psychology," *South Atlantic Review*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (Jan., 1983) 2; 14/10/2010 < <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3199509> >.

<sup>168</sup> Besides Schneider's article, Schopenhauer's influence on early Lawrence is discussed for example by E. H. Green, "Lawrence, Schopenhauer and the Dual Nature of the Universe," *South Atlantic Bulletin*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (Nov, 1977), pp. 84-92, 30.3.2012, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3199029>>.

<sup>169</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Ltd, 1910) 219.

<sup>170</sup> As Schopenhauer eloquently puts it: For every individual is transitory only as phenomenon, but as thing-in-itself is timeless, and therefore endless (Schopenhauer 364).

<sup>171</sup> The transgressive nature of these regions is given by their "sublime" nature and the way they point out the futility of human existence.

<sup>172</sup> Especially instructive in this respect are Lawrence's letters to Arthur McLeod from 2. June 1914, to Edward Garnett from 5 June 1914 and a very important letter to Amy Lowell, from 14. November 1916. Both will be the subject of our following discussion.

Boccioni, Paolo Buzzi and Ardengo Soffici.<sup>173</sup> Besides considering the inspiration Lawrence drew from Futurist texts which he certainly read, the argument explores a number of fruitful analogies between Lawrence's work and relevant aspects of Futurist thought. This is possible first of all due to the general affinity between the emphasis which both Lawrence and Futurists lay on the need for a "complete renewal of human sensitivity."<sup>174</sup> In doing so, the argument considers a number of common themes shared by Lawrence and the Italians, namely the phenomenon of dance and the importance of one's environment – Lawrence's *circumambient* cosmos and Futurist notion of *ambiente* or the already mentioned *sensibilia*.

The particular interest of the Futurists in spatial phenomena, such as Boccioni's or Marinetti's theories of "force lines", "physical transcendentalism", or "plastic sensibility of objects", gives Lawrence the lexicon to articulate his own ideas of the essential connectivity of man and Nature. In this way both of these theories contribute to the central discussion of the "shape of ex-istence" and ask whether life, human subjectivity and human body should be treated as an open or closed structure, i.e. as something essentially connective and constituted by its relation to its outside, or something that is autonomous and essentially self-organizing. In addition to this, Italian Futurism is going to play a vital part in the final chapter of the thesis in which it will serve as a vital source of comparison in the context of the aesthetics and philosophy of Wyndham Lewis.

Finally, as it was the case in the discussion of Virginia Woolf in the first chapter of the thesis, the problem of subjectivity and its integrity and autonomy will be connected with the thought of Henri Bergson. By claiming that "we are creating ourselves continually"<sup>175</sup>, Bergson's thought on memory and duration represents a vital contribution to any discussion of the problem of integrity, autonomy and individuality of the human subjectivity. Furthermore, Bergson's thought is also crucial for grasping

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<sup>173</sup> Editors of Cambridge edition of D. H. Lawrence's letters inform us that Lawrence certainly read Marinetti's "Manifesto Technico" and futurist anthology "I Poeti Futuristi" (*The Letters of D. H. Lawrence* Vol. 2, George J. Zytaruk and James Boulton, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 180. For more details on Lawrence's interaction with Futurism see Andrew Harrison, *D. H. Lawrence and Italian Futurism: A Study of Influence* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2003).

<sup>174</sup> *Futurism, An Anthology*, Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, Laura Wittman, eds. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009) 143. Limitations of this analogy will be stressed in the following discussion.

<sup>175</sup> Bergson, *Evolution* 7.

the intricate relation between “whole and its parts”, the dis-continuity in space and time and the problem of artificial sub-divisions of matter which is performed in our practical life. As such, Bergson’s discussion of “continuity in space,” plays an extremely important role in Futurist aesthetics, first of all in the work of Umberto Boccioni, who systematically exploits in his manifestos Bergson’s thought on the subject. Illuminating the problem from a completely different yet connected perspective, both Futurism and Bergson’s philosophy stand for a common target of the anti-romantic neo-classicist thought of T. E. Hulme or Wyndham Lewis and as such it is going to be treated in the final chapter.

From this perspective it is further crucial to point out once more that all of the theories used to interpret Lawrence’s thought, at some point or other, threaten to dissolve, erode, or completely re-construct the classical and traditional idea of human subjectivity as an autonomous and discrete entity and theorize it as an open, heterogeneous structure. As will be demonstrated, Schopenhauer’s knowledge of the “pure subjectivity,” Bergson’s hypothetical state of “pure perception” and the Futurist replacement of “human” sensibility with the “physiology of the matter” all represent alternative approaches to subjectivity which theorise numerous ways of its partial or temporal inhibition. The following chapter examines the manifestations of this “inhibition” by observing the role of spaces, places, shapes and images of (dis)continuity and dissolution in Lawrence’s fiction and metaphysics. In doing so, the argument pays some special attention to three recurring “spatial themes” themes: the regions of transgression, the phenomenon of dance and Lawrence’s ideas on continuity and discontinuity in his theory of visual art.

## **2.2 Vast Spaces and Ideal Places in Lawrence’s Fiction and Metaphysics**

Being a writer co-responsible for the so called modernist “crisis of representation of space,”<sup>176</sup> D. H. Lawrence has in all stages of his artistic development paid some special attention to the problems of space, place and the way in which environment shapes and constitutes human existence. As consequence of this, in all of his texts, Lawrence’s work consistently witnesses its author’s life-long interest in representing human life “in genuine living relation to his surroundings.”<sup>177</sup> This applies to the early work influenced

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<sup>176</sup> Michellucci 1.

<sup>177</sup> D. H. Lawrence, ‘Fantasia of the Unconscious’, *Fantasia of the Unconscious/Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1975) 47.

by the social-space of mining communities and the spirit of Nottinghamshire landscape, to the uncannily “inhuman” powers of the heath-landscape in Lawrence’s reading of Thomas Hardy’s novels, to the theory of the “Spirit of Place” as well as to his Italian, Mexican and Australian travelogue-essays. As a direct result of this, Lawrence’s canonical texts very often rely on an intricate structure that brings together elements of psychological and physiological or physical nature. The complex nature of the spatial arrangement of Lawrence’s stories and the interrelatedness of this arrangement with the often very complex psychological situation of Lawrence’s characters, transcends mere topological or topographical relations. The “in” of Lawrence’s fiction, liberated from the “restrictive bonds of simple location”<sup>178</sup>, is never the simple “in” of physical containment. As such it can be best examined by an analysis of specific liminal or transitional regions or areas, in which the true nature of human subjectivity is revealed in some excessive, transgressive or transcendental experience.

### **2.3 Interlude No. 2: A Short Course in Lawrence’s Psychology**

Any analysis of the mutual affinity between the physical and psychical spaces in Lawrence’s fiction requires a brief outline of Lawrence’s psychology.<sup>179</sup> The argument of this thesis relies on the following interpretation of this particular aspect of Lawrence’s thought. For Lawrence, the existence of an individual “human Self” is accomplished by an act of differentiation and separation of what Lawrence usually refers to as man’s ego, mind, consciousness or any other “greater manifestation of his individuality”<sup>180</sup>, from the whole of Nature/ Universe/ Cosmos.<sup>181</sup> This greater whole, from which the individualised life issues, is referred to in Lawrence’s *Study of Thomas Hardy* as “a great, unmoved, utterly homogeneous infinity, a great non-being, at once a positive and negative infinity: the whole universe, the whole infinity, one motionless homogeneity, a something, a nothing”<sup>182</sup>. The main purpose of man’s conscious

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<sup>178</sup> Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1998) 181.

<sup>179</sup> For more on Lawrence’s psychology see for example D. J. Schneider, *D. H. Lawrence - The Artist as Psychologist* (Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1984) or ‘Schopenhauer and the Development of D.H. Lawrence’s Psychology.’

<sup>180</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 431.

<sup>181</sup> Lawrence does not seem to distinguish between Universe and Cosmos the way for example Alexandre Koyré does. See: Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1957).

<sup>182</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 432.

existence, based on this divorce “from the passionate purpose that issued him out of the earth into being”<sup>183</sup> is the attempt to achieve the “maximum of being”<sup>184</sup> and preserve this state for as long as it is possible. If unchecked by the resistance of the opposing desire to “become one with the universe”, this drive achieves a state of hypertrophied, solipsistic and egoistic existence which Lawrence calls the Ideal or idealism. As Lawrence puts it, by

idealism we understand the motivizing of the great affective sources by ideas mentally derived. As for example the incest motive which is first and foremost a logical deduction made by human reason, even if unconsciously made, and secondly is introduced into the affective passional sphere, where it now proceeds to serve as a principle for action. This motivizing of the passional sphere from the ideal is the final peril of human consciousness. It is the death of all spontaneous, creative life, and the substituting of mechanical principle. It is obvious that the ideal becomes mechanical principle, if it be applied to the affective soul as a fixed motive. An ideal established in control of the passionate soul is no more and no less than a supreme machine-principle. And a machine, as we know is the active unit of material world. Thus we see how it is that in the end pure idealism is identical with pure materialism, and the most ideal peoples are the most completely material. Ideal and material are identical. The ideal is but the god in the machine – the little fixed, machine-principle which works the human psyche automatically.<sup>185</sup>

From this separation from the “original unity with the universal all”<sup>186</sup> it inevitably follows that the mortal and temporal life of man is realized in the name of (a) an unconscious longing to restore or at least re-enact this original timeless union or at least achieve some “lesser version” of it. This longing (which remains suppressed in the background of one’s psyche) is yet active behind the conscious intellect and manifests itself as something that Lawrence calls “longing to restore the union, the Absolute, the eternal, the unchanging”<sup>187</sup>. Against this “longing for union,” however, at the same time there is another force at work, namely the (b) “will-to-differentiation”. This is conceptualised as a tendency towards “the maximum of being” and is in certain contexts to be identified with the Nietzschean concept of the “will-to-power”. These two forces – (b) the “separation” and (a) “unification” - work throughout human life as two

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<sup>183</sup> Lawrence, *Phoenix* 415.

<sup>184</sup> Lawrence, *Phoenix* 403.

<sup>185</sup> Lawrence, *Fantasia of the Unconscious/Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* 210.

<sup>186</sup> M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1971) 323.

<sup>187</sup> Lawrence, *Phoenix* 446.



contradictory impulses, whose tension creates a “metaphysical gap,” which becomes the condition for the life of the individual.<sup>188</sup> Given this metaphysical account, man can be easily seen as:

small [and] vulnerable [...], the farthest adventurer from the dark heart of the first of the suns, into the cosmos of creation. Man, the last god won into existence. And all the time sustained and threatened, menaced and sustained from the Source, the innermost sun-dragon. And all the time, he must submit and he must conquer. Submit to the strange beneficence from the Source, whose ways are past finding out. And conquer the strange malevolence of the Source, which is past comprehension also.<sup>189</sup>

The whole of life of man is in Lawrence understood as constant balancing and disbalancing of these two opposing forces or “wills”: the will towards the maximum of individual being and the will towards re-uniting with the will of the Universe, consequently becomes an ever present theme in Lawrence’s psychology. In Lawrence’s own words,

[t]here is in me the [b] great desire of creation and [a] the great desire of dissolution. Perhaps these two are pure equivalents. Perhaps the decay of autumn purely balances the putting forth of spring. Certainly the two are necessary each to the other; they are the systole-diastole of the physical universe. [...] There is in me the desire of creation and the desire of dissolution.<sup>190</sup>

The simultaneous existence of these two drives also contributes to the essentially heterogeneous quality of the Self and to its “differential character” in which the two main impulses oppose each other but at the same time make each other meaningful. As Diane S. Bonds summarizes in her *Language and the Self in D. H. Lawrence*, in Lawrence’s world: “[t]hings have their being and identity not in isolation but in relation to each other”.<sup>191</sup> This metaphysics in turn implies psychology of a “relational and differential model of the self, [in which] the self can exist or be defined only in relation

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<sup>188</sup> Lawrence’s metaphysics is in this point reminiscent of the classical romantic “myths of return”, for more on the romantic nature of Lawrence’s psychology see for example “The Circuitous Journey: From Blake to D. H. Lawrence” in M. H. Abrams’ *Natural Supernaturalism*.

<sup>189</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Mornings in Mexico and Etruscan Places* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971) 87.

<sup>190</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 678.

<sup>191</sup> Diane S. Bonds, *Language and the Self in D. H. Lawrence* (Michigan: U. M. I. Research Press, 1987) 24.

to the not-self or the other, and as that which stands outside the self shifts, so must the self”.<sup>192</sup>

What Bonds terms a “relational model of the self” is first of all a model that cannot rely on a closed structure and that would exist discretely in itself, separated from the rest of the world by a clear-cut distinction. Quite the opposite, it is a model that in fact heralds the post-modern and post-human notions of “supplementarity” and “technological”<sup>193</sup> existence in which “what is outside constitutes the very being of what it lies outside of”<sup>194</sup>. The “externalised” nature of human subjectivity inevitably opens the question of individual and discrete ex-istence of human beings and derived notions such as individuality or personality. All of these problems echo Bergson’s poetic remark:

In fact, we do indeed feel that not one of the categories of our thought – unity, multiplicity, mechanical causality, intelligent finality, etc. – applies exactly to the things of life: who can say where individuality begins and ends, whether the living being is one or many, whether it is the cells which associate themselves into the organism or the organism which dissociates itself into cells? In vain we force the living into this or that one of our molds. All the molds crack.<sup>195</sup>

The question whether categories such as subject, subjectivity, identity, personality or individuality (but also material entities such as objects, places and bodies) naturally exist as essentially related or whether they exist discretely, merely juxtaposed next to each other, and whether the distinctions or dividing lines we as humans draw between these entities reflect their “true being”. All of these questions are rearticulated in the following discussion in spatial terms as a problem of shapes, clear and blurred outlines, diffusion, dissolution and distinctness. This being said, the role of Lawrence’s psychological system based the co-existence of the two main psychological impulses (a) and (b) in every individual psyche, becomes a very important factor in the analysis of the spatial and psychological structures of Lawrence’s fictions. The importance of these two psychological impulses and the resulting situation in which “we are always divided

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<sup>192</sup> Bonds 24.

<sup>193</sup> On the notion of supplement and supplementarity see: Derrida, *On Grammatology* 244. For the notion of anthropological technological philosophies see for example: Louis Armand and Arthur Bradley: “Introduction: Thinking Technicity,” *Technicity* (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2006) 1 - 14.

<sup>194</sup> Bernard Stiegler, *Time and Technics: The Fault of Epimetheus*, transl. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) 193.

<sup>195</sup> Bergson, *Evolution* x.

within ourselves”<sup>196</sup> can be felt in Lawrence’s work in the emotional or even existential attachment of individual characters towards the space they inhabit and the living places they create.

Lawrence’s “in-space-inscribed” psychology thus represents a re-articulation of the basic polarity of the “love-hate” relationship with the earth in which: “one, [presupposes that] earth is a hostile, alien place, keeping man from a human potential that can only be realized by transcending earth; and the other, that earth is man’s true home, his only possible environment, which he must adapt to and control in order to full fill himself.”<sup>197</sup>

#### **2.4 “Space → Place → Space”: To Feel at Home on the Face of the Earth**

Rearticulating this fundamental duality, Lawrence’s characters, being the proverbial “last gods won into existence”<sup>198</sup>, struggle to make themselves “feel at home on the face of the earth”<sup>199</sup>. As a part of this truly existential struggle, which is nothing else but a prolongation of the fundamental will towards the maximum of one’s being, man attempts to create a living place,<sup>200</sup> a piece of Cosmos to keep himself safe and detached from the vast homogeneity of the indifferent universe. The creation of these Ideal “hypomnesic environments”, which are designed to temporarily counterbalance the inevitable emergence of the “anamnesic” memories of individual’s Unified existence, acquires in Lawrence’s thought a central role in the process of constitution of individual identity. Understood as “the [...] one in which both subject and object, both self-and-world are pressed together”<sup>201</sup>, the lived place becomes a perfect piece of technology<sup>202</sup>, a perfect Ideal-machine to promote life that is other than life: a perfect “Non-I” protecting the I.

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<sup>196</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 492.

<sup>197</sup> Leonard Lutwack, *The Role of Place in Literature* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984) 3.

<sup>198</sup> Lawrence, Mexico 87.

<sup>199</sup> Phoenix 398.

<sup>200</sup> This paper works with the Jeff Malpas’ definition of place as “one in which both subject and object, both self-and-world are pressed together” (J. E. Malpas. *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 15.

<sup>201</sup> Malpas 39.

<sup>202</sup> Technology is here understood in its non-instrumental sense. For the non-instrumental interpretation of technology as “revealing” or “aletheia” see Heidegger’s seminal *Question Concerning Technology*, for a concise summary of the non-anthropological and non-instrumental rearticulating of technology see for example “Original Technicity: Technology and Anthropology” or Louis Armand’s “Technics and Humanism” in Arthur Bradley and Louis Armand, eds., *Technicity* (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2006).

Representing the result of the human “contest with [the] cosmic enemy, [in which] man finds his further ramification [and] his further *ideal* vindication”<sup>203</sup>, the phenomenon of place represents a materialisation of the “will to the maximum of being”. Yet, place cannot be understood simply as a supplement in the classical Aristotelian sense of the word, i.e. as an “inert and neutral prosthesis”<sup>204</sup>, but rather as a complex ontological state which, by placing oneself outside of oneself and/ or becoming one’s own outside and vice versa, closely unites man with his surroundings. As such, *place* - this new microcosm, the small union of man and “his world” stands in a fundamental opposition to the “de-humanized force”<sup>205</sup> of the “homogeneous tissue of *space*.”<sup>206</sup>

Importantly, the characteristic “technicity” of this gesture “names something which can no longer be seen as a series of prosthesis or technical artefacts [...] but the basic and enabling condition of our life-world”<sup>207</sup> and of human ex-istence as such. In this sense, the process of creating places, understood as creation of life-supporting knowledge-batteries, is identical with the process of the hypomnesic exteriorisation of human knowledge and memory. This memory-knowledge is consequently rearticulated in Lawrence’s texts into a metaphysical myth of individual existence supported by an essentially externalised form of memory, localised and “en-gramed”<sup>208</sup> in individualised places in a strategy that bears some significant traces of Bachelard’s “topoanalysis”. In what might be called a creative gesture of “progressive implacement”<sup>209</sup> an individual constructs his or her existence mnemo-technically by localising his or her memories and their ego-identity into a particular Ideal-place. As Gaston Bachelard has it in his *Poetics of Space*:

In the theatre of the past that is constituted by memory, the stage setting maintains its characters in their dominant roles. At times we think we know ourselves in time, when all we know is a sequence of fixations in the spaces of the being’s stability – a being who does not

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<sup>203</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *The Symbolic Meaning* (London: Centaur Press, Ltd., 1962) 208. My italics.

<sup>204</sup> Bradley and Armand 4.

<sup>205</sup> Lawrence, *Symbolic Meaning* 198.

<sup>206</sup> Phoenix 433. My italics.

<sup>207</sup> Bradley and Armand 3.

<sup>208</sup> Bernard Stiegler, “Anamnesis and Hypomnesis,” *Technicity*, ed. Arthur Bradley and Louis Armand (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2006).

<sup>209</sup> Casey 16.

want to melt away, and who, even in the past, when he sets out in search of things past, wants time to “suspend” its flight. In its countless alveoli space contains compressed time.<sup>210</sup>

As such, the technical-phenomenon of place plays the key role in Lawrence’s most important short stories such as “England, My England!” “Shades of Spring”, “The Trespasser” or “The Blind Man”. All these stories feature a character who is trying to construct his existence on the face of the earth by attempting to organise supposedly unorganised matter of space into a life-supporting place. To illustrate this, let us consider the following extract from Lawrence’s later tale “The Man Who Loved Islands”.

There was a man who loved islands. He was born on one, but it didn’t suit him, as there were too many other people on it, besides himself. He wanted an island all of his own: not necessarily to be alone on it, but *to make it a world of his own*. An island, if it is big enough, is no better than a continent. It has to be really quite small, before it *feels like* an island; and this story will show how tiny it has to be, before you can presume to fill it with your own personality. Now circumstances so worked out, that this lover of islands, by the time he was thirty-five, actually acquired an island of his own. He didn’t own it as freehold property, but he had a ninety-nine years’ lease of it, which, as far as a man and an island are concerned, is as good as everlasting. Since, if you are like Abraham, and want your offspring to be numberless as the sands of the sea-shore, you don’t choose an island to start breeding on. Too soon there would be overpopulation, overcrowding, and slum conditions. Which is a horrid thought, for one who loves an island for its insulation. No, an island is a nest which holds one egg, and one only. This egg is the islander himself.<sup>211</sup>

This extract shows exactly the situation of place-creation in which an individual attempts to “cut out” his living place from the homogeneous mass of space that surrounds him. From this perspective, “The Man Who Loved Islands” is a story that shows the full circle of the life of an individual. This circle can be in cosmological terms expressed by the “space → place → space” pattern. Following this pattern, the story ends in a scene of dissolution of the island, islander and eventually of the whole human world:

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<sup>210</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (New York: Orion Press, 1964) 8.

<sup>211</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Selected Stories* (London: Penguin Classics, 2007) 286. My italics.

The dark days of winter drew on. Sometimes there was no real day at all. He felt ill, as if he were dissolving, as if dissolution had already set in inside him. Everything was twilight outside, and in his mind and soul. [...] For some moments he swooned unconscious. [...] Like some strange, ethereal animal, he no longer realised what he was doing. Only he still derived his single satisfaction from being alone, absolutely alone, with the space soaking into him.<sup>212</sup>

As we shall argue in the following discussion, any such attempt to manufacture an idealised topological “fixation” is in Lawrence’s stories inevitably doomed to fail. The problematic nature of the process of creating places is in Lawrence’s tales often represented as an essentially Nietzschean struggle for power with natural phenomena (as in “The Man Who Loved Islands”, or in *The Trespasser*) but also with other individuals. This is especially true for early stories such as “A Modern Lover” or “Shades of Spring”.

“The Shades of Spring” is one of Lawrence’s most popular and at the same time most complex short stories. The role of place in this story can be interpreted from the perspectives of individual characters and used to support their individual existence in face of others. As a part of this, the landscape in all its forms and incarnations – the road, the family house, a secret place or a parlour - are all imbued or “en-gramed” with knowledge. Similarly to the situation in the “Kew Gardens”, it is possible for a place to mirror within it future as well as past and form a strange personal heterochronia. All of these processes validate the idea that: “what we think of as ‘knowledge’ whether of the world around or our ourselves, is not a neutral reflection of things but an interested interpretation of them.”<sup>213</sup>

The main hero of the story, Syson, enters the story after his return from his studies to the place where he spent his childhood. His key feature and failure in this story is his idealism which materialises in the egocentric interpretation of his former life (especially his relationship to his childhood sweetheart Hilda) and a belief that the situation remained fixed and unchanging in the time of his absence. As Anna Grmelová concisely points out, “his [Syson’s] belief that nothing has changed in the meantime is contradicted early in the story when a handsome young gamekeeper blocks his way,

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<sup>212</sup> Lawrence, Collected 1189 – 1190.

<sup>213</sup> Milton, *Lawrence and Nietzsche: A Study of Influence* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987) 30.

frustrating Syson's assumptions of idyllic timelessness."<sup>214</sup> This frustration is soon accompanied by "the bitter disillusionment Syson experiences [...] when it is brought home to him that Hilda not only radically differs from his construction of her but that she rejects his mythical version of their former relationship."<sup>215</sup> Recalling Bachelard once more it is again possible to repeat that: "[for] a knowledge of intimacy, localisation in the spaces of our intimacy is more urgent than a determination of dates."<sup>216</sup> Perhaps even because of this, the ideal timeless construction of Syson's identity is obviously bound and fixed to the place where he spent his childhood and where he experienced his first intimate relationships.

The very act of the keeper barring Syson's path represents a symbolic prelude anticipating and mirroring the plot of the entire short story. The result of this encounter is a long ranging disillusionment. This disillusionment not only reveals the true state of Syson's native landscape but, at the same time, reveals much of Syson's behaviour as foolish, completely ideal-driven and not corresponding to the objective reality of his being (his marriage, his former lover belonging to someone else, his friends no longer being his friends, his love-letters no longer having any purpose). The place he returns to works in this case as a strange paradoxical mechanism that supposedly triggers or nests his ideas but at the same time turns them into ruin after his arrival. In this respect, the paradoxical epistemological nature of place and "its" knowledge, reveals its true de-constructive nature.

The topology of the story's setting is of high importance and gives no doubt of a symbolic structure of this "native heterotopia". The whole native-area is designed to form an enclosed space or environment and thus creates a spatiotemporal framework to the whole of Syson's return. As it was said, the story begins with Syson's entering the perimeter of his native landscape and ends with him leaving for the city, i.e. takes place from the time Syson passes through the gateway of the wood<sup>217</sup> and enters the quadrangle of the farm with the plum tree (one of the key indicators of the flux of time). The core of the farm is formed by a common area of the kitchen (where those who

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<sup>214</sup> Anna Grmelová, *The Worlds of D. H. Lawrence's Fiction* (Praha: Karolinum, 2001) 85.

<sup>215</sup> Grmelová 86.

<sup>216</sup> Bachelard, *Space* 9.

<sup>217</sup> Here, as well as in "The Shadow in the Rosegarden" and other stories one has to enter the heterotopia through a "gateway."

belong to the place eat) and an orchard (Syson's favourite topos and locus of his topophilia) at the back of the house. It is the place

he [Syson] loved [...] extraordinarily, the hills ranging round, with bear-skin woods covering their giant shoulders, and small red farms like brooches clasping their garments [...] To his last day, he would dream of this place, when he felt the sun on his face, or saw the small handfuls of snow between the winter twigs, or smelt the coming of spring.<sup>218</sup>

After Syson eats alone in the kitchen he is sent into the private sphere of the house. The parlour he finds himself in is the seat of materialised memorabilia hidden in cupboards and bookshelves. These hidden treasures for the one last time resurrect his sentiments of the past intimacies:

Opening a high cupboard let into the thickness of the wall, he found it full of his books, his old lesson books, and volumes of verse he had send her, English and German. The daffodils in the white windows-bottoms shone across the room, he could almost feel their rays. The old glamour caught him again. His youthful water-colours on the wall no longer made him grin; he remembered how fervently he had tried to paint for her, twelve years before.<sup>219</sup>

Interestingly enough, the epistemology of the short story does not rely on the function of the place so to say exclusively. In "The Shades of Spring", as well as in other stories,<sup>220</sup> Lawrence, instead of describing a character, rather focuses on describing a character in relation to various material objects (place included). From this perspective, it seems important to realise that an individual becomes in a way defined by its relation to his outside (places, space, objects, other individuals), which he at the same time helps to create. This is especially true for an author like Lawrence who understood the entity of knowledge and its true place in human life as a central issue to an authentic life of man.

Typically, in "The Shades of Spring", the process of knowledge constitution takes place in a strange pulsation<sup>221</sup> of Syson in turns accepts and rejects the fact of his idealisation failing. This emotional and epistemological to-ing and fro-ing coincide with the rhythm of the places he visits and thereby effectively creates a topoanalytical map of his

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<sup>218</sup> Lawrence, Collected 283.

<sup>219</sup> Lawrence, Collected 285.

<sup>220</sup> Examples of these stories could be: "The Prussian Officer", "The Horse-Dealer's Daughter", "The Man Who Loved Islands", "Shadow in the Rose Garden", "England! My England!" or "Odour of Crysantemums".

<sup>221</sup> For Lawrence typically, communication, knowledge and even being as such take place as pulsation, as he often asserts: "likewise between the systole and diastole of the heart" (Lawrence, *Fantasia* 44).



individual existence. Different places stimulate his cognitive processes differently and control the level of Syson's attunement to various stimuli, making him accept and/or discard his idealised construction of himself.

The following extract clearly demonstrates the way the drive for knowledge disguised as understanding lies behind the mechanical principle of the imagined construction Syson has developed while idealising the place and the people behind it:

She [Hilda] turned to the window. He noticed the fine, fair down on her cheek and her upper lip, and her soft white neck, like the throat of a nettle flower, and her fore-arms, bright as newly blanched kernels. He was looking at her with new eyes, and she was a different person to him. He did not know her. But he could regard her objectively now. 'Shall we go out,' she asked. Yes! he answered. But the predominant emotion, that troubled the excitement and perplexity of his heart, was fear, fear of that which he saw. There was about her the same manner, the same intonation in her voice, now as then, but she was not what he had known her to be. He knew quite well what she had been for him. And gradually he was realising that she was something quite other, and always had been. [...] The old illusion gone, they were strangers, crude and entire. But he would give her her due – she would have her due for him.<sup>222</sup>

In this extract, there is a chance to observe how the idealised image of Hilda becomes something that veils Hilda's "objective" existence. Seeing Hilda with new eyes, Syson is able to perceive that his construction of Hilda was conditioned by his self-deceptive idealisations and realises that: "she is and always has been something else." The distinction between "being" and "being something to someone", crucial for Lawrence as it is, becomes manifested in Syson's "epiphany"<sup>223</sup> during which he realises his "knowledge" is only a "self and ideal motivated" interpretation of reality fixed in the realm of memory and designed by the pattern of the intimate value of individual places.

The philosophical background of this scene as well as of the epistemology put in practice by Syson throughout the story bears significant traces of Nietzschean statement that

our perception as [being] part of our apparatus of knowledge which has developed as an instrument of the ruling urges, it follows that our awareness of the world is shaped by

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<sup>222</sup> Lawrence, *Collected* 285.

<sup>223</sup> Note the similarity to "The Shadow in the Rose Garden". "She wanted to be free of it. It was not him so much, but it, something she had put on herself that bound her so horribly. And having put the bond on herself, it was hardest to take it off" (Lawrence, *Collected* 310).

impulses currently dominant in us and that any significant change in the power relations of the self will find corresponding change in the nature of the “reality” we experience.<sup>224</sup>

Syson’s inability and unwillingness to accommodate oneself to the changes in the environment are symptoms of the idealism he himself created. Syson’s visit in the parlour is followed by his walk to the wood with Hilda. During this the former couple visits a small hut with a hidden apartment where Hilda and her recent lover meet. Allowing Syson to peep into such place stands for the last scene in what might be called a guided deconstruction-tour through the intimate places of Syson’s past. Step by step, the story turns into a struggle for power: Hilda fully demonstrates her refusal to be reduced to a particle in the mechanism of Syson’s construct of herself and in this way profoundly transcends the place as well as the artefacts which are colonised by Syson’s illusion.

With the essentials of Lawrence’s psychology of space and place explained, the following discussion will focus on the confrontation of the personal, ego-constructed microcosm of human place with an in-human space of “regions of transition” or “borderline areas.” These areas host the struggle between the ego-created world of places and the world of Nature, staging the transition between the above described lived places of individual human “ex-istence” and the dehumanised space of the cosmos. As will be shown, this experience is typically accompanied by the experience of erosion or loss of one’s idealised-identity and individual existence.

## **2.5 Open and Closed Structures: Beyond Ordinary Experience**

Regions of transmission regularly re-appear in Lawrence’s fiction and can be preliminarily defined as: 1) regions into which Lawrence’s characters enter while experiencing some extreme or “sublime” situation (typically death, existential anxiety, dance), 2) regions which include a borderland/line or a zone of in-distinction between two supposedly separate worlds, in which the two worlds or universes in some way coexist or are ostentatiously confronted with each other (typically the world of the living and the world of the dead, but also the sea and the land, surface and depth), and finally: 3) regions representing the process of transgression from the surface topology of everyday places, which are necessarily heterogeneous, enclosed and finite, into space

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<sup>224</sup> Milton 122.

that is homogeneous, smooth, hidden behind or under the region of empirical phenomena and usually perceived as limitless in size and volume.

Chronologically speaking, the concept of the region of transgression was for the first time extensively and systematically used in Lawrence's second novel, *The Trespasser* (1912). *The Trespasser* is an extremely complex early text on the verge between a novel and a longer short story. It is a pseudo-romantic narrative of a pair of lovers, Helena and Siegmund, who, trying to escape their everyday lives, leave their social relations behind and hide together for a few days on a small island near the coast of England. Unfortunately, what promises to be an idyllic stay in a "place beyond the ordinary experience,"<sup>225</sup> eventually turns into an encounter with a strange unknown anxiety and an experience of existential transgression. As will be shown, the source of this anxiety is first of all embedded in the spatial arrangement of the would-be idyll - the island and the sea around it.

Considering the spatial structure of the narrative we may observe that what promised to be a typical story with a simple concentric structure (as one might expect an island story to be) simply refuses to rely on an experience of a closed micro-cosmos or environment and instead turns into an existentially formative experience of a borderline region. Consequently, the story disrupts the expectations of the pair of lovers who idealize the island into a temporary safe heaven which would accommodate their social transgression (i.e. their escape from society, family, etc.) and replaces it with a qualitatively different experience of the border-line between the island and the surrounding sea. The island-heterotopia of social transgression, the expected *place* "other than home," quickly becomes an island heterotopia of "other than human" which stages the transfer from structured lived-places to the sublime space of the "great mass of life that washes unidentified."<sup>226</sup>

Mentioned for more than two hundred times in the novel, the sea plays a crucial symbolic mytho-poetical role and becomes a perfect embodiment of what just a few years later will become Lawrence's interpretation of the idea of "Immanent Will". Adopted from Schopenhauer's philosophy and novels of Thomas Hardy, the "Immanent Will" represents an embodiment of the principle of pre-individual, "vast

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<sup>225</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *The Trespasser* (London: Heinemann, 1965), 64.

<sup>226</sup> Lawrence, *Trespasser* 68.

incomprehensible pattern of [...] primal morality greater than ever the human mind can grasp”<sup>227</sup> and that manifests itself in the stirrings of the cosmos. Inspired by his stay on The Isle of Wight, Lawrence uses the actual geomorphology of this particular island to represent a typical metaphysical “borderline region”, located between the vast homogeneous space of the crushing sea and the towering mass of the chalk cliffs. The following scene depicts precisely the type of limit experience of an encounter with the natural other:

They [Helena and Siegmund] laboured along the shore, beside the black, sinuous line of shrivelled focus. The base of the cliff was piled with chalk debris. On the other side was the plain level of the sea. Hand in hand, alone and overshadowed by huge cliffs, they toiled on. The waves staggered in, and fell, overcome at the end of the race. Siegmund and Helena neared a headland, sheer at the side of a house, its base weighed with a tremendous white mass of the boulders, that the green sea broke among with a hollow sound, followed by a sharp hiss of withdrawal. The lovers had to cross this desert of white boulders, that glistened in smooth skins uncannily. Siegmund saw that the waves were almost at the wall of the headland. [...] He and Helena must hurry, or they would be prisoned on the thin crescent of strand still remaining between the great wall and the water. The cliffs overhead oppressed him – made him feel trapped and helpless. He was caught by them in a net of great boulders, while the sea fumbled for him. [...] He looked at the waves curling and driving maliciously at the boulders. [...] ‘Let us get round the corner’, he begged. ‘Really, Siegmund, the sea is not anxious to take us,’ she [Helena] said ironically.<sup>228</sup>

Half-captured between the horizontal flatness of the green sea and the vertical mass of the white cliffs over them, the two lovers find themselves on a diminishing *line* of land, caught in-between the world of people and the world of elements. Based on the above discussed outline of Lawrence’s psychology, this line, understood as a dividing-line or a border line that separates two competing regions, represents an experience of a liminal existential situation that balances on the verge of two systems of thought and/ or organisation: the human place and the in-human space, the limited and the limitless, the clear-cut and the dissolved, the solid and the fluid, the striated and the smooth. The shoreline which surrounds the island can again in this sense be understood as a *frame* which, by what Miroslav Petříček calls the paradox of “continuity and discontinuity”<sup>229</sup>, keeps the outside and inside (at least momentarily) separated. At the same time,

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<sup>227</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 419.

<sup>228</sup> Lawrence, Trespasser 39.

<sup>229</sup> Petříček 32 - 36, 100 - 103.

however, this porous line allows the outside to structure the inside and becomes a line of continual “focusing and de-focusing”<sup>230</sup>.

The disappearing gap which literally as well as metaphorically stands for a “platform” that “keeps” the two lovers alive, is not only the last remaining bond to the land above them but is also, considering the specific context of Lawrence’s mythological accounts of human existence, a spatial analogy of the temporal nature of human ex-istence which results from one’s separation from the whole of Nature. The island, representing a region which pressingly “pulses with the heartbeat of the sea”<sup>231</sup>, thereby announces the existence of the original and pre-individual

One [which] is at the same time willing and unwilling. Systole and diastole, it pulses with willingness and unwillingness that we should live and move on, from being to being, manhood to further manhood.<sup>232</sup>

Discussing the spatial propositions of this scene, it is first of all important to note that the only way to reach the coastline is to undergo long, laborious and also a bit dangerous descent from the surface-level of the island to the sea.

They [Helena and Siegmund] were searching for a way of descent. At least Siegmund inquired of the coastguard the nearest way down the cliff. [...] Siegmund and Helena lay side by side upon the dry sand, small as two resting birds, while thousands of gulls whirled in a white-flaked storm above them, and the great cliffs towered beyond, and high up over the cliffs the multitudinous clouds were travelling, a vast caravan en route. Amidst the journeying of oceans and clouds and the circling flight of heavy spheres, lost to sight in the sky, Siegmund and Helena, two grains of life in the vast movement, were travelling a moment side by side.<sup>233</sup>

The vertical movement connected with this descent is of great symbolic importance and becomes characteristic of a special type of endemic “borderline knowledge” below the space of the everyday. The Ideal “knowledge” that is gained at the end of the descent is here, however, not a human-made knowledge granting superiority, elation of spirit and domination over others that awaits at the top of a Yeatsian tower. Quite the opposite, it is a knowledge characteristic of the lower pole of the vertical axis which is in Lawrence’s work connected not only with the Christian concept of the Fall, but also

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<sup>230</sup> Petříček 105.

<sup>231</sup> Lawrence, *Trespasser* 38.

<sup>232</sup> Lawrence, *Mornings in Mexico and Etruscan Places* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1971) 87

<sup>233</sup> Lawrence, *Trespasser* 42.

with the mytho-poetical knowledge that sprouts out of the recognition of the otherness, in-humanness and of the dark powers of the Earth. These are represented by the anti-Cosmos, which dwells beyond the proverbial veil of Maya or under the “warm surface of life”, and symbolise “the relentless mass of cold beneath - the mass of life which has no sympathy for an individual, no cognizance of him.”<sup>234</sup> As Lawrence puts it in a fittingly entitled short story “The Borderline”:

[B]ehind all the ashy pallor and sulphur of our civilisation, lurks the great blood creature waiting, implacable and eternal, ready at last to crush our white brittleness and let the shadowy blood move erect once more, in a new implacable pride and strength.<sup>235</sup>

The encounter with the “other” of Nature postulates here an important theme that is connected in Lawrence’s work with the experience of transgression of the Idealised, self-enclosed existence of the human place. This theme, which is already embedded in the very existence of Lawrence’s dual universe, is further related to the impossibility of representing reality using only one system of thought or one theoretical paradigm. Analogically to the literary genres which undermined the achievements of the world-order and discourse of Enlightenment rationalism, such as gothic and libertine novels or even romantic poetry, Lawrence’s sublime experience of transgression, or border-crossing, represents a step beyond the safe “reality” of positivist science and philosophy. With this step beyond the petrifying effects of “human” language, egotism, morality, and world-order, Lawrence’s aesthetics in its own specific way comes close to Woolf’s anti-conventionalism and shows the crucial significance of the experience of a line or limit, especially that of human subjectivity and individuality.

As was suggested, the above quoted extract becomes a manifestation of one of the inherent dualities of Lawrence’s Universe, which consists of an ephemeral world of empirical phenomena and an invisible world of impersonal Will.<sup>236</sup> The “World as Will” is in *The Trespasser* is not invisible or inaccessible, but rather something “to be acutely experienced” precisely in the borderline region which Helena and Siegmund visit during their trips along the coastline. In addition, the experience of transgression is

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<sup>234</sup> Lawrence, *Trespasser* 52.

<sup>235</sup> Lawrence, *The Complete Stories of D. H. Lawrence in Three Volumes* (London: Heineman, 1966) 596.

<sup>236</sup> For even more on Lawrence’s relationship to Schopenhauer’s thought see for example D. J. Schneider’s *The Consciousness of D. H. Lawrence - An Intellectual Biography* (Kansas: University of Kansas, 1986).

often connected with an experience of existential anxieties which man faces while standing on the edge of *his* “known” world (place), facing the great One in the form of some of Lawrence’s mythological unifying principles, the Sun, the “Dark Core” of the Earth, the Moon, or the Sea:

[T]o feel the long, slow lift and drop of this almost empty ship, as she took the waters. Ah, God, liberty, liberty, elemental liberty. I wished in my soul the voyage might last for ever, that the sea he had no end, that one might float in this wavering, tremulous, yet long and surging pulsation while time ever lasted: space, never exhausted, and no turning back, even.<sup>237</sup>

As it is implied in the above quoted passage from Lawrence’s *Sea and Sardinia*, this existential aspect is in Lawrence’s mythological account closely linked to Schopenhauer’s idea of death as conceptualized in Schopenhauer’s influential *The World as Will and Representation*. According to this interpretation, death should first of all be understood as a loss of individual existence and becoming part of the Whole of the great Will of the Universe.

Will is the thing - in - itself, the inner content, the essence of the world. Life, the visible world, the phenomenon, is only the mirror of the will. Therefore life accompanies the will as inseparably as the shadow accompanies the body; and if will exists, so will life, the world, exist. Life is, therefore, assured to the will to live; and so long as we are filled with the will to live we need have no fear for our existence, even in the presence of death. It is true we see the individual come into being and pass away; but the individual is only phenomenal, exists only for the knowledge which is bound to the principle of sufficient reason, to the *principio individuationis*. Certainly, for this kind of knowledge, the individual receives his life as a gift, rises out of nothing, then suffers the loss of this gift through death, and returns again to nothing.<sup>238</sup>

The acute vision of death, felt by Siegmund as an uncanny feeling that the sea is “anxious to take him” eventually develops into an ever-present motif. For Schopenhauer as well as for Lawrence and his heroes, this vision potentially becomes a moment of paradoxical freedom. This “freedom”, which results from the safety of the return and the transcendence of the world of natural phenomena, however, takes place at the cost

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<sup>237</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Sea and Sardinia* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1997) 30 - 31.

<sup>238</sup> Schopenhauer 354.

of losing one's individuality.<sup>239</sup> As Eleanor H. Green sums up in her article "Lawrence and Schopenhauer on Death:"

Paradoxically, we receive our freedom from [our] torment only through renouncing our identity as phenomena in the world of representation, by lifting the veil of the Maya, recognising our essential unity with this same cruel, eternally insatiable will, and thus totally abnegating the individual will to live within us in favour of the larger universal will of which it is only a part.<sup>240</sup>

Consequently, this urgently existential moment, which constitutes Siegmund's anxiety in the face of the vision of the large volumes of matter, is actively experienced in *The Trespasser* as an encounter with the Other of "animated" Nature.

Siegmund made a great effort to keep the control of his body. The hillside, the gorse, when he stood up, seemed to have fallen back into shadowed vagueness about him. They were meaningless dark heaps at some distance, very great, it seemed. I can't get hold of them,' he said distractedly to himself. He felt detached from the earth, from all the near, concrete, beloved things; as if these had melted away from him, and left him, sick and unsupported, somewhere alone on the edge of an enormous space. He wanted to lie down again, to relieve himself of the sickening effort of supporting and controlling his body. If he could lie down again perfectly still he need not struggle to animate the cumbersome matter of his body, and then he would not feel thus sick and outside himself.<sup>241</sup>

This encounter takes place in a region where both the individual and the Universe meet one another in a mythical unifying gesture which heralds the individual's death and which foreshadows his return to the One of the "larger universal will" that awaits in the "shadow vagueness" below. The spatiality of this gesture, being the spatiality of death understood as a return *into* the vast undifferentiated space or voluminous matter, drastically reduces the potentiality of subjective and idealised relations (Siegmund finds the landscape "meaningless") between an individual and his environment (reduced to "meaningless dark heaps at some distance") to an eventual submission to the large, inhuman foundation of the sea, where he dissolves.

In accordance with these principles, considering Siegmund's "psychological profile", and recalling the working title of the book – *The Saga of Siegmund*, it becomes possible to read the story as Siegmund's personal quest for an external stabilising point to

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<sup>239</sup> Schopenhauer 228.

<sup>240</sup> Green 84.

<sup>241</sup> Lawrence, *Trespasser* 54.



“support his existence” and for a unification with something that would surpass him. Leaving his home (i.e. the set of relations and places that moulded him and worked as a structure that supported his integrity) and eventually being rejected by his lover, Siegmund suffers from a terrible freedom of his now socially and topologically *unrelated* existence. This problem brings us to a crucial question: why does a novel that has begun as a lovers’ idyll turn into a story that is so acutely concerned with existential questions and so often contains scenes of anguish and ontological insecurities?

In his article *D. H. Lawrence and Ontological insecurity*, D. J. Kleinbard focuses precisely on the problem of ontological unbalance that is so typical for Lawrence’s heroes. Considering recent findings in the study of pervasive states of anxiety as well as the Freudian theory of anxiety, Kleinbard introduces a special notion of an “ontologically unstable” person and states that “[a] person afflicted with ‘ontological insecurity’ has the feeling that he is unreal and the related fantasy that he is almost entirely dependent upon other people for his reality as well as for his personal identity.”<sup>242</sup> Kleinbard’s analysis points to the fact that majority of Lawrence’s characters, such as Siegfried, or for example Paul Morel,<sup>243</sup> can be described as suffering from such states of deficient identity and owe their individual existence to the relation with the other – another person, another will, another place and eventually the Cosmos as an “other”. Such person’s existential and ontological status is essentially a relation. The locus of their identity is completely exterior to themselves as individuals.

Returning to the story of *The Trespasser*, it seems possible to argue that Siegmund’s and Helena’s stay on the island is tainted with exactly this type of “ontological insecurity” which manifests itself in their struggle for “safer foundation” for one’s existence. The situation radically worsens after Helena and Siegmund fail in providing each other with a mutually supportive “state of balance” as lovers. This in fact represents a failure in re-enacting the unifying gesture in which the couple would dance

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<sup>242</sup> D. J. Kleinbard, “D. H. Lawrence and Ontological Insecurity,” *Modern Language Associations*, Vol. 89 No.1 (Jan 1, 1974) 154 – 163. 14. Oct. 2010 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/461678>>, 154.

<sup>243</sup> Paul’s dependence on his mother in *Sons and Lovers* is proverbial. To illustrate this let us consider the following example: “He [Paul] had come back to his mother. Hers was the strongest tie in this life. When he thought round, Miriam shrank away. There was an unreal, vague feeling about her. And nobody else mattered. There was one place in the world that stood solid and did not melt into unreality: the place where his mother was. Everybody else could grow shadowy, almost non-existent to him, but she could not. It was as if the pivot and pole of his life, from which he could not escape, was his mother. And in the same way she waited for him. In him was established her life now. D. H. Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2011) 253.

into the “mystical unifying moment” in which “the male seethes and whirls in an incredible speed upon the pivot of the female, where the two are one, as axle and wheel are one, and the motions travel to infinity.”<sup>244</sup>

Against this background, Siegfried, feeling rejected and unappreciated by Helena, who according to him “ought to be rejoiced at [him], but [...] is not [and instead] rejects [him] as if [he] were a baboon under [his] clothes,”<sup>245</sup> in turn re-focuses his attention and searches for an ontological foundation for his existence elsewhere - this time in re-establishing the primordial relation between himself and the “circumambient cosmos.” Since, as Lawrence has it, “no man and no woman can get a perfect mate”<sup>246</sup>, the rejection is inevitably followed by a reorientation from the personal to the impersonal lover on the part of both protagonists.

That night she met his passion with love. It was not his passion she wanted, actually. But she desired that he would want *her* madly, and that she would have all – everything. It was a wonderful night to him. It restored in him the full ‘will to live.’ But she felt it destroyed her. Her soul seemed blasted. At seven o’clock in the morning Helena lay in the deliciously cool water, while small waves run up the beach full and clear and foamless, continued perfectly in their flicker the rhythm of the nights passion. Nothing, she felt had ever been so delightful as this cool water running over her.<sup>247</sup>

And a bit later, even more literally:

Siegmond lay still, looking at her. The changes in him were deeper, like an alternation in his tissue. His new buds came slowly, and were of a fresh type. He lay smiling at her. At least he said: ‘You look now as if you belonged to the sea’. ‘I do; and one day I shall go back to it,’ she replied. For to her at the moment, the sea was a great lover, like Siegmund but more impersonal, who would receive her when Siegmund could not.<sup>248</sup>

This paradoxical situation, in which the lovers seek the fulfilment of their desires and needs not in each other but in some form of “materiality”, i.e. in the sea in this particular example, can again be interpreted as a result of one of the two basic drives of Lawrentian psychology, i.e. the Schopenhauerian drive to Union with some greater whole. Here, according to Daniel J. Schneider’s article *Schopenhauer and the*

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<sup>244</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 442.

<sup>245</sup> Lawrence, Trespasser 32.

<sup>246</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 445.

<sup>247</sup> Lawrence, Trespasser 45.

<sup>248</sup> Lawrence, Trespasser 51.

*Development of D. H. Lawrence's Psychology*, Lawrence's conception of psychology can be seen as transcending Schopenhauer's theory of sexual motivation of individuals seeking a partner of opposite qualities in order to benefit their species to a more general, indeed "universalistic" stage in Lawrence's psychology. Schneider writes:

[T]he idea that 'each loves what he lacks' was only the starting point of Lawrence's reasoning about the nature of sexual motivation. He was quick to generalize the idea: to see that the love of what one lacks is more than a sexual desire: it is also a desire to overcome separation or divorce from the nature itself, from the whole of the cosmos. Man, confronted existentially by his awareness that he is merely derivative, merely a fragment of the Whole, seeks to unite himself with the All (all, that is Non-I) in the act of loving. His desire is not just to perpetuate the species but to be restored to the primal unity with nature, to the earth, the *Magna Mater*.<sup>249</sup>

This being said, Helena's and Siegmund's "transcending move" from an attempt at a union with one another to an attempt at a union with the whole (by becoming a "lover to the sea") can in fact be seen as following the general development of Lawrence's psychology – i.e. the "transcending move" from one's longing to restore a union with a suitable "opposite/ complementary" member of one species, to an attempt to return to the "whole of the cosmos." As we will see, this development is a gesture of considerable epistemological significance in which an individual rejects relationships in the phenomenal world in favour of the knowledge of the Ideal.

As was suggested, this "transcending move" is materialized in the story in the process in which the sea becomes for Siegmund the "great impersonal lover". In her union with thus lover Helena could lose her individuality only to incarnate "the personification of great motherhood of women", the great archetypal Devouring Mother:

'Hawwa - Eve - Mother!' She [Helena] stood compassionate over him [Siegmund]. Without touching him she seemed to be yearning over him like a mother. Her compassion, her dignity, seemed so different from his little Helena. This woman, tall, pale, drooping with the strength of her compassion, seemed stable, immortal, not a fragile human being, but a personification of the great motherhood of women. 'I am her child, too,' he dreamed as a child murmurs unconscious in sleep. he had never felt her eyes so much as now, in the darkness, when he looked only into deep shadow.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Daniel J. Schneider, *Development* 4.

<sup>250</sup> Lawrence, *Trespasser* 61.

As we may observe, the story culminates when this transcending gesture, from *a* union with an individual (Helena) to *the* union with some timeless stable entity, reaches its climax. The importance of this scene can be further illustrated in an almost analogical scene from Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913). The following extract from a novel which Lawrence published only about a year after *The Trespasser* describes Paul Morel and Mrs Daves during their visit to the Lincolnshire coastline, and captures a situation in which individual characters choose between personal and impersonal "lovers." The difference of scale between an individual and the "elemental space" here, as in *The Trespasser*, asserts its full symbolic importance.

[Mrs Daves] went plodding heavily over the sand that was soft as velvet. He, on the sandhills, watched the great pale coast envelop her. She grew smaller, lost proportion, seemed only like a large white bird toiling forward. 'Not much more than a big white pebble on the beach, not much more than a clot of foam being blown and rolled over the sand,' he said to himself. She seemed to move very slowly across the vast sounding shore. As he watched, he lost her. She was dazzled out of sight by the sunshine. Again he saw her, the merest white speck moving against the white, muttering sea-edge. 'Look how little she is!' he said to himself. 'She's lost like a grain of sand in the beach--just a concentrated speck blown along, a tiny white foam-bubble, almost nothing among the morning. Why does she absorb me?' The morning was altogether uninterrupted: she was gone in the water. Far and wide the beach, the sandhills with their blue marrain, the shining water, glowed together in immense, unbroken solitude. 'What is she, after all?' he said to himself. 'Here's the seacoast morning, big and permanent and beautiful; there is she, fretting, always unsatisfied, and temporary as a bubble of foam. What does she mean to me, after all? She represents something, like a bubble of foam represents to the sea. But what is she? It's not her I care for.' Then, startled by his own unconscious thoughts, that seemed to speak so distinctly that all the morning could hear, he undressed and ran quickly down the sands. She was watching for him. Her arm flashed up to him, she heaved on a wave, subsided, her shoulders in a pool of liquid silver. He jumped through the breakers, and in a moment her hand was on his shoulder.<sup>251</sup> (S&L 404-405).

The process of deliberation between a personal and impersonal lover is here, as well as in *The Trespasser*, expressed in imagery that stresses the incomparable proportions of the two and contrast two analogical relationships: between individuals and between an individual and the other of Nature. This shift from "union with an individual" to "union with a greater whole" also, significantly, represents a shift in focus from the description of an inter-subjective relationship between male and female to a relationship that

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<sup>251</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 404 - 405.

confronts individual subjects with some grater whole from which all individuals, according to Lawrence's mythological account of human existence, emerged. It is important to stress here that when Lawrence talks about "male and female," he does not necessarily talk about a man and a woman but about "male and female principles." As D. J. Schneider summarizes in *The Consciousness of D. H. Lawrence: An Intellectual Biography*:

[When] Lawrence felt that his soul had been wonderfully fertilized by the female [...] he did *not* mean 'the feminine.' He meant instead the female principle – the being grounded in the earth or the flesh, in the deep blood knowledge of the sympathy with the whole being. 'The female is the source, the origin, the Magna Mater. She is the darkness, the sensual body, the unconscious. Only by remaining in contact with the physical origin is the male spirit restored to the primal infinite; only through such contact is the male liberated from his 'egotism and assertion' and prepared to do his life's work – work founded on the acceptance of, and submission to, the deepest knowledge of Being and of the human place in the scheme of being. No petty, human goals but the submission to the nonhuman[.]'<sup>252</sup>

Crucially, the inter-changeability of individual manifestations of the main principles, i.e. the possibility of switching from the female principle in a woman, in "the earth or in the flesh" and after all also in one's psyche (the desire for dissolution is an essentially feminine principle), illustrates the tight and yet dynamic structure of Lawrence's universe which is bound by the same principles, analogies or relations on all macro- and micro-cosmic levels.

## **2.6 The Sea Dissolves so Much**

At this point it has become possible to suggest that the longed for union, as it is described above, as well as the existential awareness of the derivative nature of our existence as individuals becomes in the story closely connected with visions of seas or oceans. The infinitely stretching waters represent here an instance of a more general vision of the vast undifferentiated mass of the cosmos to which an individual returns and which remains dormant under the "warm surface of life [... as] the relentless mass of cold beneath - the mass of life which has no sympathy for an individual, no cognizance of him."<sup>253</sup> It is precisely the exposure to the vastness and inhumanity of the space of the surrounding cosmos which makes man realize the phenomenal,

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<sup>252</sup> Schneider, *Intellectual Biography* 82.

<sup>253</sup> Lawrence, *Trespasser* 52.

fragmentary and derivative nature of one's individual existence that asserts itself despite all his Idealizing effort.

All of these motives are paradigmatically brought together in Lawrence's early poem "Shadow of Death":

The earth again like a ship steams out of the dark sea over  
The edge of the blue, and the sun stands up to see us glide  
Slowly into another day; slowly the rover  
Vessel of darkness takes the rising tide  
I, on the deck, am startled by this dawn confronting  
Me who am issued amazed from the darkness, stripped  
And quailing here in the sunshine ...<sup>254</sup>

The significance of the feminine moment of "the return to the whole" for the phenomenal "I, of the substance of shadow", mentioned by Helena in the above quoted extract, is further explained in one of Lawrence's letters. Here Lawrence describes the notion of Schopenhauerian death qua return to the "unorganised whole" and identifies it with a sort of pantheistic non-personal-God-vision:

There still remains a God, but not a personal God: a vast, *shimmering* impulse which waves onwards towards some end, I don't know what - taking no regard of the little individual, but taking regard for humanity. When we die, like raindrops falling back again into the sea, we fall back into the big, shimmering sea of unorganized life which we call God. We are lost as individuals, yet we count in the whole.<sup>255</sup>

This pantheistic extract further justifies the connection which has been established between images of the inhuman sea, or more importantly, with the dark, vast unorganised space it represents, and the inhuman, immanent Will of the Schopenhauerian Universe. This impulse, as already argued, can be identified with death - in Lawrentian-Mythical sense, i.e. understood as dissolution into the nothingness of space or matter,<sup>256</sup> in which "the great psyche [...] must die, and not only die, must be reduced back to elements by a long, slow process of disintegration, living

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<sup>254</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *The Complete Poems of D. H. Lawrence* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1994) 97 - 98.

<sup>255</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *The Collected Letters of David Herbert Lawrence*, ed. Harry, T. Moore (London: Heinemann, 1965) 76.

<sup>256</sup> Here, paradoxically "space" plays the same role as "matter" since, due to their un-differentiated-ness (i.e. having no parts) both do not mirror the individual but let him dissolve in it.

disintegration.”<sup>257</sup> This “type” of death paradoxically contains “positive” as well as “negative” aspects - it is true that it represents annihilation of individuality and personality in the subject, which undergoes a “reduction back to the elements”<sup>258</sup> but, on the other hand, it is the only true way how to overcome the “divorce from nature”, the rupture between Nature and individual. This “positive” aspect of Death, i.e. death as something natural, as the necessary return to the greater Whole, thus represents the backbone of Lawrence’s psychology.

Lawrence expands on the theme of death in terms of return and dissolution in a number of texts that follow *The Trespasser*. One of the most interesting scenes in this respect comes from Lawrence’s *Women in Love* (1920), and represents another fine example of a typically elemental proto-image which connects the notions of homogeneous space and individual death. The imagery is in this instance expanded by notions of conscious and unconscious. The scene is taken from the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of the novel, called “The Water Party,” and describes the way in which Ursula, one of the main characters, contemplates death and suicide after an accident which occurred during the event. In this accident a local girl and a doctor who attempts to save her drown in a muddy country pond. Symbolically, their drowned bodies could not be found until the vast pond has been emptied.

She [Ursula] sat crushed and obliterated in a *darkness* that was the *border* of death. She realised how all her life she had been drawing nearer and nearer to this brink, where there was no beyond, [...] one must fulfil one’s development to the end, must carry the adventure to its conclusion. And the next step was over *the border into death*. So it was then! There was a certain peace in the knowledge. After all, when one was fulfilled, one was happiest in *falling into death*, as a bitter fruit plunges in its ripeness *downwards*. Death is a great consummation, a consummating experience. It is a development from life. [...] There it is, in front of us, as in front of Sappho, *the illimitable space*. *Thereinto* goes the journey. [...]. The next step led into the *space of death*. Did it?--or was there--? Her thoughts drifted into unconsciousness, she sat as if asleep beside the fire. And then the thought came back. *The space o’death!* [...] She could feel, within the *darkness*, the terrible assertion of her body, the unutterable anguish of *dissolution*, the only anguish that is too much, the far-off, awful nausea of *dissolution set in within the body*. “Does the body correspond so immediately with the spirit?” she asked herself. [...] *To die is to move on with the invisible. To die is also a joy, a joy of submitting to that which is greater than the known, namely, the pure*

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<sup>257</sup> Lawrence, Symbolic 116.

<sup>258</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 117.

*unknown*. That is a joy. [...] Death itself, like the *illimitable space*, is beyond our sullyng. [...] One might come to fruit in death. She had had enough. For where was life to be found? No flowers grow upon busy machinery, there is no sky to a routine, there is no space to a rotary motion. And all life was a rotary motion, mechanised, cut off from reality. [...] The only *window* was death. One could look out on to the *great dark sky of death* with elation, as one had looked out of the classroom window as a child, and seen *perfect freedom in the outside*. [...] Everything was gone, walled in, with spikes on top of the walls, and one must ignominiously creep between the spiky walls through a labyrinth of life. But the great, *dark, illimitable kingdom of death, there humanity was put to scorn*.<sup>259</sup>

This text represents a typical scene depicting an experience of “the death by water” in D. H. Lawrence’s work. As such, it brings together all of the aspects of the borderline scenes which were identified in the previous discussion. First of all, the sight of the drowned bodies as well as the imaginary re-construction of the scene of drowning is expressed in almost exclusively spatial vocabulary. To the dreaming Ursula, the pond water becomes “darkness that was the border of death”, death itself is a “window” from our reality, the only escape to the “outside”, it is the “where” *into* “which our journey goes”, a place that becomes “space only”. Advancing one step beyond the imagery of *The Trespasser*, the space of the pond region of transgression in *Women in Love* is represented as an almost complete abstraction which “downgrades” human-made relations into an experience of undifferentiated homogeneity of space. Deprived of all colours (with the exception of black) and sensible qualities, death almost equals pure extension and the edge of the pond becomes the verge of the homogeneous illimitable space *into* which one falls *downwards* and *dissolves*.

Besides general resemblances, there are at least two main recurring motives that link this scene with the discussion of the limit experience of the Other in *The Trespasser*: The motif of descent, i.e. a movement down along the vertical axis which echoes the movement of death in Lawrence’s simile “*falling into death*, as a bitter fruit plunges in its ripeness *downwards*”, reminds us of the gesture of submission of an individual to the immense space (of death) as to “that which is greater than the known, namely the pure unknown.” The idea of submission, already mentioned in the quote from D. J. Schneider’s study, is adjusted here to the watery lexicon and is expressed anew through a key spatial metaphor of “dissolution.”

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<sup>259</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Women In Love* (London: CRW Publishing Ltd., 2005), 209. My italics.



Typically, here as in other examples, dissolution represents an act which reverses the act of creation. It represents the reversal of the already discussed process of differentiation from homogeneous space and is directly opposed to the second main impulse in Lawrence's psychology - the full and maximal "achievement of itself".<sup>260</sup> As such, the metaphor of dissolution works against all attempts to stabilise human subject by creating places "on the face of the earth" and threatens not only the human body and human individuality but also "humanity" as such. Lawrence repeatedly works with this motif in his work, as for example in the poem "The Sea, the Sea."

The sea dissolves so much  
...  
Once the moon comes down  
and the sea gets hold of us  
cities dissolve like rock-salt  
and the sugar melts out of life  
iron washes away like an old blood-stain  
money makes even no sediment  
and only the heart  
glitters in salty triumph  
over all it has known, that has gone now into salty nothingness.<sup>261</sup>

In these lines, Lawrence paints a vision that unites the dissolution of human subjectivity with the dissolution of humanity. The moment of dissolution is treated in an interesting way in the last three lines which suggest that a part (the heart) of an "individual," survives the cataclysmic dissolution and "glitters in salty triumph/over all it has known." This triumph, however, is not to be identified with the triumph of a Kantian subject which, relying on the mechanisms of the methodology of teleological judgement, subsumes the dangerous phenomena of nature under the human purpose. In fact, nothing could be further from Lawrence's pantheistic and in-human conception of the universe that Kant's optimism expressed in his claim that "[w]ithout the man all creation would be a mere waste, in vain, and without a final purpose."<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Lawrence, *Phoenix* 403.

<sup>261</sup> Lawrence, *Complete Poems* 371.

<sup>262</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Press, 2008) 293; §86.

### 2.7 Interlude No. 3: The Sublime in Arthur Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea*

The interpretation of Lawrence's texts which connects existential anxieties with the vastness of the space under water or the oppressive roar of the oceans can be further reinforced by an allusion to what in this respect seems an essentially romantic quality of Lawrence's texts - their Sublime character of the discussed scenes. As we have already suggested above, these visions of vast open spaces, of towering cliffs, and of homogeneous matter fall under the general category of "the Sublime." This vast "umbrella term," however, requires some further specification. "The Sublime" belongs, along with other traditional concepts, such as the Beautiful, the Grotesque or the Picturesque to classical aesthetic categories. Supposedly coined in the third century A. D. by Longinus in his *Peri Hypsous*, or *On the Sublime*, and reformulated in many later variants, the category is generally associated first of all with the poetry of English romanticism and romantic or gothic literature.

Longinus' text sets the standard of the category by associating the sublime quality with that which is "high" (hypsous) and/ or "great" (megethos), both in rhetorical and psychological terms. Besides numerous other specifications, Longinus introduces two additional important moments that are constitutive both for the quality of the sublime and the discussion to follow: the so called "transport" (ekstasis, vytržení), which he defines as "the effect of elevated language upon an audience," that, according to Longinus, "is not persuasion but transport,"<sup>263</sup> and the "agonic" or antagonistic moment, i.e. the fight for the possession of greatness between the listener and the speaker.

The term sublime reaches English soil in 17th century with Nicolas Boileau's 1679 "translation" of Longinus' *On Sublime* and more famously in Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757). The latter represents an important reinterpretation of the sublime-antagonistic quality, established first of all by the "sublime quality" of Milton's Satan. With Kant's interpretation of the term in his *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790), the sublime, or "das Erhabene," reaches its perhaps most canonical status. The main source of inspiration for the apparently sublime

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<sup>263</sup> Longinus, *On Sublime*, trans. R. W. Roberts (Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press, 2014) non. pag., 1. 4. 2014. <[http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/l/longinus/on\\_the\\_sublime/](http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/l/longinus/on_the_sublime/)>.

character of Lawrence's scenes depicting limit experiences should, however, not to be sought in "that beastly Kant",<sup>264</sup> but rather in the thought of Arthur Schopenhauer.

As was already pointed out, young Lawrence was deeply impressed by Schopenhauer's philosophy, knowledge of which he acquired through his close reading of Schopenhauer's opus magnum - *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Idea, 1819). Besides other philosophical problems, Schopenhauer pays in this book a considerable amount of attention to the problem of the Sublime and the Beautiful. In fact a significant portion of the Third Book of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, called "The Platonic Idea: The Object of Art," is devoted to an exposition of what might be understood as an aesthetic-based epistemology in which the Sublime plays an extremely important role. The following discussion is highly relevant not only to Lawrence's "sublime" visions and experience of transgression, but also for the explication of Wyndham Lewis' aesthetics of the 1920's, and aims to briefly introduce the basic outlines of this particular aspect of Schopenhauer's philosophy.

Schopenhauer's aesthetics is an inevitable result of the dual structure of Schopenhauer's conceptualisation of reality and as such it is very closely linked to his "dual" epistemology. According to Schopenhauer, the world we live in can be seen as build up of phenomena, perceived by individuals, and the world of Idea(s) qua things-in-themselves in a loosely Kantian and/or Platonic sense. This division or duality has some important epistemological consequences since it establishes two "orders" of knowledge. First, there is the subjective, phenomenal and "individual" type of knowledge of the senses, or of "particular things".<sup>265</sup> However, there also exists the objective knowledge of timeless Ideas, i.e. of things the way they "really are" in themselves. The way Schopenhauer describes the difference between the two types of knowledge, the individual and Ideal, is very important for our following discussion. As a result of this distinction:

The individual, as such, knows only particular things; the pure subject of knowledge knows only Ideas. For the individual is the subject of knowledge in its relation to a definite particular, manifestation of will, and in subjection to this. This particular manifestation of will is, as such, subordinated to the principle of sufficient reason in all its forms; therefore, all knowledge which relates itself to it also follows the principle of sufficient reason, and no other kind of knowledge is fitted to be of use to the will but this, which always consists

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<sup>264</sup>

<sup>265</sup> Schopenhauer 228.

merely of relations to the object. The knowing individual as such, and the particular things known by him, are always in some place, at some time, and are links in the chain of causes and effects. The pure subject of knowledge and his correlative, the Idea, have passed out of all these forms of the principle of sufficient reason: time, place, the individual that knows, and the individual that is known, have for them no meaning. When an individual knower has raised himself in the manner described to be pure subject of knowledge, and at the same time has raised the observed object to the Platonic Idea, the world as idea appears complete and pure, and the full objectification of the will takes place, for the Platonic Idea alone is its adequate objectivity. The Idea includes object and subject in like manner in itself, for they are its one form.<sup>266</sup>

Perceived under the “principle of sufficient reason,” particular objects we encounter in our everyday life are “interesting for individuals” only through the relations into which objects are placed [...] and [through] their innumerable connections in space, time, and causality.”<sup>267</sup> This “relative” or “individual” type of knowledge is, given the not-yet-postmodern philosophical context, necessarily of a lower degree than that of the “objective” or “Ideal” knowledge, which, by contrast:

breaks free from the service of the [individual] will, by the subject [of knowledge] ceasing to be merely individual, and thus becoming the pure will-less subject of knowledge, which no longer traces relations in accordance with the principle of sufficient reason, but rests in fixed contemplation of the object presented to it, out of its connection with all others[.]<sup>268</sup>

For the purpose of the following discussion, three crucial moments should be pointed out. First, the objective knowledge could be defined as the knowledge devoid of “relations and circumstances”<sup>269</sup> introduced by the subject. It is the knowledge which “plucks the object of its contemplation out of the stream of the world’s course, and has it isolated”<sup>270</sup>. Second, temporal, spatial, causal or any other relations between objects (and consequently also between subjects and objects) blur our knowledge of the true Idea of things. Third, the Ideal knowledge can be achieved, but only at the cost of what

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<sup>266</sup> Schopenhauer 232. The philosopher continues: “Since now, as individuals, we have no other knowledge than that which is subject to the principle of sufficient reason, and this form of knowledge excludes the Ideas, it is certain that if it is possible for us to raise ourselves from the knowledge of particular things to that of the Ideas, this can only happen by an alteration taking place in the subject which is analogous and corresponds to the great change of the whole nature of the object, and by virtue of which the subject, so far as it knows an Idea, is no more individual” (228).

<sup>267</sup> Schopenhauer 228.

<sup>268</sup> Schopenhauer 230.

<sup>269</sup> Schopenhauer 228.

<sup>270</sup> Schopenhauer 239.

can easily be seen as an “ontological” change in the perceiving subject, or more specifically, in an individual, who as a part of the act of knowing:

loses himself in this object [of knowing], i.e., forgets even his individuality, his will, and only continues to exist as the pure subject, the clear mirror of the object, so that it is as if the object alone were there, without any one to perceive it, and he *can no longer separate the perceiver from the perception, but both have become one*, because the whole consciousness is filled and occupied with one single sensuous picture; if thus the object has to such an extent passed out of all relation to something outside it, and the subject out of all relation to the [individual] will.<sup>271</sup>

The language Schopenhauer uses in the above quoted paragraph (esp. the italicised section) should remind us of the moments discussed in Woolf’s fiction in which one can “no longer separate the perceiver from the perception”. Importantly for the present discussion, the “cognitive” situation which Schopenhauer describes here and which can be (and will be) identified in the course of our argument as treading on the very edge of humanity, results from an exposition to an intense aesthetic experience. This experience can draw on two main sources: ART and NATURE. Focusing on the role of nature as a mediator of the knowledge of the Ideas, Schopenhauer works with two categories, which often accompany each other – the Sublime and the Beautiful.<sup>272</sup>

Both the Beautiful and the Sublime are aesthetic categories which raise individuals “above the knowledge of mere relations subject to will”<sup>273</sup> and bring them to the “knowledge free from will [in] which the Ideas [...] readily present themselves to us.”<sup>274</sup>

The major difference between the two categories is that the Sublime, unlike the

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<sup>271</sup> Schopenhauer 231. My italics.

<sup>272</sup> Schopenhauer 262.

<sup>273</sup> Schopenhauer 260.

<sup>274</sup> Schopenhauer 260. Let us quote the extract in full: “As long as that which raises us from the knowledge of mere relations subject to the will, to aesthetic contemplation, and thereby exalts us to the position of the subject of knowledge free from will, is this fittingness of nature, this significance and distinctness of its forms, on account of which the Ideas individualised in them readily present themselves to us; so long is it merely beauty that affects us and the sense of the beautiful that is excited. But if these very objects whose significant forms invite us to pure contemplation, have a hostile relation to the human will in general, as it exhibits itself in its objectivity, the human body, if they are opposed to it, so that it is enhanced by the irresistible predominance of their power, or sinks into insignificance before their immeasurable greatness; if, nevertheless, the beholder does not direct his attention to this eminently hostile relation to his will, but, although perceiving and recognising it, turns consciously away from it, forcibly detaches himself from his will and its relations, and, giving himself up entirely to knowledge, quietly contemplates those very objects that are so terrible to the will, comprehends only their Idea, which is foreign to all relation, so that he lingers gladly over its contemplation, and is thereby raised above himself, his person, his will, and all will: in that case he is filled with the sense of the sublime, he is in the state of spiritual exaltation, and therefore the object producing such a state is called sublime” (260).

Beautiful, relies on ostentatious hostility of natural phenomena which makes man “sink into insignificance before their immeasurable greatness”<sup>275</sup>. It is precisely the feeling that we “lose ourselves in the contemplation of the infinite greatness of the universe in space and time”<sup>276</sup> which connects Schopenhauer’s conception of the Sublime with an experience of the space of death “into which one falls,” an experience that leaves Ursula “crushed and obliterated.” Marking the inevitable “development of life,” and triggering the “unutterable anguish” of “dissolution within the body,” the “sense of the sublime” corresponds with the Schopenhauerian emphasis on the “transcendence of our own individuality.”<sup>277</sup>

Besides the mild pessimism of its existential overtone, the scene of Ursula’s contemplation of the inevitability of death cannot be easily dismissed as hysteric or emotionally overexposed. In the pond scene, the “tragic joy” of the Sublime (Ursula even uses the word “joy”) is mixed with a strange type of amazed stoicism, typical for Schopenhauer’s account of the Sublime, which on one hand notices the loss of one’s existence as an individual, but on the other, sees it as an escape from the phenomenal world “of no existence” into the whole of true being. As Schopenhauer, analogically to Kant puts it:

*If we lose ourselves in the contemplation of the infinite greatness of the universe in space and time, meditate on the thousands of years that are past or to come, or if the heavens at night actually bring before our eyes innumerable worlds and so force upon our consciousness the immensity of the universe, we feel ourselves dwindle to nothing; as individuals, as living bodies, as transient phenomena of will, we feel ourselves pass away and vanish into nothing like drops in the ocean. But at once there rises against this ghost of our own nothingness, against such lying impossibility, the immediate consciousness that all these worlds exist only as our idea, only as modifications of the eternal subject of pure knowing, which we find ourselves to be as soon as we forget our individuality, and which is the necessary supporter of all worlds and all times the condition of their possibility. The vastness of the world which disquieted us before, rests now in us; our dependence on it is annulled by its dependence on us.*<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Schopenhauer 260.

<sup>276</sup> Schopenhauer 267.

<sup>277</sup> Schopenhauer 267.

<sup>278</sup> Schopenhauer 266. As it was suggested above in a comment rejecting Kant’s interpretation of the Sublime, this particular account is not without its problems, Lawrence would probably not subscribe to the dependence of the Word on human morality and dwell on the superiority of the natural other over the human.

Recognising that the experience of the Sublime may, due to its “hostile and life threatening” nature, “easily yield to anxiety”<sup>279</sup>, as we have seen in the extracts above, Schopenhauer’s notion of the Sublime takes a Kantian direction in which the subject is finally able to transcend the threatening situation through renouncing his or her (nevertheless phenomenal) subjectivity. As part of this gesture, an individual realises that “the vastness of the world which disquieted us before, rests now in us [and] our dependence upon it is annulled by its dependence upon us”<sup>280</sup>. At this point it should be noted that the relationship of “dependence” is in Lawrence radically shifted from the subject to the world, or the cosmos, which is thus in a strict sense, completely independent of human action or existence and pays no respect to the “little, pathetic patten of man’s moral life and struggle”<sup>281</sup>. As Lawrence recapitulates in his *Symbolic Meaning*: “If you are a child of mother earth, you must learn to discard your ideal self, in season, as you discard your clothes at night.”<sup>282</sup> Accordingly, no “Idealized” (which means subjective and ego conscious) knowledge can permanently enforce its will upon the Cosmos.

What happens when you idealize the soil, the mother-earth, and really go back to it? Then with the overwhelming conviction it is borne in upon you, as it was on Thomas Hardy, that the whole scheme of things is against you. The whole massive rolling of natural fate is coming down on you like a slow glacier, to crush you to extinction. As an idealist. Thomas Hardy’s pessimism is an absolutely true finding. It is the absolutely true statement of idealist’s last realisation, as he wrestles with the bitter soil of beloved mother-earth. [...] The idealist must perish, says mother earth. Then let him perish. [...] You can’t idealize mother earth. You can try. You can never succeed. But succeeding you succumb.<sup>283</sup>

## 2.8 “The Space of the World”

With this being said it becomes more and more apparent that Lawrence’s interpretation of the Sublime discards the mutual dependence between the subject and the hostile phenomena (in the literal sense) and replaces it with a model which fully exposes the “agonal moment” of the struggle between the blind forces of nature and an individual, who stumbles between the Idealized vision of his individual existence and the despair

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<sup>279</sup> Schopenhauer 262. My italics.

<sup>280</sup> Schopenhauer 266.

<sup>281</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 419.

<sup>282</sup> Lawrence, Symbolic Meaning 194.

<sup>283</sup> Lawrence, Symbolic Meaning 194.

resulting from his exposition to the colossal cosmos, as in the following description in Lawrence's *The Rainbow*:

She [Ursula] felt an agony of helplessness. She could do nothing. Vaguely she knew the huge powers of the world rolling and crashing together, darkly, clumsily, stupidly, yet colossal, so that one was brushed along almost as dust. Helpless, helpless, swirling like dust! Yet she wanted so hard to rebel, to rage, to fight. But what? Could she with her hands fight the face of the earth, beat the hills in their places? Yet her breast wanted to fight, to fight the whole world. And these small hands were all she had to do it with.<sup>284</sup>

The sublime nature of this experience can thus be seen as primarily residing in the exposition of the inherently dual nature of the universe and of the strife between the Idealised (subjective) and the pessimistic (objective) vision of it. The strife of an individual to claim his or her place on the face of the earth, though vain, adds another dimension to the agonal dimension of this experience.

By an analogy between the microcosm of human subjectivity and the macrocosm of cosmological or spatial processes, the sublime, death promising experience, (portrayed as a return to this vast primordial space) translates into a loss of the human-made place *on account of* inhuman space. As was already pointed out in the discussion of Siegmund and Helena, the immensity of space and the oppressive sublime nature of one's existential exposedness can (albeit only temporarily) be resisted by re-enacting an Idealised union with an individual of the opposite gender. As Lawrence puts it in his *Study of Thomas Hardy*:

No man can endure the sense of space, of chaos, on four sides of himself. It drives him mad. He must be able to put his back to the wall. And this wall is his woman. From her he has a sense of stability. She supplies him with the feeling of Immutability, Permanence, Eternity.<sup>285</sup>

What is here referred to as a *sense* or a *feeling* of stability can be effectively read as yet another example of what psychology knows as “defensive mechanisms of the ego” or, to use another expression, as a way in which human subjectivity attempts to overcome the terror which the human subject experiences when faced with the mass of the life-threatening homogeneous extension of the surrounding world. The temporally limited feeling of stability provided by the union with a woman is represented in a very

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<sup>284</sup> Lawrence, *Rainbow* 319.

<sup>285</sup> Lawrence, *Phoenix* 446.



interesting way in two complementary poems, fittingly named “Song of a Man Who is Loved” and “Song of a Man Who is Not Loved.” Let us quote the latter of the two in full:

THE space of the world is immense, before me and around me;  
If I turn quickly, I am terrified, feeling space surround me;  
Like a man in a boat on very clear, deep water, space frightens and confounds me.

I see myself isolated in the universe, and wonder  
What effect I can have. My hands wave under  
The heavens like specks of dust that are floating asunder.

I hold myself up, and feel a big wind blowing  
Me like a gadfly into the dusk, without my knowing  
Whither or why or even how I am going.

So much there is outside me, so infinitely  
Small am I, what matter if minutely  
I beat my way, to be lost immediately?

How shall I flatter myself that I can do  
Anything in such immensity? I am too  
Little to count in the wind that drifts me through.<sup>286</sup>

This poem stands in sharp contrast to the optimism of the “Man Who is Loved” who banishes his existential agoraphobia by singing that:

Between her breast is my home, between her breasts.  
Three sides set on me space and fear, but the fourth side rests  
Sure and a tower of strength, ‘twixt the walls of her breasts.<sup>287</sup>

As we can see from these two complementary poems, the solution to man’s existential crisis triggered by the sublime experience of the surrounding cosmos is not in the Schopenhauerian stoical detachment or Kantian teleological gesture. It rather relies on an attempt to momentarily create one’s lived-place on the surface of the earth by unification with a female principle, i.e. by turning one’s attention from the surrounding space to the existence of relations one creates for oneself. The stabilising point of the

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<sup>286</sup> Lawrence, Complete Poems 170.

<sup>287</sup> Lawrence, Complete Poems 194.

narrator's individual identity thus shares qualities of place, home and as well as a woman's body: "sure on a heaven of peace/ between the mounds of her breasts." We can see the connection between a female body and a building in the line: "And the chaos that bounces and rattles like a shrapnel, at least/ Has for me a door into peace, warm dawn in the east/ where her bosom softens towards me".<sup>288</sup> This connection is only an extension of the female body as a dwelling place, set against the abstraction of the space of the world in which the narrator sees himself "isolated in the universe."

The idea of an isolated life, independent of the powers of the vital cosmos, represents the failure to see what has been termed as "the acceptance of, and submission to, the deepest knowledge of Being and of the human place in the scheme of being."<sup>289</sup> This idea stands for another variation of the spatial articulation of the (dis-)continuity and autonomy of human existence. Pointing out the fact that, "harbouring a child within her body, woman is herself a place"<sup>290</sup>, the theme of stability resonates even more poignantly in the final scene of Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, in which Paul, facing his mother's death and "having no place on the earth" experiences an acute feeling of "ontological insecurity":

The town, as he sat upon the car, stretched away over the bay of railway, a level fume of lights. Beyond the town the country, little smouldering spots for more towns--the sea--the night--on and on! And he had no place in it! Whatever spot he stood on, there he stood alone. From his breast, from his mouth, sprang the endless space, and it was there behind him, everywhere. The people hurrying along the streets offered no obstruction to the void in which he found himself. They were small shadows whose footsteps and voices could be heard, but in each of them the same night, the same silence. He got off the car. In the country all was dead still. Little stars shone high up; little stars spread far away in the floodwaters, a firmament below. Everywhere the vastness and terror of the immense night which is roused and stirred for a brief while by the day, but which returns, and will remain at last eternal, holding everything in its silence and its living gloom. There was no Time, only Space. Who could say his mother had lived and did not live? She had been in one place, and was in another; that was all. And his soul could not leave her, wherever she was. Now she was gone abroad into the night, and he was with her still. They were together. But yet there was his body, his chest, that leaned against the stile, his hands on the wooden bar. They seemed something. Where was he?--one tiny upright speck of flesh, less than an ear of wheat lost in the field. He could not bear it. On every side the immense dark silence

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<sup>288</sup> Lawrence, Complete Poems 194.

<sup>289</sup> Schneider, Intellectual Biography 82.

<sup>290</sup> Lutwack 82.

seemed pressing him, so tiny a spark, into extinction, and yet, almost nothing, he could not be extinct. Night, in which everything was lost, went reaching out, blond stars and sun. Stars and sun, a few bright grains, went spinning round for terror, and holding each other in embrace, there in a darkness that outpassed them all, and left them tiny and daunted. So much, and himself, infinitesimal, at the core a nothingness, and yet not nothing. ‘Mother! he whispered—‘mother!’ She was the only thing that held him up, himself, amid all this. And she was gone, intermingled herself. He wanted her to touch him, have him alongside with her. But no, he would not give in. Turning sharply, he walked towards the city’s gold phosphorescence. His fists were shut, his mouth set fast. He would not take that direction, to the darkness, to follow her. He walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly.<sup>291</sup>

As we have seen, the dynamic structure of the above quoted scenes from *The Trespasser* and *Sons and Lovers* rests on a play of substitutions in which Siegmund switches his attention from his human (Helena) and inhuman lover (the sea). This chain of substitutions opens a question, which is directly implied by the dual nature of Lawrence’s universe, regarding the relationship between appearance and reality, copy and Idea, simulacrum and epiphany. The question can be reformulated in the following way: are the structures and relations man creates “on the face of the earth” by re-enacting the Unity with the whole (hypomnestic place, union with a woman, subjective/ideal knowledge, but also language) mere simulacra? In other words, are they mere products of the subjective knowledge guarded by the Schopenhauerian “principle of sufficient reason”, which does not convey the true idea of things as they really are but instead “makes the thing an imaginary object [...] used to build castles in the air congenial to the egotism and individual humour”?<sup>292</sup> Or can these subjective worlds represent a “positive” product of human imagination in which an individual becomes in Shaftesbury’s words “just Prometheus, under Jove?”

The problem of human existence as based on an Ideal “second creation” and the sublime nature of the conflict of this “second creation” with the primal forces of Nature is based on “the self-awareness-of-itself”<sup>293</sup> of the human spirit. It is possible to say with Schopenhauer that the knowledge of an individual subject recycles important questions concerning human imagination and creativity, which are typical for romantic poetry. For example in Byron’s romantic drama *Manfred*, in which the spirits and genii

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<sup>291</sup> Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers* 473.

<sup>292</sup> Schopenhauer 242.

<sup>293</sup> Lawrence, *Phoenix* 766.

summoned by the main hero represent a mere “hypertrophy of his own Self”<sup>294</sup> and “phantasmata of his personality”<sup>295</sup>, the idealised structures of Lawrence’s heroes also embody the solipsistic conceit that conquers our vital self and disrupts our connection with the vital cosmos. The resulting horror of solipsistic existence is eloquently expressed in the following poem:

I SHALL never forget the maniacal horror of it all in the end  
when everything was me, I knew it all already, I anticipated it all in my soul  
because I was the author and the result  
I was the God and the creation at once;  
creator, I looked at my creation;  
created, I looked at myself, the creator:  
it was a maniacal horror in the end.

I was a lover, I kissed the woman I loved,  
and God of horror, I was kissing also myself.  
I was a father and a begetter of children,  
and oh, oh horror, I was begetting and conceiving in my own body.<sup>296</sup>

The “maniacal horror” which is expressed in these two stanzas of Lawrence’s “New Heaven and Earth” is a most instructive example of the hypertrophied solipsism of idealized existence of an individual who lives encapsulated in the world of the phenomenal structures of his own ego. This state of circular self-reflection that is taken for reality becomes the opposite extreme to the loss of one’s individuality which results from one’s return to the One. The problematic nature of this solipsism results from an existence that not only “disregards the polarity of strife”<sup>297</sup> but also disregards the “contest with the cosmic enemy” in which man “finds his further ramification.”<sup>298</sup> The vital nature of the struggle between man and the Cosmos becomes one of many metaphors for the acceptance of “the human place in the scheme of being.” As Lawrence amusingly illustrates:

Every time we turn on a tap water, every time we turn a handle to have fire or light, we deny ourselves and annul our being. The great elements, the earth, air, fire, water are there

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<sup>294</sup> Zdeněk Hrbata a Martin Procházka, *Romantismus a romantismy* (Praha: Nakladatelství Karolinum, 2005) 132. My translation.

<sup>295</sup> Hrbata and Procházka 45.

<sup>296</sup> Lawrence, *Complete Poems* 200.

<sup>297</sup> Grmelová 112.

<sup>298</sup> Lawrence, *Symbolic Meaning* 209.

like some great mistress whom we woo and struggle with, whom we heave and wrestle with. And all our appliances do but deny us these fine embraces, take the miracle of life away from us. The machine is the great neuter. It is the eunuch of eunuchs. In the end it emasculates us all. When we balance the sticks and kindle a fire, we partake of the mysteries. But when we turn on an electric tap there is as it were a wad between us and the dynamic universe.<sup>299</sup>

This lucid description makes an immensely important point: human life should be based on “polarized interchange”<sup>300</sup> between man and his complementary other – Nature, the dynamic universe or complementary female principles. Sublime and life-threatening visions paradoxically pluck man out of the solipsist conceit of his idealised, over-individualistic existence, which attempts at a stable, closed and unrelated existence that points towards itself. The inhibition of man’s solipsism re-establishes his link to the living cosmos and reinstalls man’s dynamic existence understood as a structure that points beyond itself, towards a state of strange yet vital reciprocity between man and nature. As Lawrence states: “everything vital, or natural, is unstable, thank God.”<sup>301</sup>

Returning once more to *Woman in Love*, we may observe that the anguish Gerald experiences after his vain attempt to save little Diana and the doctor is also connected with the idea of enormous space that drastically reduces the possibility of human relations with it.

‘If you once die,’ he [Gerald] said, ‘then when it’s over, it’s finished. Why come to life again? There’s room under that water there for thousands. ‘Two is enough,’ she said murmuring. He dragged on his second shoe. He was shivering violently, and his jaw shook as he spoke. ‘That’s true,’ he said, ‘maybe. But it’s curious how much room there seems, a whole universe under there; and as cold as hell, you’re as helpless as if your head was cut off.’ He could scarcely speak, he shook so violently.<sup>302</sup>

Gerald’s experience sums up all the ideas that have been associated with the concept of mass or matter: the vision of vast space, or “room” in this case, the suggestion of a vertical (downward) movement and a sense of a mystical, or concealed character of what lies beneath - of the “whole universe under there.” This vision expresses a specific attitude towards the environment: the fundamental feeling of not being-at-home, the un-homeliness, the *Unheimlichkeit* of the universe and realisation of its indifference

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<sup>299</sup> Lawrence, *Symbolic Meaning* 209.

<sup>300</sup> Lawrence, *Symbolic Meaning* 299.

<sup>301</sup> Lawrence, *Symbolic Meaning* 200.

<sup>302</sup> Lawrence, *Women* 211.

towards lives of individuals. Under the phenomenal surface dwells the “great mass of life that washes unidentified, and that we call death, creeps through the blue envelope of day, and through our white tissue, and we can’t stop it, once we’ve begun to leak.”<sup>303</sup>

In this cosmologico-psychological account, the death of humans can effectively be read as a death of places and vice versa. As Edward Casey demonstrates in his analysis of primeval patterns of creation myths (including the Biblical), a large number of these relies precisely on the act of the emergence of place amidst a limitless or endless space or void rather than emerging “ex nihilo.” In Casey’s words: “creation is a process of progressive implacement”<sup>304</sup>, i.e. a process of separation of a place from space which is a “radical no-place”.

Interestingly, one of the mythical patterns analysed by Casey in his book is that of Hopi - an Indian tribe, whose anthropological analysis is presented by Lawrence in the chapter “The Hopi Snake Dance” of his travel-book *Mornings in Mexico*<sup>305</sup>. The discussed creation myth of the Hopi people is significant to our discussion of images of matter and visions of void since it begins with the so called “Tokpela” - “endless space” or an “immeasurable void” which has precisely the same quality as these images. “For the Hopi,” Casey writes, “‘the first world,’ that is the first state of the world, is precisely that of Tokpela, ‘endless space.’ Tokpela is conceived as ‘immeasurable void’ that has no beginning or end, no time, shape or life. [...] ‘In the case of the Hopi legend, creation opens with a situation of endless space in which neither regions nor actions are possible.’”<sup>306</sup>

Casey’s description of the Hopi myth has fascinating resonance with Lawrence’s idea of dual structure of reality, as well as with the mythical thesis of the emergence of individual consciousness. It seems that the process of emergence of a place from space can be seen as a larger scale parallel of the mythical version of individual existence, which is in Schopenhauer’s philosophy primarily understood as existence of the subject qua “individual will” governed by the “principle of sufficient reason.” This analogy introduces a new and much deeper symbolism to all of Lawrence’s accounts of the “return” to the matter or space discussed above. Accordingly, individuals are “copying”

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<sup>303</sup> Lawrence, *Trespasser* 61.

<sup>304</sup> Casey 16.

<sup>305</sup> Lawrence, *Mexico* 71 - 90.

<sup>306</sup> Casey 16 - 17.

on a microcosmic scale the processes that take place on the cosmological level.. The creation or demise of an “individual human being” is seen here as a miniature-copy of the process of creation and destruction of his individual universe, i.e. his lived place.

Further, the elemental image of water mass allows Lawrence to create a stage on which the spheres of the conscious and unconscious coexist in purely spatial terms. An encounter with the water mass is analogical to a descent into the unconsciousness that makes one realize the deep structures of one’s psyche which exist repressed in the body-consciousness. In Ursula’s own words: “the terrible assertion of her body, the unutterable anguish of *dissolution*, the only anguish that is too much, the far-off, awful nausea of *dissolution set in within the body*.”<sup>307</sup>

The connection of unconscious states of mind with the water element is a relatively well established one.<sup>308</sup> Lawrence’s source of this elemental imagery and symbolism can be traced to his study of ancient Greek philosophy, especially to his ardent study of the pre-Socratics in John Burnet’s *Early Greek Philosophy* but also for example to Aristotle’s physics, which describes water as flowing downwards to its “natural place”.<sup>309</sup> Favouring “thoughts of the ancients” in which the “the science and religion were in accord,”<sup>310</sup> Lawrence systematically develops his dynamic fire/ water – consciousness/ unconsciousness dualism, which he in turn infuses into the spatial and psychological arrangement of his fiction.

As an extension of these ideas, Lawrence’s “spatialisation” of human psychology can be further traced in his description of the two main principles or wills that compete in an individual and see them as analogical to the forces that are present in the physical universe. In his crucial essay *The Reality of Peace* (1917), Lawrence formulates another interesting “physicalist” description of the compound nature of human psyche by comparing the balance of the drives constituting it to an “orbit.” Once again using predominantly spatial metaphors to describe human psyche, Lawrence states:

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<sup>307</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love* 209.

<sup>308</sup> Perhaps the finest example of the interconnectedness of the concepts of water, death and the unconscious is to be found in poetical works of Gaston Bachelard, esp. in his *L'eau et Les Reves*. Lawrence and the water poetics see for example D. J. Schneider, “D. H. Lawrence and the Early Greek Philosophers,” *The D. H. Lawrence Review*, Vol. 17, No.2 (Newark: University of Delaware, Summer 1984) 97 - 110; or Robert H. MacDonald, “The Union of Fire and Water,” *The D. H. Lawrence Review*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Newark: University of Delaware, Spring 1977) 34 -51.

<sup>309</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, IV 1, 208b9-10.

<sup>310</sup> D. J. Schneider, Lawrence and the Early Greek Philosophers 98.

I am drawn by *centripetal force* into communion with the whole, and [...] I flee in equivalent *centrifugal force* away into the splendour of beaming isolation, when these two balance and match each other in mid-space, that suddenly, like a miracle, I find the peace of my orbit. Then I travel neither back nor forth. I hover in the unending delight of a rapid, resultant orbit.<sup>311</sup>

Describing the two opposing desires or wills as (physical) “forces,” one centripetal – bringing objects to the centre of the Whole or Universe and other, centrifugal – turning away from it, opens yet another possibility of interpreting the movement on the vertical axis in the physical world of Lawrence’s fiction. Within this psychological model, instances of a downward movement, descent, fall, drowning, etc., by analogy symbolise a physical demonstration of an imbalance of the two main psychological drives that (perhaps unconsciously) struggle in the mind of an individual. Ursula’s phrase “*falling into death*, as a bitter fruit plunges in its ripeness *downwards*” becomes a perfect example of the “*centripetal force* into communion with the whole”, demonstrating the structural complexity of Lawrence’s “psychology in space”.

It is interesting to point out that when considering cosmological models, all downward vertical movements in fact should be understood as centripetal movements and all horizontal movements become movements on an orbit. The physical movement of individual characters associated with crossing the “horizontal” surface level of the orbit downwards, under the water surface, under the edge of a cliff, etc., becomes a mirror image of a “*centripetal force*”, i.e. of the desire for self destruction and longing for death understood as a return or as a submission to the Cosmic whole.

## 2.9 “Death” by Water

Returning chronologically before *Women in Love*, we may observe that Lawrence’s innovative novel, *The Rainbow* (1915), massively relies in its imagery on the Schopenhauerian notions of the Sublime and the Beautiful in respect to such spatial qualities as the vastness, limitlessness, darkness, scenes of dissolving and melting into water, stretching horizons, but first and foremost the discussed experience of the border and its transgression. Examining the specific interaction of “the human” and the material reality of Nottinghamshire landscape, Lawrence’s *The Rainbow* contains a number of important scenes that connect the phenomena of death, water and space with

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<sup>311</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 693.



an experience of transgression. One of the most significant scenes which confirm this connection is the flood scene in the tenth chapter of this novel.

The flood in the tenth chapter of *The Rainbow* is vital not only for the “material” fact of the flood water causing death of a character - Fred Brangwen. Of equal importance are the images and tropes Lawrence uses to convey this in many senses typical “drowning scene”. The flood takes place on a “watery night” during which the flood water, initially only “knee deep,” eventually evolves into a storm of symbolic allusions of a downward movement that delves under the surface and the “hoarse, brutal roar of a mass of water rushing downwards:”

He [Fred] went to meet the running flood, sinking deeper and deeper. His soul was full of great astonishment. He *had* to go and look where it came from, though the ground was going from under his feet. [...] The water was carrying his feet away, he was dizzy. He did not know which way to turn. The water was whirling, whirling, the whole black night was swooping in rings. He swayed uncertainly at the centre of all the attack, reeling in dismay. In his soul he knew he would fall. As he staggered something in the water struck his legs, and he fell. Instantly he was in the turmoil of suffocation. He fought in a black horror of suffocation, fighting, wrestling, but always borne down, borne inevitably down. Still he wrestled and fought to get himself free, in the unutterable struggle of suffocation, but he always fell again deeper. Something struck his head, a great wonder of anguish went over him, than the blackness covered him entirely.<sup>312</sup>

Re-reading a description like this, one has to wonder how deep the floodwater actually is, so that Fred can go “deeper” or “down” or to “fall” so many times in such a short period of time. Does the “ankle-deep” floodwater have no bottom? To counter such commonsense realism one has to realize that the extract does not only describe a scene of drowning and/ or an experience of a drowning person but that it also carries a heavy symbolic “cosmo-psychological” meanings in which the water transcends its mere materiality and becomes, as Fred’s son Tom has it: “the Unknown murdering his father.”

The elementary matter once again becomes a medium for a downward vertical movement, symbolic of a centripetal movement towards the centre of the universe, a movement that becomes analogous to the process unification with the whole of great Being, an act of a sublime pre-death vision. Typically, the act of drowning inevitably

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<sup>312</sup> Lawrence, *Rainbow* 245.

leads the victim deep down through space, under the surface of everyday places. The analyzed scene, though resting firmly on realistic foundations, quickly overgrows its realism as is clearly visible in Lawrence's use of metaphorical and allegorical representations of space.

Typically for Lawrence's description of changed states of mind such as the hallucinatory scene of the orderly's death in "The Prussian Officer" or the dance scene in "The White Stocking," the swirling and circular movement of liquid matter stretches to cover the whole space of the story. Eventually, the flood transmutes the already "watery night" that is "swooping in rings" into an abstracted "border to the space of death" of Ursula's vision. Poor Fred knows "in his soul that he would fall" and the inevitability of his "fall," now when earth, water and air joining forces against him, is further stressed by his seemingly illogical compulsion to look for the source of the now fully animated water. All of these moments reinforce the interrelatedness of physical and psychical planes of existences and extend the general principles of human psychology to something that is externalised and extended. In this way the principles at work in the human psyche find themselves coexistent in continual union with the principles of material universe.

To illustrate such transcendence, Lawrence relies almost exclusively on visions and images of space rather than time, and positions his characters on the threshold of the great abstracted and homogeneous space of death, "fecund darkness" and "homogeneous rare living plasm" from which, according to Lawrence's mythological account of human existence, an individual is born and into which he returns.

Another important drowning scene is to be found in Lawrence's story called "The Horse-dealer's Daughter." The main difference between the two scenes is that the "victim" in "The Horse-dealer's Daughter" manages to make her return from the borderline region, saved by a courageous local doctor. Characteristically, "The Horse-dealer's Daughter" is a story which combines a relatively straightforward plot with increasing complexity of an intricate spatial structure. The main figure, a young girl named Mabel, whose mother has died years ago, lives with her brothers and father. After the economic failure of their trading business all members of the family are forced leave the household to look for a new life. Mabel's response to this situation is a truly Lawrentian one - an attempt at a re-union with her dead mother which she performs by

wading into a nearby pond. After visiting her mother's grave<sup>313</sup> (an original Foucauldian heterotopia) Mabel sets out on her journey to her dead mother by passing through a gate of the water-filled space.

She [Mabel] moved, direct and intent, like something transmitted rather than stirring in voluntary activity, straight down the field toward the pond. There she stood on a bank for a moment. She never raised her head. Then she waded slowly into the water. He [the doctor] stood motionless as the small black figure walked slowly and deliberately into the motionless water, and still moving forward towards the centre of the pond, where slowly, gradually moving deeper into the motionless water, and still moving forward as the water got up to her breast. Then he could see her no more in the dusk of the dead afternoon."<sup>314</sup>

Mabel's descent to the pond seems to be guided by some incomprehensible "force" and resembles some sort of ritual, an unconscious involuntary action, a watery hecatomb to the greater image of her mother who dwells in the earth and who can be reached through the gateway of the pond. The man-made reservoir which gathers all the floating and living waters from its surroundings becomes to Mabel a materialized bidding to join her mother, merge in the great One and dissolve, swallowed by elements. Despite the shared water-melancholy, Lawrence's pond is not a happy day-dreaming pond of Woolf's "The Fascination of the Pool". Instead, functioning as a place of rebirth, it comes close to the Hardy-like pond of "A Simple Melody", only grimmer and less playfully naive.

Dr. Fergusson, who ventures to the pond in order to save Mabel from drowning, is overwhelmed by the dead-like nature of the pond water and experiences a mortal fear of it.

"He [Dr. Fergusson] stood on the bank, breathing heavily. He could see nothing. His eyes seemed to penetrate the dead water. Yes, perhaps that was the dark shadow of her black clothing beneath the surface of the water. He slowly ventured into the pond. The bottom was deep, soft clay; he sank in, and the water clasped dead cold round his legs. As he

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<sup>313</sup> Mabel's fate is foreshadowed in a scene depicting her visit to her mother's grave: "Carefully she clipped the grass from the grave, and arranged the pinky-white snow chrysanthemums in the tin cross. When this was done, she took an empty jar from a neighbouring grave, brought water, and carefully, most scrupulously sponged the marble headstone and the coping-stone. It gave her sincere satisfaction to do this. She felt immediate contact with the world of her mother. She took minute pains, went through the work in a state of bordering pure happiness, as if in performing this task she came into a subtle, intimate connection with her mother. For the life she followed here in the world was far less real than the world of death she inherited from her mother" (D. H. Lawrence, *Selected Stories* 188).

<sup>314</sup> Lawrence, *Selected Stories* 190.

stirred he could smell the cold, rotten clay that fouled up into the water. It was objectionable to his lungs. Still, repelled and yet not heeding, he moved deeper into the pond. The cold water rose over his thighs, over his loins, upon his abdomen. The lower part of his body was all sunk in the hideous cold element. And the bottom was so deeply soft and uncertain, he was afraid of pitching with his mouth underneath. He could not swim and was afraid.<sup>315</sup>

As the doctor enters the now fully animated pond it becomes clear to him how hostile and unnatural the place is. The soft clay and mud at the bottom give an impression that the pond holds him by his feet as if it were a living organism, manifesting some uncanny will of its own. Typically for Lawrence, doctor's perception is composed more than one sense: the water is cold as well as smelly, opaque, suffocating:

He crouched a little, spreading his hands under the water and moving them round, trying to feel for her [Mabel]. The dead cold water swayed upon his chest. He moved again, a little deeper, and again, with his hands underneath, he felt all around under the water. And he touched her clothing. But it evaded his fingers. He made a desperate attempt to grasp it. [...] And in doing so, he lost his balance and went under, horribly, suffocating in the foul, earthy water, struggling madly for a few moments. At last, after what seemed an eternity, he got his footing, rose again into the air and looked around. *He gasped, and knew he was in the world.* Then he looked at the water. She had risen near him. He grasped her clothing, and, drawing her nearer, turned to take his way to land again.<sup>316</sup>

The water represents a hostile and troubling environment, a non-world at the verge of self-destruction and dissolution. With Mabel's clothes slipping deeper under the surface, the situation turns into a struggle not only for one but for two lives. Eventually, as the doctor finds his footing, Mabel's body appears as if spontaneously or miraculously (the story was originally called "The Miracle") on the water surface. From the very beginning, the animated water-space follows the logic of the borderline regions in all important aspects – it is the middle or meeting ground between two opposing regions and/ or principles: life and death, consciousness and unconsciousness, surface and depth, above and below, the will to live and the will to die.

It is very interesting to compare this particular pond scene, and by extension Lawrence's water scenes in general, to the treatment of a similar trope in Woolf's stories such as "A Simple Melody" or "The Fascination of the Pool." Both of these stories, which we have

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<sup>315</sup> Lawrence, Selected Stories 191.

<sup>316</sup> Lawrence, Selected Stories 191.

analysed in detail in the previous chapter, rely on water and ponds and reverie-like contemplations of changed states of mind. Especially in the former story, Woolf paints a picture of a very Lawrence/ Hardy-like heath pond. Both Woolf's stories oppose the water-space to "human" systems of knowledge and action, such as language, a horse selling business, a high-society party. Both stories rely on what might be called transcendence or, more poetically, dissolution of "human" subject(ivity) into material inhumanity of the surrounding space, place or cosmos.

Consequently, both authors engage in a play of substitution of that which is solid that which is fluid or, in other words, that which is continuous and that which is separated. "Away from the surface of hard and separate facts,"<sup>317</sup> subjects get split, thought is mixed with air, memories subsist in water and are sliced by blades of a reed. But most importantly, both Woolf's and Lawrence's texts push towards peculiar instances of "inhuman moments" in which the perceiving subjects, being empty of their identities collapse into their outside and, being more than fascinated by the object they perceive, identify themselves with it.

It is very interesting to observe metaphors and images which Lawrence uses to represent these scenes of changed states of mind. The discussed images of seas and water in general, the sense of limitless space but also the images of darkness and "fecund night" are all symptomatic of some extreme psychological imbalance. There is, however, one more trope which Lawrence uses to develop psychologically tense situations - the experience of dance.

## **2.10 The Space of Dance**

So far we have analysed the ways how spatial imagery of transgression mimics extreme states of human consciousness in which individual characters headed towards their inhuman or material fate and examined mechanisms these characters used to avoid this. The discussion so far focused on the aesthetic/philosophical concept of the Sublime, on Lawrence's spatial imagery and on the psychological symbolism of water, space and homogeneous matter. In the following section we will turn our attention to a trope that is often interpreted as an important motif to Lawrence but also to modernism in general and discuss the phenomenon of dance. The aim of this discussion will be to examine this

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<sup>317</sup> Woolf, *House* 42.

phenomenon in its specific Lawrentian meaning, as a unique spatial metaphor, or an essentially dynamic “articulation of space”<sup>318</sup> in which the human subject reaches a limit situation that temporarily compromises his stability and allows him to experience different ontological states. The “sublime” quality of dance, understood as a means of “transgression” of psychological and spatial unity of one’s existence, will be complemented by an analysis of dance as a quasi-Bergsonian “unique form of continuity in space,” that is, as a valid contribution to the central problem of our discussion – the problem of shapes, relations and free play of substitution between the solid and the fluid.<sup>319</sup>

Lawrence’s life-long interest in dance is a generally acknowledged fact.<sup>320</sup> Dance is one of Lawrence’s favourite ways of representing limit states of mind and of a weakened ontological position of the human subject. As a result of this, dance scenes which carry metaphysical resonances are almost as frequent as scenes describing physical dissolution in large volumes of matter and occur in an overwhelming majority of Lawrence’s texts. From the proverbial dancing skills of Walter Morel in *Sons and Lovers* (1913) to the well known “The White Stocking” (1914), numerous dance scenes in major novels such as *The Rainbow* (1915) or *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1928), the “Dance” chapter in *Twilight in Italy* (1916), to the later “anthropological” dances in *Mornings in Mexico* (1927), dancing Etruscans on the tomb paintings in *Sketches of Etruscan Places* (1927) to Lawrence’s own paintings such as “Fire Dance” or “Dance-sketch” - dance represents to Lawrence a perfect spatial, cosmological and physical model of human psychology.

Let us start our discussion with a dance scene that unites all the above discussed moments: spatial imagery, water imagery, sublime setting and a loss of ontological integrity of the dancers. Such scene is to be found in the eleventh chapter of Lawrence’s *The Rainbow* (1915). Let us also note that this scene takes place in the second half of the novel, after the drowning of Paul Brangwen which has already been analyzed. It is interesting to observe how the dance scene reintroduces and elaborates the theme as well as the elemental and spatial imagery of the latter flood scene. The dance itself is

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<sup>318</sup> László Moholy-Nagy, *Od materiálu k architektuře*, trans. Anita Pelánová (Praha: Triáda, 2002) 194.

<sup>319</sup> In our discussion we will primarily focus on instances of pair dance.

<sup>320</sup> For Lawrence on dance see: Mark Kinkard-Weeks, “Lawrence and Dance.” *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Spring 1992). 14. Oct. 2010. < <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1290699> >.

part of an after-wedding party and takes place in a field among haystacks. As befitting an exemplary ritual-like event, the party takes place on a “mysterious night,” surrounded by sacred “darkness [that] was passionate and breathing with immense, unperceived heaving.”

The music began, and the bonds began to slip. Tom Brangwen was dancing with the bride, quick and fluid and as if in another element, inaccessible as the creatures that move in the water. [...] The music came in waves. One couple after another was washed and absorbed into the deep underwater of the dance. [...] At the touch of her hand on his arm, his consciousness melted away from him. He took her into his arms, as if into the sure, subtle power of his will, and they became one movement, one dual movement, it would continue for ever. It was his will and her will locked in the trance of the motion. Two wills locked in one motion, yet, never fusing, never yielding to one another.<sup>321</sup>

In its emphasis on the physical properties of the dance, i.e. on describing it as a “unified movement” with both of the dancers being “locked in the trance of motion,” the scene reminds us of a similar the “unification in movement”<sup>322</sup> in another typical Lawrentian dance scene in “The White Stocking”. In addition to this, and crucially for our recent discussion, the dance as well as the music that accompanies it, establish a direct link with the water-based imagery of the above quoted scenes of drowning, longing for union and dissolution into the greater impersonal wholes. The passage that follows confirms the connection between the dance-movement and dissolution in the Lawrentian water-space.

They were both absorbed in a profound silence, into a deep, fluid energy that gave them unlimited strength. All the dancers were weaving intertwined in the flux of music. Shadowy couples passed and passed before the fire, the dancing feet danced silently into the darkness. It was a vision of the depths of the underworld, under the great flood. There was a wonderful rocking of the darkness, slowly, a great, slow swinging of the whole night, with the music playing lightly on the surface., making the strange, ecstatic, ripping on the surface of the dance, but underneath *only one great flood heaving slowly backwards to the edge of the oblivion*, slowly forward to the other verge, the heart sweeping along each time, and tightening with anguish as the limit was reached, and the movement, at crises, turned and swept back.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> Lawrence, Rainbow 315.

<sup>322</sup> Lawrence, Collected Stories 333.

<sup>323</sup> Lawrence, Rainbow 316.

This darkening scene fully establishes a connection between limit states of mind and images of a great undifferentiated mass through the use of “water-like imagery.” It is interesting to observe how the relatively innocent scene of a common dancing party gradually darkens and eventually changes into a vision of our world as unknowingly acting as a manifestation, or as an extension of some other Universal Will that hides under the phenomenal surface and is linked to our unconsciousness. In this respect, it is crucial to notice the role of the “wonderful rocking of darkness” which symbolically corresponds to the darkening of the individuality of the dancers. This sublime transcendence of one’s individuality can be understood as a re-enactment of the process of creation of a greater, timeless whole, by re-enacting a man-woman whole of the proverbial Platonic egg. It is also, and perhaps more importantly, a mythological re-enactment of the act of creation and destruction, a little death, a return to the darkness that erases differences between the pre- and un-conscious.

Dance, or any other mystical unifying encounter of man and woman (or the male and female principle), is thus a re-enactment of “unification with greater whole” which is structurally modelled on Schopenhauer’s transcendental Sublime/ Beautiful aesthetics with all its consequences: loss of individuality, ontological instability, visions of “Ideal knowledge”. The similarity between dance and an “unsuccessful” or “unaccomplished” death (by water, for example), enables us to see dance as a form of a “re-birth” - such as in “The Horse-dealer’s Daughter,” in numerous instances of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, in stories such as “The Sun,” or in the following scene of *The Rainbow* in which Brangwen woes his wife.

He turned and looked for a chair, and keeping her still in his arms, sat down with her close to him, to his breast. Then, for a few seconds, he went utterly to sleep, asleep and sealed in the darkest sleep, utter, extreme oblivion. From which he came to gradually, always holding her warm and close upon him, and she was utterly silent as he, involved in the same oblivion, the fecund darkness. He returned gradually, but newly created, as after a gestation, a new birth, in the womb of darkness. Aerial and light everything was, new as morning, fresh and newly-begun. Like a dawn the newness and the bliss filled in. And she sat utterly still with him, as if in the same.<sup>324</sup>

Re-experiencing birth, the lovers as well as the dancers temporarily re-enact a whole, which stimulates in Tom a feeling of “strange, inviolable completeness of the two of

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<sup>324</sup> Lawrence, *Rainbow* 44 - 45.



them [w]hich made him [Tom] feel as sure and stable as God.”<sup>325</sup> All encounters between the male and female principles are in this respect very similar Lawrence’s work. Nevertheless, it is important to ask if this mock re-enactment of the greater cosmological Union should be understood merely as a vain attempt to create an external stabilising point that would help individuals to overcome their “ontological insecurity” and “feel at home on the face of the earth”<sup>326</sup> or whether it should be understood as an implicit instance of an existential struggle and thus attains a Sublime character. In this respect, the phenomenon of dance combines “epiphanic” moments of transcendence of one’s individuality with life-threatening moments of ontological instability and death.

Returning to the analysis of individual dance scenes we may summarize that these scenes feature a number of recurring motives: water imagery and symbolism which alludes to the unconsciousness motif of return, images of dissolution, “geometrical” or physical accounts of dance as an allegory of a male-female relationship, and finally, images of dance as a “cosmological” symbol of a state of psychological balance or “orbit”, as described for example in “Reality of Peace” (1917). All of these moments can be seen as pointing to the general instability and dynamic character of human existence.

This being said, dance is first of all a phenomenon that unites and balances two originally separate things – the dancers and their bodies. The unification or dissolution of this “duality” takes place on a number of analogical levels. First, dance is the unification of a man and a woman, or a “male or female” principle, who represent the “axle and the wheel of the unified motion”<sup>327</sup>. Second, on the level of psychological drives that work within individual minds, dance represents dynamic balance between the main psychological drives: “the desire of creation and the desire to dissolution”<sup>328</sup> and their respective “force vectors” - the centrifugal and centripetal motion. Finally, on the most abstract level, dance represents a mixture of consciousness and unconsciousness or human and inhuman constituents of the human psyche and forms a substantial unity of the dancer and the dance as we know it from Yeats’ “Among School Children” or Lawrence’s “The White Stocking:”

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<sup>325</sup> Lawrence, *Rainbow* 45.

<sup>326</sup> Lawrence, *Phoenix* 398.

<sup>327</sup> Lawrence, *Phoenix* 442.

<sup>328</sup> Lawrence, *Phoenix* 678.

The room was all vague around her, like an atmosphere, like under sea, with a flow of ghostly, dumb movements. But she herself was held real against her partner, and it seemed she was connected with him, as if the movements of his body and limbs were her own movements, yet not her own movements – and oh, delicious!<sup>329</sup>

Dance, representing an “inhuman medium,” thus enables a sort of transport, not only from our conventional and social selves, in this respect Lawrence’s accounts of dance differ from classical representations of dance as a medium of a socially acceptable “sexual” encounter, but also from our self-objectifying solipsism. A very interesting and often neglected instance of such “transport” can be found in Lawrence’s *Twilight in Italy*:

[T]here was the surpassing lift and swing of the women, when the woman’s body seemed like a boat lifted over the powerful, exquisite wave of the man’s body, perfect, for a moment, and then once more the slow, intense, nearer movement of the dance began, always nearer, nearer, always to a more perfect climax. And the women waited as if in transport for the climax, when they would be flung into a movement surpassing all movement. They were flung, borne away, lifted like a boat on a supreme wave, into the zenith and nave of the heavens, consummate. Then suddenly the dance crashed to an end, and the dancers *stood stranded, lost, bewildered, on a strange shore*. The air was full of red dust, half-lit by the lamp on the wall; the players in the corner were putting down their instruments to take up their glasses. And the dancers sat round the wall, crowding in the little room, faint with the transport of repeated ecstasy. There was a subtle smile on the face of the men, subtle, knowing, so finely sensual that the conscious eyes could scarcely look at it. And the women were dazed, like creatures dazzled by too much light. The light was still on their faces, like a blindness, a reeling, like a transfiguration.<sup>330</sup>

Once more relying on aquatic or perhaps even nautical imagery, this particular dance scene perfectly conveys the idea of dance as a liminal state of mind that may temporarily “transport” human subjectivities beyond the limits of their conscious selves to the “strange shore” of the unconscious. Lawrence’s dance has the power to make an individual experience a re-enacted birth and death. Adhering to classical gender distinctions, it is usually women who are more affected by or more sensitive to the intoxicating influence of dance and who are better disposed to receive the “dark knowledge.”

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<sup>329</sup> Lawrence, *Collected Stories* 333.

<sup>330</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Twilight in Italy* (London: Heinemann Ltd, 1956) 97 - 98.

Dance was also important to Italian Futurists, whose impact on Lawrence's work was significant (especially since 1914). Futurists paid a lot of attention to dance, understood as a means of "transcendence of life" and "multiplication of human body"<sup>331</sup>, and see dance as a vital contribution to the "re-fashioning" human psychology and physiology into a completely new "Sensibilità" and "elaboration of a New Man, one who would be fully adapted to a new world transformed by science and technology."<sup>332</sup> So for example F. T. Marinetti in his "Manifesto of Futurist Dance" praises the visionary "utilization of electric lights and mechanical movements"<sup>333</sup> in famous dances performance of Loie Fuller. Fuller's so-called *Serpentine Dance* represented for Marinetti an entirely new, modern and technological perception of the human and the human body in a performance which visualises new possibilities of "incorporation of the mechanical devices of modernity that turned human into modern beings"<sup>334</sup>. As Patrizian Veroli argues in the study on Futurist dance *Loie Fuller's Serpentine Dance and Futurism*:

The identification of the human being with the motor implied, for Marinetti, the possibility of a prosthetic body, with the increased potential of new external organs. As a grand visionary, he imagined the realization of a perfect synchronisation between human beings and machines, in which the later would become additional organs whose extraneousness would be annulled by human will power. Marinetti's vision of prosthetic body originated from Darwin, Lamarck and Carrel's theories, which seemed to guarantee that animal and human bodies would progressively adapt to the transformation of their living environment.<sup>335</sup>

Setting aside the blatantly phantasmagorical nature which some of Marinetti's ideas share with the equally unusual ideas of various "post-modern post-humanisms,"<sup>336</sup> the Futurist conception of dance shares a surprisingly large number of important characteristics with Lawrence's project. These ideas can be subsumed under the

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<sup>331</sup> F. T. Marinetti, "Manifesto of Futurist Dance," *Futurism, An Anthology*, ed. L. Rainey, C. Poggi and L. Wittman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press) 236 - 7.

<sup>332</sup> Serge Milan, "The Futurist Sensibility: An Anti-philosophy for the Age of Technology," *Futurism and the Technological Imagination*, ed. Günter Berghaus (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009) 63.

<sup>333</sup> Marinetti, *Dance* 236.

<sup>334</sup> Patrizia Veroli, "Loie Fuller's Serpentine Dance and Futurism: Electricity, Technological Imagination and the Myth of the Machine," *Futurism and the Technological Imagination* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009) 138.

<sup>335</sup> Veroli 139.

<sup>336</sup> A typical example of a postmodern "Futurism" is the work of an Australian techno-performer Stelarc, a more academic treatment of the subject can be found in authors like Bernard Stiegler, D. J. Harraway or to Lawrence's scholarship most relevantly Jeff Wallace, *D. H. Lawrence, Science and the Posthuman* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

revolutionary idea of “connectivity” and “cohesion” of the human body and as an extension of this, of human subjectivity. First, both Lawrence and Marinetti are interested in the relationship of man subject and his environment. Second, Lawrence’s and Marinetti’s philosophies dwell on the importance of a vital and dynamic relationship between man and his surroundings and stress the open nature of this structure. Third, as a consequence of this, both Lawrence and the Futurists eventually face a Bergsonian situation which results into the impossibility to determine the clear outline of the human body and individual subjectivity because both of these freely mingle and penetrate into the environment and are (at least to a certain degree) constituted by that which is their own outside.

The affinity between Lawrence and Marinetti’s or even Boccioni’s “connective” Futurism becomes more visible if we bracket out what Lawrence calls “stupid”<sup>337</sup> adoration of the machine. The connection between these thinkers in fact works on a deeper level of what has recently been referred to as “non-instrumental idea” of technology, i.e. on a level of material structures and their influences on “human” psyche. Interestingly enough, it is again Umberto Boccioni and his notion of “primordial psychology of objects”<sup>338</sup>, rather than Marinetti and his naive “automobilism” that so closely resembles Lawrence’s famous concept of “physiology of matter.” It is curious to note that though this well known formula resulted from Lawrence’s mis-reading of a mis-print in the first edition of Marinetti’s “Manifesto tecnico” that read “fisicologia intuitiva della materia” and was only later replaced by “psicologia,” the term actually makes sense in both translations. This poignant paradox testifies to the variability and transferability of categories of human and material origin. As the editors of Lawrence’s letter fittingly point out: “Despite the apparently paradoxical notion, it would have been quite appropriate for a Futurist writer to speak of an ‘intuitive physiology of matter’, an idea which obviously appealed to DHL.”<sup>339</sup> More than just pointing out that one of the most often quoted formulas of Lawrence’s philosophy was inspired by a typo, this anecdote illustrates the inherent resemblance of the two terms within Lawrence’s system, but also Futurist theory. As Lawrence himself points out in one of his letters:

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<sup>337</sup> Lawrence, Letters II 183.

<sup>338</sup> Umberto Boccioni, “Absolute Motion + Relative Motion = Dynamism,” *Futurism, An Anthology*, ed. L. Rainey, C. Poggi and L. Wittman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press) 187.

<sup>339</sup> Lawrence, Letters II 182.

[W]hen I read Marinetti, - 'the profound intuitions of life added one to the other, word by word, according to their illogical conception, will give us the general lines of an intuitive physiology of matter' I see something of what I am after. I translate him clumsily, and his Italian is obfuscated – and I don't care about physiology of matter – but somehow – that which is physic – non-human in humanity, is more interesting to me than the old-fashioned human element – which causes one to conceive a character in a certain moral scheme and make him consistent.<sup>340</sup>

What Lawrence suggests in this oft quoted letter to Edward Garnett, is an idea of inhumanity which can be connected to the “physiology of matter” to be found in the solidity of wood or iron. The affinity (or even identity) between these non-human aspects of human psychology, “material physiology” and “material psychology” has fascinating implications in other Futurist texts. For example in an essay called “Absolute Motion + Relative Motion = Dynamism”, written some three months before Lawrence wrote his famous letters to Edward Garnett, Boccioni defines his “primordial psychology” of objects as “the plastic potential that resides in an object [which] is its force” and claims that as such it enables us:

to create in our paintings new subjects which do not aim at narrative or episodic representations; instead, it coordinates the plastic values of reality, a coordination which is purely architectural and remains free of all literary and sentimental influences.<sup>341</sup>

Boccioni's commentary not only rejects the traditional “human” categories such as plot and character in fiction (or plastic and visual arts in this case) but, more importantly, opens the possibility of new, dynamic relations between objects, environments, human bodies and human psyches. The dynamism, in which “two objects, of different shapes, can influence each other and be characterized by the diverse potential of their absolute motions”<sup>342</sup>, openly challenges the closed nature of traditional “physical” relations and introduces an idea of reality as a radically open system. This “primordial psychology” manifests itself on the level of material objects by disruption of their optical surface, prolongation of their “physical influence” *outside* of the body of the object, and by compromising their “common-sense” solidity. Describing his method as “lyrical conception of forms”, Boccioni, writes in his typical physico-psychological lexicon, of a new “dynamic form.”

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<sup>340</sup> Lawrence, Letters II 183.

<sup>341</sup> Boccioni, Dynamism 187.

<sup>342</sup> Boccioni, Dynamism 187.

Dynamic form, which by its essence is mutable and evolving, is a sort of *invisible halo* between the object and action, between relative motion and absolute motion, between the object and environment from which it is *inseparable*. It is a species of analogical synthesis that resides at the border between the real object and its ideal plastic potential, graspable only with strokes of intuition.<sup>343</sup>

Inscribing to objects the same invisible and “luminous halo [of] a semi transparent envelope”<sup>344</sup> as Virginia Woolf ascribes to life and consciousness, Boccioni ends up with the same notion of the essential “un-circumscribed-ness” of objects. The corrosion of form and penetration of clear cut divisions between objects is not enough. A few paragraphs later, Boccioni takes these notions yet one step further:

Some time ago an anonymous correspondent from Rome wrote me a letter full of insolent nonsense, asking me whether I had ever understood that art, creation, is a symbol of freedom from death, and that this aspiration toward the infinite is suggested to us by the masterpieces of the past with their mysterious silence and stillness. [...] Responding to that gentleman, I would say that if he has the patience to study and observe, he’ll see that that inspiration to nothingness is rendered in dynamic masterpieces by dynamic disintegration, by the violent desire to get out of ourselves in order to lose ourselves in space. Ours is an expansion into infinite speed, not a static concentration of the I.<sup>345</sup>

As we can observe from the supposedly insolent nature of the objections of this anonymous correspondent, Futurist (and by extension also Lawrence’s) aesthetics is a part of a much broader, pan-European struggle between (neo)classicist and progressive avant-gardes. The Futurist vision of an end to the classical “self-contained statue”<sup>346</sup> and the end of self-contained art in general, introduces a crucial point of our discussion - the end of a self-contained body and *end of the self-contained subjectivity* which can no longer be based on notions such as individuality or personality but rather on an analogy to the structures of “matter, whose essence must be seized by strokes of intuition”.<sup>347</sup> Representing an exact copy of Lawrence’s dance scenes in which a woman typically becomes “all soft and pliant to [a man], flowing to his form, whilst he united her with

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<sup>343</sup> Futurism, An Anthology 191. My italics.

<sup>344</sup> Woolf, Selected Essays 9. My italics.

<sup>345</sup> Boccioni, Dynamism 193.

<sup>346</sup> Umberto Boccioni, “Futurist Sculpture,” *Futurism, An Anthology*, ed. L. Rainey, C. Poggi and L. Wittman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press) 117.

<sup>347</sup> F. T. Marinetti, “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature,” *Futurism, An Anthology*, ed. L. Rainey, C. Poggi and L. Wittman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press) 122.

him and they lapsed along in one movement,”<sup>348</sup> Futurist aesthetics captures the same inhibition of the “traditional characteristics of distinctness, stillness, and silence” of separate, “clare et distincte” bodies and souls.

As was already suggested, the nature of these problems is essentially Bergsonian. Both Marinetti and Boccioni were immensely interested in Bergson’s ideas on the arbitrary nature of “division[s] of object’s motion and equally [...] arbitrary subdivision of matter”<sup>349</sup> and frequently used the cardinal feature of Bergson’s method - the “intuition” - to explain their artistic goals. Intuition, understood as a philosophical method of “exactness”<sup>350</sup> is defined by Bergson as a method opposed to the common-sense method of “analysis” as:

the kind of *intellectual sympathy* by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible. Analysis, on the contrary, is the operation which reduces the object to elements already known, that is, to elements common both to it and other objects. To analyze, therefore, is to express a thing as a function of something other than itself.<sup>351</sup>

Intuition, as adopted by Boccioni or Marinetti, is a tool which enables them to articulate a new method that could be contrasted with traditional and conventional “methods of knowing”. Furthermore, it is a method which enables the perceiver to comprehend the dynamic, i.e. relational, fluid nature of objects, which were artificially “distinguished and separated” only to be “reunited by the artificial bond of the ego”.<sup>352</sup> As Bergson poetically summarizes:

Now it is easy to see that the ordinary function of positive science is analysis. Positive science works, then, above all, with symbols. Even the most concrete of the natural sciences, those concerned with life, confine themselves to the visible form of living beings, their organs and anatomical elements. They make comparisons between these forms, they reduce the more complex to the more simple; in short, they study the workings of life in what is, so to speak, only its visual symbol. If there exists any means of possessing a reality absolutely instead of knowing it relatively, of placing oneself within it instead of looking at it from outside points of view, of having the intuition instead of making the analysis: in

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<sup>348</sup> Lawrence, *Collected Stories* 331.

<sup>349</sup> Umberto Boccioni, “The Plastic Foundations of Futurist Sculpture and Painting,” *Futurism, An Anthology*, ed. L. Rainey, C. Poggi and L. Wittman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press)141.

<sup>350</sup> Fulka 15; Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Josef Fulka (Praha: Garamond, 1996) 1.

<sup>351</sup> Bergson, *Introduction to Metaphysics* 7.

<sup>352</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution* 3.

short, of seizing it without any expression, translation, or symbolic representation - metaphysics is that means. *Metaphysics, then, is the science which claims to dispense with symbols.*<sup>353</sup>

The poetic language of Bergson's philosophy is here, as everywhere else, full of essentially spatial vocabulary. Crucially for our discussion, the problems articulated in this example are identical with the problems discussed in our thesis: the real shape of things, the problem of solidify and fluidity, distinct and clearly defined elements vs. blurred edges, soft flow against distinct juxtaposition.

## **2.11 Etruscan Dancers, Kodak Vision and Juxtaposed Surfaces**

The following sections will demonstrate how the above discussed ideas go hand in hand with Lawrence's essentially romantic ideas of human existence "spoiled" be the conscious knowledge and "alienation from the living cosmos" produced by modern society but also by pre-established or socially-conditioned ways of "perception," i.e. especially by language but also an over-use of what Lawrence calls a mentalized "Kodak" vision or sight. These moments are embodied into Lawrence's earlier as well as later accounts of dance and dance paintings in his travel books. Despite their in certain respect profound difference from the dance-scenes quoted above which were created approximately ten years earlier,<sup>354</sup> Lawrence's interpretation of dance scenes on Etruscan tomb-paintings in the late 1920's can be traced back to an analogical, if not identical metaphysics, this time, however, enriched by new elements of visual and formal aesthetics.

The Etruscan essays, written during Lawrence's and Frieda's stay in Tuscany between the years 1925 and 1928 and later incorporated into a single collection of texts on Etruscan art and culture under the title *Sketches of Etruscan Places*, offer something that might be called the final version of Lawrence's metaphysics of dance. The essays collected in this book represent, together with Lawrence's essays written during his first stay in Italy and the influence of Italian Futurism, the most substantial contribution of Italian culture to Lawrence's philosophy.<sup>355</sup> The analysis of dance scenes in the

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<sup>353</sup> Bergson, Introduction to *Metaphysics* 8.

<sup>354</sup> One of the differences is for example by the lack of attention to "physicalist" language of Lawrence's earlier essays.

<sup>355</sup> Lawrence's first stay in Italy dates back to years 1912 to 1914. In these years Lawrence resided with his future wife, Frieda Weekley in the vicinity of the Lago di Garda (now a venue of Lawrentian



*Sketches* brings together a number of familiar features of Lawrence's metaphysics. As we hope to demonstrate, all of these moments are connected with alternative ways of cognition and knowledge acquisition and point towards the possibility of pre-civilised versions of in- or pre-human sensitivities and states of mind.

Going "further than common-place life"<sup>356</sup>, the dancers on the painted walls of Etruscan tombs did not represent to Lawrence the mental consciousness of civilised man but stood for:

[t]he natural flowering of life! Behind all Etruscan liveliness was a religion of life, which the chief men were seriously responsible for. Behind all the dancing was a vision, and even a science of life, a conception of the universe and man's place in the universe which made men live to the depth of their capacity. To the Etruscan, all was alive: the whole universe lived: and the business of man was himself to live amid it all. He had to draw life into himself, out of the wandering huge vitalities of the world. The cosmos was alive, like a vast creature.<sup>357</sup>

Analogically to the already discussed dance scenes, the "dancing spirit of Etruscan dancers"<sup>358</sup> provides an access to a region without self-consciousness and self-reflection where "knowledge means experience".<sup>359</sup> "Reflecting the complex destiny of all things",<sup>360</sup> dance ushers the way to a romantic world of pre-enlightenment pantheistic cosmology of the hierarchically structured, sympathetic cosmos that nurtures but at the same time becomes the realm of death understood as a transcendence of the life-constructing dualities and return to the primordial Unity - "into death, over the border between the elements."<sup>361</sup> Lawrence's nostalgia for "man's place in the universe, which made men live to the depth of their capacity," favours the mystical idea of the pre-Cartesian and pre-Newtonian cosmos, which was destroyed by the "scientific

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conferences) but also on his travels in North Italy. As a result of these travels Lawrence published a collection of travel/philosophy articles entitled *Twilight in Italy* which, in a chapter "Lemon Gardens," contains one of the earliest accounts of Lawrence's body vs. mind duality. Another fruitful encounter with Italy took place in 1921 when Lawrence and Frieda travelled Sardinia, Sicily and South Italy and as a result of this wrote his *Sea and Sardinia*.

<sup>356</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Sketches of Etruscan Places and Other Italian Essays* (London: Penguin Books, 1999) 49.

<sup>357</sup> Lawrence, *Etruscan* 57.

<sup>358</sup> Lawrence, *Etruscan* 128

<sup>359</sup> Lawrence, *Etruscan* 58.

<sup>360</sup> Lawrence, *Etruscan* 61.

<sup>361</sup> Lawrence, *Etruscan* 165.

revolution” of the 17th and 18th century and kept alive by 19th century positivism. As Alexandre Koyré argues, this revolution:

can be described roughly as bringing forth the destruction of the Cosmos, that is, the disappearance, from philosophically and scientifically valid concepts, of the conception of the world as a finite, closed, and hierarchically ordered whole (a whole in which the hierarchy of value determined the hierarchy and structure of being, rising from the dark, heavy and imperfect earth to the higher and higher perfection of the stars and heavenly spheres), and its replacement by an indefinite and even infinite universe which is bound together by the identity of its fundamental components and laws, and in which all of these components are placed on the same level of being.<sup>362</sup>

Importantly, this “indefinite and infinite” universe destroys the phenomenal world of colours and replaces it with a system build of “matter and movement”. In such a world:

Thing[s] do not have their spot any longer: all the spots are in reality equal, besides, all the things are equal as well. All things are matter and movement. [...] The Universe is not ordered with respect to man: it is no longer “ordered” at all. [...] It is but a tragic victory: in such infinite new world of the new science there is no place for man neither for God.<sup>363</sup>

Returning to Lawrence’s analysis, we may follow how the established imagery of the great One or Whole *into* which one dies as an individual is again phenomenally identified with vastness of the sea:

In the tombs we see it; throes of wonder and vivid feeling throbbing over death. Man moves naked and glowing through the universe. Then comes death: he dives into the sea, he departs into the underworld. The sea is that vast primordial creature that has a soul also, whose inwardness is a womb of all things, out of which all things emerged, and into which they are devoured back. balancing the sea is the earth of inner fire, of after-life and before-life. Beyond the waters and the ultimate fire lay only that oneness of which the people knew nothing: it was a secret the Lucumones kept for themselves, as they kept the symbol of it in their hand. But the sea people. The dolphin leaps in and out of it suddenly, as a creature that suddenly exists, out of nowhere. He was not: and lo!<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1957) 2.

<sup>363</sup> Alexandre Koyré, *Rozhovory nad Descartem*, transl. Petr Horák (Praha: Vyšehrad, 2005) 69. My translation.

<sup>364</sup> Lawrence, Etruscan 60.

The “wet darkness of the womb”<sup>365</sup> which the sea in its vastness and depth represents, encompasses Lawrence’s interpretation of “fecund darkness” in the drowning scenes, dance scenes, union of the male and female principle, and other limit scenes or visions discussed so far. In a transcendental death-gesture that unites all oppositions and dualities into a single substantial unity of the primordial whole, the Etruscan dance scenes, though perhaps on a different, more profound level, repeat the unifying movement of dance through which the “esoteric knowledge” brings an individual and the living cosmos closer together. The notion of death (as well as dance) as a place, or more precisely space that is to be found “beyond the borders of elements,” i.e. death as something that erases all limits, differences, borders and dividing lines that define individual existence, is a recurring image of great importance and will serve as a recurring topic in the following discussion.

Thus, an experience of dance becomes an alternative, changed state of consciousness that provides individuals with new magnitudes of perception. These newly re-acquired faculties re-establish a peculiar connection between an individual and the surrounding “living-cosmos” by “achieving [...] a pure relationship between ourselves and the living universe”<sup>366</sup>. The closeness and interconnected nature of things conveyed by the Etruscan paintings, stands behind the very “vividness” or the “being-alive” character of the portrayed dancers and goes “beyond art.”<sup>367</sup>

Significantly, to be alive stands here for being connected and vice versa. These principles imply cosmology which enables and supports such stratification and that, at the same time, reformulates the previous duality of the Schopenhauer-inspired universe. To put the matter briefly, Lawrence’s late adaptation of Schopenhauerian aesthetics is based on two consecutive steps.<sup>368</sup> In the first step, Lawrence replaces the Platonic

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<sup>365</sup> Lawrence, Etruscan 60.

<sup>366</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 528.

<sup>367</sup> Lawrence, Etruscan 48.

<sup>368</sup> As we have summarized in the relevant “interlude” and in the discussion of Schopenhauer’s “two levels of knowing,” the supposed duality of our world corresponds the duality of types of knowledge. Accordingly, there exists Ideal “knowledge independent of all relations” (Schopenhauer 238) and the subjective knowledge guarded by the principle of sufficient reason which does not give the true idea of things as they really are but instead “makes the thing an imaginary object [...] used to build castles in the air congenial to the egotism and individual humour” (Schopenhauer 242). The former of the two types of knowing relied precisely on ignoring of the “when and where” (Schopenhauer 231), i.e. the temporal and spatial relations and focusing on the real “what”. As we have seen, this “what,” this Idea, is accessible

“timeless Ideas” by his notion of the “living Cosmos.” Consequently, in his second step, the goal of Lawrence’s alternative modes of knowledge is not to perceive the “changeless eternal truth” by eradicating the relative aspects of one’s subjectivity but to reveal and re-establish the “true relationship to the things we move with and amongst and against.”<sup>369</sup>

This seemingly mysterious phrasing, which is in fact yet another reformulation of the romantic myth of eternal return to the Whole of nature, articulates Lawrence’s desire to unify mental and intuitive sources of our existence, balance them in our consciousness and thereby overcome the rupture of the human psyche. Importantly, this goal coincides with the aim of art which is to “reveal the relation between man and his circumambient universe, at the living moment.”<sup>370</sup> The cosmological “by-product” of this revolution is rejection Cartesian and Newtonian visions of the universe, reconstruction of the vital relations between man and his universe, and re-emergence of the “Cosmos” in the sense of Koyré’s sense.

This cosmological dimension of Lawrence’s discussion of shapes, edges and relations between objects is equally applicable to the level of human relations with the surrounding cosmos which cannot be reduced to the Sublime visions of the hostile elements. The true vital (i.e. non-Idealised) relationship between an individual and the Cosmos (in Koyre’s sense), is based on the rejection of the “human conception” and instead accepting:

primary human psyche [which] is a complex plasm, which quivers, self-conscious, in contact with circumambient cosmos. Our plasmic psyche is radio-active, connecting with all things, and having first-knowledge with all things. The religious systems of the pagan world did what Christianity has never tried to do: they gave the true correspondence between the material cosmos and the human soul. The ancient cosmic theories were exact, and apparently perfect.<sup>371</sup>

Lawrence’s eco-cosmology thus extends the problem of shapes of objects to the problem of the shape of human subjectivity and identity, or life in general, and presents it in its essential connectivity, in its externalised nature where the rigid borders of the

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through the workings of the Sublime/Beautiful in nature and, crucially for the present discussion, in works of Art.

<sup>369</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 525.

<sup>370</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 527.

<sup>371</sup> Lawrence, Symbolic Meaning 176.

classical “clare et distincte” existence surrender to the strange and mysterious “interplay of life among the elements.”<sup>372</sup>

Categories like “Clear and Distinct,” or in other words, discrete, self-enclosed, solipsistic, separate and essentially unchanged by spatio-temporal relations, fit into the central theme of the shape of human existence. From the very beginning of our discussion we have paid attention to different ways metaphysics articulated theories in spatial language and to the play of substitution between that which is solid or fluid (Woolf), related and unrelated (Lawrence, Schopenhauer), clearly outlined or undetermined (Bergson), juxtaposed or subtly connected. The experience of the Sublime was “raising the subject” as well as its object above spatio-temporal relations but at the same time merged the two together. Empiricism and idealism are extreme forms in Bergson’s dynamic system of “non-Cartesian” duality, dance “melts” dancers into a single whole and then separates them. Thoughts of Woolf’s characters are mixed with air, Lawrence’s characters dissolve into the space of death or water. Language separates the flow of ideas into discrete facts, but man cannot relate to the cosmos while at the same time maintaining his identity.

## 2.12 “The Unified Flow”

The connection with the Cosmos is made possible by alternative perceptive attitudes and renewed awareness of the subject which results from limit situations such as existential anxieties, visions of water or large homogeneous space, dance, but also from Lawrence’s favourite sense of touch. The privileged position of this sense is based precisely on its direct and “conductive” nature, which in comparison with other means of cognition such as language and sight (which are both institutionalised, intellectualised and controlled by habit), may serve to re-establish one’s “great and intricately developed sensual awareness, or sense-awareness, and sense-knowledge”<sup>373</sup>. Lawrence’s essays on Etruscan tomb paintings, especially “The Painted Tombs of Tarquinia” and “Volterra,” elegantly develop these psychologico-metaphysical motifs into remarkable visual aesthetics.

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<sup>372</sup> Lawrence, *Symbolic Meaning* 231.

<sup>373</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Apocalypse and the Writings on Revelation* (London: Penguin Books, 1995) 91.

After stressing the life-like nature of the discussed paintings and the almost sublime character of Etruscan dancers who “knew their gods in their fingertips,”<sup>374</sup> Lawrence examines the phenomenon of touch with all its typical attributes and relates it to what he considers to be the most significant formal features of Etruscan compositions. Lawrence observes:

That again is one of the charms of Etruscan paintings: they really have the sense of touch; the people and the creatures are all really in touch. It is one of the rarest qualities, in life as well as in art. There is plenty of pawing and laying hold, but *no real touch*. In pictures especially, the people may be in contact, embracing or laying hands on one another. *But there is no soft flow of touch. The touch does not come from the middle of the human being. It is merely a contact of surfaces, and juxtaposition of objects.* This is what makes so many of the great masters boring, despite their clever composition. Here, in this faded Etruscan painting, there is a *quiet flow of touch that unites* the man and the woman on the couch, the timid boy behind, the dog that lifts his nose, even the very garlands that hang from the wall.<sup>375</sup>

The unifying “quiet flow” of touch Lawrence finds in these paintings unites all of the represented objects into something that is more than a mere composition or juxtaposition of separate, self-contained items. There is a striking similarity between Bergson’s argument concerning his intuitive method and Lawrence’s formulation of his argument quoted above. Contemplating the problem of intuitive and analytical knowledge, Bergson presents the following summary of his discussion. The similarities which are most relevant for our discussion have been italicized in both quotations.

I perceive at first, as a crust solidified on the surface, all the perceptions which come to it from the material world. *These perceptions are clear, distinct, juxtaposed or juxtaposable one with another; they tend to group themselves into objects.* [...] All these *clearly defined elements* appear more *distinct* from me, the more distinct they are from each other. Radiating, as they do, from within outwards, they form, collectively, the surface of a sphere which tends to grow larger and lose itself in the exterior world. But if I draw myself in *from the periphery towards the centre, if I search in the depth of my being* that which is most uniformly, most constantly, and most enduringly myself, I find an altogether different thing. There is, *beneath these sharply cut crystals and this frozen surface, a continuous flux*

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<sup>374</sup> Lawrence, Etruscan 55.

<sup>375</sup> Lawrence, Etruscan 54. My italics.

*which is not comparable to any flux I have ever seen. There is a succession of states, each of which announces that which follows and contains that which precedes it.*<sup>376</sup>

Lawrence's analysis of the Etruscan paintings, which uses almost exactly the same vocabulary as Bergson in his *Introduction*, aims at exactly the same problem as Bergson's philosophy: to reveal and maintain the vital relation between things and thus represent the proverbial "breath of life" which dynamically stirs under the "static and single":

What is the breath of life? My dear, it is the strange current of interchange that flows between man and men, and men and women; and men and things. A constant current of interflow, a constant vibrating interchange. That is the breath of life. And this interflow, this electric vibration is polarized. There is a positive and a negative polarity. This is the law of life, of vitalism. Only ideas are final, finite, static, single.<sup>377</sup>

Following Lawrence's plea "not to set things from their setting",<sup>378</sup> the "soft flow of touch" establishes links that flow across all gaps created by the "clear and distinct" sharp edges of self-enclosed objects and the classical "extended vs. spiritual" duality and through an "affinity of pure relations" connects not only things with other things but also things and human subjectivities:

[T]hat makes the eternity for each one of us, me and the timber I am sawing, the lines of force I follow; me and the dough I knead for bread, me and the very motion with which I write, me and the bit of gold I have got.<sup>379</sup>

Lawrence's emphasis on new or alternative (non-logocentric, emphatic, instinctive, haptic, unconscious) forms of vital interchange between man and his surroundings, between man and nature but also, between man and animals or objects, is a prominent theme which started to grow in importance especially since Lawrence's *The Rainbow*. Besides Bergson, these changes can once more be traced Marinetti's and especially Boccioni's Futurism. Besides being an author of famous Futurist works of art, such as his neo-impressionist pseudo-cubist painting "Street Enters the House" (*La Strada Entra Nella Casa*, 1911) or a dynamist "statue" "Unique Forms of Continuity in Space" (*Forme uniche della continuità nello spazio*, 1913), Boccioni is an author of a number of

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<sup>376</sup> Bergson, *Introduction to Metaphysics* 10. My italics.

<sup>377</sup> Lawrence, *Symbolic Meaning* 199.

<sup>378</sup> Lawrence, *Etruscan* 34.

<sup>379</sup> Lawrence, *Phoenix* 528.

essential theoretical essays of the emerging Futurist aesthetics. Lawrence, who was familiar with Futurist thought, knew Boccioni and wrote a lengthy analysis of one of his most important sculptures “Development of a Bottle in Space” in *Study of Thomas Hardy*.<sup>380</sup>

It is interesting to examine the influence of Boccioni’s thought on Lawrence’s ideas of the vital connectivity man. The “affinity” between the two authors can be seen especially in Boccioni’s theory of the so-called “Physical Transcendentalism.”<sup>381</sup> Boccioni, using exactly the same language of “lines of force” as Lawrence uses in the above quoted extract, defines it as the trade-mark of new plastic arts:

We must take the object which we wish to create and begin with its central core in order to uncover the new laws and new forms which link it invisibly but mathematically to **external plastic infinity** and to **internal plastic infinity**. This new plastic art will then be a translation, whether in plaster, bronze, glass, wood, or any other material, of those atmospheric planes which bind and intersect things. This vision, which I have called **physical transcendentalism** [...] will provide the plastic arts with those sympathetic effects and mysterious affinities which create formal and reciprocal influences between the different planes of an object. Sculpture, therefore, must make objects live by showing their extensions in space as perceptible, systematic, and plastic. *No one still believes that one object finishes off where another begins* or that there is anything that surrounds us—a bottle, a car, a house, a hotel, a street—which doesn’t cut into and sectionalize us with its arabesque of curves and straight lines.<sup>382</sup>

Serving initially as a theory which would explain the effect of a work of art on its viewers based on “prolongations of the rhythms impressed on our sensibility by these very [artistic] objects”<sup>383</sup>, “physical transcendentalism” quickly transformed into a “physical” theory which aspired to redefine our everyday reality by penetrating the dividing-lines which show where “one object finishes off [and] where another begins.” We should remember that Lawrence’s problem with conventional paintings is that “there is no soft flow of touch,” which means no continuity and connection between

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<sup>380</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 465.

<sup>381</sup> The editors of *Futurism, An Anthology* inform that the term was for the first time used by Boccioni in a now lost lecture for the International Artistic Circle in Rome on the 29<sup>th</sup> May 1911 and reappears later in Boccioni’s manifesto “Futurist Sculpture” (April 1912), in a joint manifesto “The Exhibitors to the Public” from February 1912 and also in another memorandum, “The Plastic Foundation of Futurist Sculpture and Painting” (March 1913) (*Futurism* n536).

<sup>382</sup> Boccioni, *Futurist Sculpture* 114. My italics.

<sup>383</sup> G. Balla, U. Boccioni, C. Carrá, L. Russolo and G. Severini, “The Exhibitors to the Public,” *Futurism, An Anthology*, ed. L. Rainey, C. Poggi and L. Wittman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press)107.



objects, between man and the cosmos, or between man and objects. The touch, Lawrence says, does not come from within the person. It is merely a contact of “surfaces and juxtaposition of objects.”<sup>384</sup> The “mere” juxtaposition of objects further implies that these objects are not connected in any other way besides their surface contact. In other words these objects and bodies are separate and autonomous, their forms do not corrode and their contours remain stable. The motif of touch becomes in this sense a perfect synecdoche for one complex bundle of related problems that fall under the headline of connectivity between man and his environment. Importantly, Lawrence also draws his inspiration and lexicon from the physical “force language” of Futurist texts and integrates his own metaphysics.

Consequently, exactly the same problems that were at the heart of Boccioni’s Futurism can be found in Lawrence’s discussion of the Etruscan paintings. The main problem for Lawrence is that modern paintings do not represent the vital contact between objects, individuals, and their environment and incorrectly treat these as separate and discrete “units”. Paintings that reduce the “subtle living relationship” and the “life-interchange” of “polarized communication” between individual objects and between man and the living cosmos to a mere “juxtaposition” not only fail as art, but also present an over-intellectualized, hygienic view of the modern “clare et distincte” reality. Disregarding the technical lexicon of Futurist manifestos, the problems articulated by Lawrence’s analysis of the Etruscan “compositions” are essentially akin to the problems of continuity and discreteness of objects posed by Boccioni and other Futurists. At the same time, the problem of continuity and/ or of contingency of objects cannot but betray its Bergsonian origin.

The use of the “force lines” and other “physical” metaphors which were aimed at capturing the “breath, the sensibility, and the instincts of metals, stones, woods, and so on, through the medium of free objects and capricious motors”<sup>385</sup>, is not restricted only to Boccioni but pulses through the whole body of Futurist literature. For example Marinetti’s texts, which Lawrence certainly read, insist on the “freedom” of the new Futurist art which abolishes the traditional structures or patterns of human knowledge such as syntax, the ‘I’ in literature, punctuation, museums, traditions and famously

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<sup>384</sup> Lawrence, Etruscan 54.

<sup>385</sup> Marinetti, Technical Manifesto 122.

“[s]ubstitute[s] for human physiology, now exhausted, **the lyrical obsession of matter.**”<sup>386</sup>

Returning to Lawrence’s interpretation of his Etruscan dancers, we may observe the close affinity between Lawrence’s interpretation and Futurist theories of “forms of continuity in space”. Lawrence continues:

The subtlety of Etruscan painting, as of Chinese and Hindu, lies in the wonderfully suggestive *edge* of the figures. It is not outlined. It is not what we call “drawing.” It is the flowing contour where the body suddenly leaves off, upon the atmosphere. The Etruscan artist seems to have seen living things surging from their own centre to their own surface. And the curving and contour of the silhouette-edge suggests the whole movement of the modelling within. There is actually no modelling. The figures are painted in the flat. Yet they seem full, almost turgid muscularity.<sup>387</sup>

From this observation Lawrence inevitably derives the following conclusion:

It must have been a wonderful world, that old world where everything appeared alive and shining in the dusk of contact with all things, not merely as an isolated individual thing played upon by daylight; where each thing had a clear outline, visually, but in its very clarity was related emotionally or vitally to strange other things, one thing springing from another, things mentally contradictory fusing together emotionally, so that a lion could be at the same moment also a goat, and not a goat.<sup>388</sup>

These extracts present an essential overview of Lawrence’s cosmology which theorises an internally connected and unified whole which lies under the phenomenal world of our senses and seriously questions the idea independent existence of objects, bodies and individuals. The relationship between the seemingly “isolated individual things” becomes for Lawrence a mere surface appearance, whose artificial “atomism” reduces reality into (at best) a set “clever compositions” or lifeless juxtapositions of objects which disrupts their natural affinity with their surroundings. In his analysis of the Etruscan paintings we see this essential connectivity and interrelatedness which entangles objects, bodies and minds into dynamic fusion which undermines the artifice of logical, linguistic and intellectual divisions imposed on reality. Importantly, this

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<sup>386</sup> Marinetti, Technical Manifesto 122.

<sup>387</sup> Lawrence, Etruscan 124.

<sup>388</sup> Lawrence, Etruscan 124.

“anti-atomism” resonates with our Bergsonian discussion of solidity and fluidity and the paradoxical “dis-continuity” in the work of Virginia Woolf.

Lawrence rearticulates this pantheistic and essentially anti-empirical and anti-analytical philosophy into a theory that blends romantic elements of Schopenhauer’s aesthetics (so crucial for his earlier work) with the later, clearly modernist and “technical” problems he articulated with the help of Futurist manifestos. As we have seen above, the problem of multiplicity and unity of objects, of bodies and individual identities is in Lawrence’s texts typically symbolised by the figure of dance and the related sense of touch.

Going far beyond of Etruscan art, Lawrence expands his philosophy to cover the whole field of visual aesthetics. Besides a number of shorter essays such as “Art and Morality” and “Morality and the Novel” which see the key role of art in “reveal[ing] the relation between man and his circumambient universe, at the living moment,” Lawrence introduces an even more complex version of his aesthetics in two longer texts: his seminal *Study of Thomas Hardy* (1914) and “Introduction to These Paintings” (1929). “Introduction to These Paintings,” was published in 1929 as a part of the so called “Mandrake” edition of Lawrence’s own paintings. Despite being intended as an introduction to his own paintings, Lawrence, typically, does not say a word about them and instead offers a very interesting outline of his idea of history and visual aesthetics. In this discussion, Lawrence combines some of his traditional themes (for example the role of our “physical” and/or “procreative” body) with new themes, such as the “thingness” in Paul Cézanne paintings, his rejection of hegemony of the eye and the so-called Kodak-visions and other “cognitive clichés”.

### **2.13 Edges, Continuities and Ruptures**

Lawrence’s main thesis in “Introduction to These Paintings,” as well as in other essays concerned with art, relies on an assumption that the negative social and philosophical climate of our modern Western mechanical democracy can be easily traced into the sphere of art. Lawrence starts his analysis by re-introducing one of his old themes - the importance of the now forgotten “vital, procreative and instinctive body,” which was forgotten as a result of the already discussed “loss of the physical connection” with the circumambient cosmos and “growth of the ‘spiritual-mental consciousness’.”<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>389</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 552.

Consistently with his stress on the dual nature of the human psyche, Lawrence describes this modern forgetting of the body and the resulting degeneration and loss of our primordial, physical-instinctive connection with the cosmos as a “rupture”. Lawrence explains:

What appeared to take full grip on the northern consciousness at the end of the sixteenth century was a terror, almost a horror of sexual life. [...] This, no doubt, is all in the course of the growth of the “spiritual-mental” consciousness, at the expense of the instinctive-intuitive consciousness. [...] [W]ith the Elizabethans the grand rupture had started in the human consciousness, the mental consciousness recoiling in violence away from the physical, instinctive-intuitive.<sup>390</sup>

Lawrence’s “grand rupture”, which is reminiscent of Eliot’s “dissociation of sensibility,” systematically destroys the “whole imagination”<sup>391</sup> and hypertrophies the “cerebral excitation” on account of our “instinctive, intuitional and/or magical” awareness. According to Lawrence, the results of these profound changes in human sensibility can be witnessed not only in literature but also in visual arts. As Lawrence explains, already “in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries we have the deliberate denial of intuitive awareness. [...] Vision became more optical, less intuitive.”<sup>392</sup> In line with this approach, Lawrence simply rejects the whole history of visual arts (especially the English one), from the Elizabethans to Paul Cézanne, as an art of “dead imagination” and “optical vision, a sort of flashy coloured photography of the eye.”<sup>393</sup> Claiming that “the English could never think anything connected with the body *religious* - unless it were the eyes”<sup>394</sup>, Lawrence continues to develop his critique of the “All-Seeing-Eye” and the universal Kodak vision and “the Eternal Eye”<sup>395</sup> as a mental and cerebral counterpart to his favourite sense of touch. As Lawrence claims in his “Art and Morality” :

This is the habit we have formed: of visualising *everything*. Each man to himself is a picture. That is, he is a complete little objective reality, complete in himself, existing by himself, absolutely in the middle of the picture. All the rest is just setting, background. To

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<sup>390</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 551-2.

<sup>391</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 557.

<sup>392</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 559.

<sup>393</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 560. The only exceptions are William Turner’s landscape water colours and William Blake’s watercolours and engravings.

<sup>394</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 562.

<sup>395</sup> See esp. Lawrence’s essay “Art and Morality”.

every man, to every woman, the universe is just a setting to the absolute little picture of himself, herself.”<sup>396</sup>

“Placing oneself into the centre of the picture” provides for Lawrence a new way how to describe his old physical and cosmological metaphors of human existence which typically expressed the balance of human and in-human constituents of the human psyche. In these psychological models, as well as in the model of the “ruptured” consciousness, the impending loss of connection with inhuman forces of the vital cosmos disrupts the “true relationship with the contiguous universe”<sup>397</sup> and causes human individuality to exist on a purely solipsistic, self-enclosed basis. This process turns individuals into what might be called “closed structures,” that is, structures that exclude any vital interaction with their surroundings. Similarly to Woolf, Lawrence connects the solipsism which results from the “self-hypertrophied” or ego-centric existence, to the achievement of a “universal vision”:

We see as the All-Seeing Eye sees, with the universal vision. And we *are* what is seen: each man to himself an identity, an isolated absolute, corresponding with a universe of isolated absolutes. A picture! A Kodak snap, in a universal film of snaps. We achieved universal vision. [...] A vision of images which are real, and each one limited to itself. We behave as if we had got to the bottom of the sack, and seen the Platonic Idea with our own eyes, in all its photographically developed perfection, lying in the bottom of the sack of our universe. Our own ego! The identifying of ourselves with the visual image of ourselves has become an instinct; the habit is already old. The picture of me, the me that is *seen*, is me.<sup>398</sup>

The failure to recognise the universe, nature or simply objects in their pre-conventional “otherness” as the “not-us” which transcends our individual existence, forms the core of Lawrence’s critique of sight and connects our discussion with Woolf’s metaphysics of “worshipping the impersonal world which is a proof of some other existence than ours”.<sup>399</sup> Both Lawrence and Woolf in their unique ways stress the importance of the uncompromising “otherness” of nature or “solid” objects that cannot be easily tainted by the conventional workings of language, social rules or the “damned egotistical self.”<sup>400</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 523.

<sup>397</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 525.

<sup>398</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 523.

<sup>399</sup> Woolf, House 47.

<sup>400</sup> Woolf, Diary II 14.

As we hope to demonstrate, in doing so, both Woolf and Lawrence run the same risk of “losing” of what is “human”, precisely because they try to replace what they see as an artificial part of humanity by an essentially inhuman set of external connections and relations. In this regard, the “whole” self Lawrence talks about in essays such as “Art and Morality” is not a whole that is nourished from within by its own unspoiled humanity but a whole whose unity is constituted from “the outside.” This discussion will a few decades after Lawrence picked by post-modern theories which claim that the essence of “the human” lies precisely in its relational or accidental character and disperse the Self among external, linguistic, material or technological labels.

The question of connectivity or self-sufficiency of concepts such as human subjectivity, human body, human existence, or even the very term “human,” becomes a question of the already discussed problem of “dis-continuity” of objects in space (and time) and of the intricate relation between one and many and between the whole and its parts.

Our self-identification, i.e. the identification of our inner selves with the social and epistemological structures we (as humans) create, raises an essentially Kantian question that attempts to decide which structures of reality are man-made and which can be defined as natural. As such, it questions the possibility of individual existence and the relation of an individual to the “otherness” of nature, of the vital cosmos, and of material objects. The ideal way which both Woolf and Lawrence promote in their texts is located in between two extreme states of “the human subject” discussed in our argument – the self-enclosed solipsism and the inhuman impersonality.

Returning to the “Introduction to These Paintings,” we may observe that the desired recognition of matter as the “complementary significant other” of our existence is, according to Lawrence, achieved in Cézanne’s still lifes. According to Lawrence, Cézanne’s apples and portraits defeat the “hydra headed cliché”<sup>401</sup> of conventional representation and the “cerebral conceit”<sup>402</sup> of a “purely optical vision”<sup>403</sup> and for the first time in centuries attempt to assert “the existence of matter [...] and the real existence of the body.”<sup>404</sup> With this being said, Cézanne’s work importantly represents a gesture of unification with “instinct, intuition, mind and intellect all fused into one

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<sup>401</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 577.

<sup>402</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 568.

<sup>403</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 577.

<sup>404</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 568.

complete consciousness.”<sup>405</sup> This unification harks back to the forgotten balance of mental faculties in men and to the in-human nature of things:

Without knowing it, Cézanne, the timid little conventional man sheltering behind his wife and sister and the Jesuit father was a pure revolutionary. When he said to his models: ‘Be an apple! Be an apple’ he was uttering the foreword to the fall not only of Jesuits and the Christian idealists altogether, but to the collapse of our whole way of consciousness, and the substitution of another way. If the human being is going to be primarily an apple, as for Cézanne it was, then you are going to have a new world of men: a world which has very little to say, man that can sit still and just be physically there, and be truly non-moral. That was what Cézanne meant with his: ‘Be an apple!’ He knew perfectly well that the moment the model began to intrude her personality and her ‘mind,’ it would be cliché and moral, and he would have to paint cliché. The only part of her that was not banal, known *ad nauseam*, living cliché, the only part of her that was not living cliché was her appleyness.<sup>406</sup>

The apple-like quality, or “appleyness” which Cézanne looked for in his models is a state of human existence which closely resembles specific states of mind in which, by renouncing their personality, individuals not only visually but also mentally lapse into a states of *almost* complete in-humanity. Closely resembling the woman in Virginia Woolf’s *Kew Gardens* who temporarily became one with the flowers she looked at, the dehumanizing apple-yness or thing-ness stands for an alternative, intuitive way of knowing things in their dynamic “wholeness.” In the following extract, Lawrence once more comments on the difference between “intuitive” touch and “mental” sight and describes ones personality and mind as hindrances to the forgotten “intuitive apperception”.

Oh, be an apple, and leave out all your thoughts, all your feelings, all your mind and all your personality, which we know all about and find boring beyond endurance. Leave it all out - and be an apple! It is the appleyness of the portrait of Cézanne’s wife that makes it so permanently interesting: the appleyness, which carries with it also the feeling of knowing the other side as well, the side you don’t *see*, the hidden side of the moon. For the intuitive apperception of the apple is so *tangibly* aware of the apple that it is aware of it *all round*, not only just the front. The eye sees only fronts, and the mind, on the whole, is satisfied with fronts. But intuition needs all-aroundness, and instinct needs insideness. The true

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<sup>405</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 574.

<sup>406</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 578 - 9.

imagination is for ever curving round to the other side, to the back of presented appearance.<sup>407</sup>

This description brings together all the important themes of Lawrence's aesthetics and merits a close scrutiny. First, in its plea to "leave out all the thoughts, mind and personality" it relies on the premises of Schopenhauer's aesthetics which requires that in order to achieve the aesthetic experience of higher, Ideal knowledge, the perceiver must "lose himself entirely" and be "filled with the perceived object".<sup>408</sup> This requirement is here approached from the point of view of the perceived object but with the very same purpose – not to present anything personal, conventional and intellectual but to convey "the thing itself" – an apple. Second, the "thoughts, mind and personality," i.e. the things that should be "left out" (because they prevent the quiet and uninterrupted apprehension of natural objects by placing them into the world of relations and connections in time and space) must be apprehended as cleansed of their personal, social and linguistic origin. Third, the desired "appleyness" is, analogically to Schopenhauer's aesthetics, accessible only by alternative or special kind of knowledge, knowledge that is not ready-at-hand, knowledge that escapes common sense, habitual, practical and social clichés and linguistic or conceptual systems of representation. Fourth, it is knowledge that relies on Bergsonian/ Futurist "strokes of intuition".<sup>409</sup> This point can be seen as essentially Kantian in the sense that it discovers and rejects man-made patterns in human knowledge, identifies them as solipsistic and seeks understanding that transcends them, and is located in the sphere of the inhuman. Finally, an important role is again played by expressions such as: intuition, instinct, intuitive apperception, all-aroundness, front vs. inside, or visual and tangible awareness are especially important.<sup>410</sup>

The theory of "in-humanity" which Lawrence applies to Cézanne's art illustrates the way in which Lawrence negotiates between the earlier Schopenhauerian aesthetics and later Futurist influence. The situation Lawrence introduces in his discussion is a seemingly paradoxical one and can be schematized into two steps: (1) Cézanne's art is

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<sup>407</sup> Lawrence, *Phoenix* 579.

<sup>408</sup> Schopenhauer 231

<sup>409</sup> Marinetti, *Technical Manifesto* 123.

<sup>410</sup> Once more an ideal opportunity to contrast sections from Lawrence's and Bergson's texts offers itself. Let us remind ourselves of the basic distinction between the analytical and instinctive method in metaphysics. See "Interlude No. 1".



based on a desire for a “true-to-life”<sup>411</sup> representation without the influence of human “clichés” (optical, linguistic, social, moral, sexual, spiritual, ideal). As such, it removes its object (an apple, a portrayed figure), from the maze of human relations and returns it to its pre-conceptualised state. (2) After accomplishing this, Cézannes art “returns” these objects to the sphere of human “intuition and instinct”<sup>412</sup> and thereby enables “the intuitive apperception of the apple [that] is so tangibly aware of the apple that it is aware of it all around.”<sup>413</sup>

This aesthetic “replacement” of human-made relationships by pre-conceptual “physiology of matter” is not restricted within the sphere of art but reflects Lawrence’s program which aims at a fundamental renewal of human sensibility. It is important that the first step, which can be seen as Schopenhauerian in its nature, is followed by the second one which can be seen as essentially Futurist. As will be argued in the following chapter, the movement which this scheme captures, i.e. the movement from the related (the human) to the unrelated (the Ideal) and back to the related (connected with the cosmos), combines classicist aspects of Hulme’s or Lewis’ aesthetics with selected “romantic” motifs adopted from Italian Futurism and romantic pantheism.

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<sup>411</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 578.

<sup>412</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 573.

<sup>413</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 579.

## CHAPTER THREE: P. W. Lewis and the Common Sense Alternative

“You Madam are the eternal humorist,  
The eternal enemy of the absolute  
Giving your vagrant moods the slightest  
twist!  
With your air indifferent and imperious  
At a stroke our mad poetics to confute -  
And - ‘Are we then so serious?’”<sup>414</sup>

As we had the chance to see in the previous chapter, Lawrence’s psychology is based on a fundamental split within the human psyche. This split delegates all instinctive, irrational and unconscious drives beyond the conscious control of man, and places these into his “outside” (into Nature, physical body, Cosmos, the transcendental “One”). This dual structure of human psyche is an important source of an “incessant conflict of the inter-opposite forces”<sup>415</sup>, which constitutes the dynamic and pulsating nature of human existence. This inherent heterogeneity of human life is typically represented in Lawrence’s texts as a continual process of *becoming* in which man continually balances *his* “human” intellect or rationality and the “inhuman” instinctive drives which connect him to the living cosmos.

In the following discussion, we will focus on a number of potential problems which Lawrence’s dynamic account of human existence poses to human individuality, personality and autonomy. Philosophical origins of this threat will be traced to the sources discussed in previous chapters: Schopenhauer’s anti-individual aesthetics, the rejection of the centralised self in Futurist aesthetics, Boccioni’s theory of “physical transcendentalism”, Bergson’s concept of “pure perception” and intuition, and finally, Worringer’s concept of empathy and abstraction. Lawrence and Woolf were not the only ones who were aware of potential artistic and philosophical dead-ends of models that decentralise human subjectivity. Thinking from a completely different philosophical and artistic position, Wyndham Lewis, a champion of classical and

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<sup>414</sup> T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004) 33.

<sup>415</sup> Lawrence, *Phoenix II* 368.

common-sense values, offers a similar, though stronger and more explicitly formulated line of criticism of these heterogeneous, dynamic and de-centralised concepts of human psychology.

Though often neglected, Wyndham Lewis was one of the most distinctive members of what is typically referred to as English Modernism. As a co-founder of perhaps the only originally English art movement of the period, Vorticism, Lewis was not only an original painter, thinker and art critic but also a very important writer of fiction. For the purposes of the following discussion, Lewis' literary achievement can be divided into two phases. First, the so called "Blast Phase" (approximately 1914 - 1921), which sees Lewis' engagement with the only genuinely English avant-garde movement – Vorticism, his work on both issues of the *Blast!*, and his struggle against Futurism, Cubism and Impressionism. The "Blast Phase" lays the foundation for what might be called the "Tyro Phase" (approximately 1921 - 1928). In this phase Lewis launched the second of his magazines, *Tyro*, published an important re-edition of his short stories in a collection called *The Wild Body* (1927) and introduced a new edition of his most famous novel *Tarr* (1928). Using Lewis' fiction as a vital source of comparison to Lawrence's and Woolf's fiction and aesthetics, the following discussion will primarily be based on both editions of *Tarr*, Lewis' short stories, and his 1920's philosophy expounded in numerous essays and *Time and the Western Man* (1928).

### **3.1 "The Sad Human Amalgam": An Introduction to Lewis' Anthropology**

Let us start our discussion of Lewis' work with an interesting quotation from his most important theoretical text, a lengthy criticism of contemporary continental philosophy called *Time and the Western Man*. In a chapter called "Spatialization and Concreteness", Lewis argues against what he systematically refers to as "the Bergsonian Time-Cult" philosophies and argues for the lost common-sense "clarity of plastic form". Let us note that Lewis' arguments against the "time philosophies" in this extract touch upon some of the key problems in our previous discussion.

The old objection to any pantheism, that it banishes individuality and is not good for the self, comes out more strongly than ever in the teaching of 'space-time.' So as you proceed in your examination of these doctrines [i.e. Romanticism and 'Time-philosophies'], it becomes more and more evident, that, although it is by no means clear that you gain anything (except a great deal many fine phrases and exalted, mystical assurances of

‘cosmic’ advantages), it is very clear what you *lose*. By this proposed transfer from the beautiful *objective, material* world of common sense, over to the ‘organic’ world of chronological mentalism, you lose not only *the clearness of outline, the static beauty*, of the things you commonly apprehend; you lose also the clearness of outline of your own individuality which apprehends them.<sup>416</sup>

From the very beginning it is possible to note that Lewis introduces an entirely new understanding of the relation between man and his lived-world and completely rearticulates the discussed affinity between material and mental spaces. With a typical straightforwardness, Lewis offers his conservative “common sense” position of a thinker, whose philosophy is, to use T. E. Hulme’s phrase, “always faithful to the conception of limit” and never forgets “the finiteness, this limit of man.”<sup>417</sup> According to this conception, which is in direct contrast with the dynamic idea of human nature of Woolf’s and Lawrence’s fictions, man’s essence remains constant. As Hulme cynically points out, man may try to “jump but he always returns back; he never flies into the circumambient gas.”<sup>418</sup>

The religious core of this argument rests on an idea of unchanging and essentially *limited* character of the “fallen” human nature. This metaphysical limit is in Lewis’ and Hulme’s essays systematically expressed with a number of spatial or plastic metaphors that favour clear cut contours, distinct divisions and sharp edges. As we will observe, Hulme’s and Lewis’ fondness for limits, which represent for them the characteristic quality of the recently reborn “classical verse”, is directly linked to such “classic” qualities as clearness of outline, stability of form, static beauty of common sense objects or the “clare et distincte” safety of Cartesian duality. In the following discussion we will observe an ongoing struggle between the supporters of “gaps” (Lewis and Hulme) and the supporters of “fluidity” (Lawrence Woolf) in the short fiction of Wyndham Lewis.

Rearticulating one of the central themes of our discussion, Lewis’ quotation further postulates a direct connection between the loss of form or the “clearness of outline” of the things or objects that we “commonly apprehend” and the “loss of individuality [of the subject] which apprehends them”. According to Lewis’ argument, as a result of these epistemological fluctuations, the ontological stability of the human subject gets compromised, man loses his substantiality, autonomy and individuality, and turns from

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<sup>416</sup> Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927) 175.

<sup>417</sup> Hulme 120.

<sup>418</sup> Hulme 120.

a living being into a dead puppet. As a consequence, the original unity and coherence of an individual collapse and, as Lewis puts it: “You become no longer one, but many”.<sup>419</sup> It is interesting to observe how Lewis’ and Hulme’s acute awareness of what today would be understood and praised as the post-human condition<sup>420</sup> becomes a common theme for authors as diverse as Yeats, Woolf and Lewis or Lawrence. Lewis, with his almost Cartesian “*claire et distincte*” vocabulary, targets his critique at (almost) all of the important sources of Lawrence’s and Woolf’s metaphysics - Italian Futurism, which Lewis considered as the “latest form of impressionism”<sup>421</sup>, and most acutely, on the arch priest of the Time Cult - Henri Bergson.

### **3.2 The Laughing Substance: Lewis’ Theory of Detachment and the Nature of the Comic**

In order to appreciate the full effect of Lewis’ novels and short stories of the studied period it is necessary to analyse the most salient features of Lewis’ anthropology and aesthetics. It has been demonstrated that Woolf’s and Lawrence’s metaphysics relies on continual breaching of the traditional “mind - body” and “physical-psychical” border. Adhering to Hulme’s assertion that “certain regions of reality differ not relatively but absolutely,”<sup>422</sup> Lewis’ work strives for the exact opposite and tries to maintain *the* ontological gap between mind and matter as broad as possible. The primary function of Lewis’ most characteristic artistic principle, the principle of “detachment”, is precisely to preserve and expand this gap.

The theory of detachment becomes for Lewis a unifying motive, which despite some minor modifications and reformulations “provides a tread of continuity in the aesthetic and ethical values advanced by [Lewis’] entire *oeuvre*”<sup>423</sup>. As a moral or philosophical principle, detachment is a gesture of transcendence which develops the idea of a Vorticist artist as a person who, positioned in the “still centre at the heart of life, of contemporary flux”, sustains his “Vortex, a principle of unity and permanence in the maelstrom of life’s diversity and change” and whose artistic aim is to “dissociate

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<sup>419</sup> Lewis, *Time* 175.

<sup>420</sup> For an interesting discussion of Lawrence’s in the context of post-human theories see Jeff Wallace, *D. H. Lawrence, Science and the Posthuman* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>421</sup> Wyndham Lewis, “Essay on the Objective of Plastic Art in Our Time,” *Tyro* 2 1922: 31.

<sup>422</sup> Hulme 4.

<sup>423</sup> Dasenbrock 173.

vitality from beef and social vivacity.”<sup>424</sup> These early theories evolve into a principle which forms the core of Lewis’ fiction and aesthetics in the 1920’s. In its most typical form, Lewis’ principle of detachment can be seen as guiding idea in his most characteristic fiction of the period: *The Wild Body* collection, *Tarr*, *The Apes of God*, and in his theoretical treatise *Time and the Western Man*.

Perhaps the most relevant definition of this principle may be found in Lewis’ essays “Inferior Religions” and “The Meaning of the Wild Body” which are appended as a commentary to *The Wild Body* Collection. Identifying this principle as the very condition of his theory of “the Comic”<sup>425</sup>, Lewis illustrates his point in a short fable:

The other day in the underground, as the train was moving out of the station, I and those around me saw a fat but active man run along, and deftly project himself between the sliding doors, which he pushed to behind him. Then he stood leaning against them, as the carriage was full. There was nothing especially funny about his face or general appearance. Yet his running, neat, deliberate, but clumsy embarkation, *combined with the coolness of his eye*, had a ludicrous effect, to which several of us responded. His *eye* I decided was the key to the absurdity of the effect. It was its detachment that was responsible for this. It seemed to say, as he propelled his sack of potatoes—that is himself—along the platform, and as he successfully landed the sack in the carriage:—‘I’ve not much ‘power,’ I may just manage it:—yes, *just!*’ Then in response to our gazing eyes, ‘Yes, that’s me! That was not so bad, was it? When you run a line of potatoes like ME, you get the knack of them: but they take a bit of moving.’

It was the detachment, in any case, that gave the episode a comic quality, that his otherwise very usual appearance would not have possessed. I have sometimes seen the same look of whimsical detachment on the face of a taxi-driver when he has taken me somewhere, in a very slow and ineffective conveyance. *His taxi for him stood for his body*. He was quite aware of its shortcomings, but did not associate himself with them. He knew quite well what a taxi ought to be. He did not identify himself with his machine.<sup>426</sup>

This seemingly absurd and otherwise completely commonplace event surprisingly holds the key to Lewis’ work. The element of detachment in this comic event relies on the mental capacity of the obese man and the taxi driver to transcend the inefficiencies of

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<sup>424</sup> Wyndham Lewis, “A Review of Contemporary Art,” *Blast!* 2 July 1915: 39.

<sup>425</sup> Despite his despise for Bergson and a number of commentators have observed similarities between some of the fundamental propositions of Lewis’ and Bergson’s philosophies, especially between Lewis’ principle of satire and Bergson’s theory of laughter. See for example: SueEllen Campbell, “Equal Opposites: Wyndham Lewis, Henri Bergson, and Their Philosophies of Space and Time,” *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Autumn, 1983), pp. 351-369.

<sup>426</sup> Lewis, *Body* 249 - 250.

their human condition. This transcendence is achieved through an act of distancing self-reflection, which helps individuals overcome their limited existence, i.e. their existence as embodied minds, and face it with an attitude that is a mixture of stoic coolness and whimsical detachment. Lewis' principle of detachment thus works here on a number of levels: first, the obese man detaches himself from his own body simply by "laughing" at its shortcomings and by distancing himself from its physiological limitations and automatic functions. Similarly, the taxi driver, who detaches himself from the mechanical nature of his habitual occupation, does not identify himself with the sequential nature of his automaton-like occupation. Finally, the observed detachment affects Lewis and other observers, who use this event to confirm their superiority over the machinery of their bodies, their everyday existence and habits. Significantly, the transcendence of the limiting conditions of our embodied existence consists in our ability to rationally reflect on this condition and thereby distance ourselves from its deterministic nature.

Understood as an act of freedom through which man transcends the de-humanizing effects of his physical and social existence, the principle of detachment is confined to an artist and a few chosen individuals who are able to perform it. The philosophical claim concerning human nature and human condition thus leads to an aesthetic principle which governs Lewis' theory of art and defines the role of an artist. The practice of detached observation is, however, so difficult that even the artist: "cannot be utterly distinct [...] for he possesses the same physical apparatus as other men. But whereas other men essentially are their bodies, the artist [...] does not identify himself with it."<sup>427</sup> As a part of this, it is important to emphasize the dual nature of the process of observation: "[t]he artist's attitude towards his own body is a mirror-image of his attitude towards other men. Man's physical nature, 'the wild body', is mechanistic and absurd; man's artistic nature is 'the laughing observer,' linked to a body but as distinct as possible from it and its values."<sup>428</sup>

This introductory analysis allows us to examine some of the fundamental differences between Lewis', Woolf's and especially Lawrence's work. Let us follow these problems in one of Lewis' most complex and at the same time most ambiguous short stories: "Cantleman's Spring Mate" (1917).

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<sup>427</sup> Dasenbrock 174.

<sup>428</sup> Dasenbrock 174.

### 3.3 “The miraculous camouflage of Nature did Not Deceive this Observer”

Impiorum namque in corporibus vita non animarum, sed corporum vita est;<sup>429</sup>

Lewis’ “Cattleman’s Spring Mate” is an openly satirical story, which seems to have been written as a direct response to some of Lawrence’s typical “romantic” short stories such as “The Shades of Spring”, “The Shadow in the Rosegarden”, or “A Modern Lover”. The main purpose of this story is to present Lewis’ view of human relationship to Nature, his surroundings, his machine-like body and the effects of his instinctive life. Consistent with Lewis’ principle of detached observation, the story is based on a third person narration of what might be called a critical self-observation or self-dissection of the main hero Cattleman. Cattleman is a military recruit who is about to be transferred to the front line and the prospect of this transfer infuses his meditative self observations with strange poignancy and a sense of revenge against the mechanism of fate. Being a typical Lewisean hero, Cattleman spends most of his time observing, analysing and examining anything he finds irrational, animalistic or mechanical, in this particular case it is his body and the way it is affected by the “handsome English spring.

The beginning of the story presents the main protagonist during an evening walk outside of his military camp, “in Nature”, wandering through the ostentatious beauty of spring fields. Lewis’ conceptualisation of Nature is, however, quite distant from Lawrence’s vital cosmos of fecund darkness, Hardy’s Heath, Yeats’ Irish countryside or Woolf’s atmospheric landscape of colourful patches. Cattleman’s analytic mind first of all sees it as threatening “unseen power”<sup>430</sup> which mechanically stirs instinctive bodily functions of various animals (Cattleman included) and involuntarily drives them towards the inevitable doom of procreation. Unlike Lawrence’s Immanent Will, which could be seen as a structurally similar metaphysical principle, Lewis’ nature is not apprehended instinctively in moments of empathic epiphany but rather subjected to the disgusted observation of the narrator who tries to stay away from it as far as possible.

The following comment neatly sums up the prevailing attitude of the main hero: “In short, the spectacle of the handsome English spring produced nothing but ideas of defiance in Cattleman’s mind.”<sup>431</sup> Full of “sharp grunt[s] of sex-hunger”, “splenetic

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<sup>429</sup> For the wicked man’s life in the body is a life not of the soul, but of the body (Saint Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 13.2).

<sup>430</sup> Wyndham Lewis, “Cattleman’s Spring Mate,” *The Little Review* Vol.4, No.6 Oct. 1917: 13.

<sup>431</sup> Lewis, Cattleman 13.



energies”, and “guttural articulations”<sup>432</sup>, “[t]he miraculous camouflage of nature” threatens Cantleman’s “humanity” as acutely as the war he is about to fight in. In a typical gesture of detached observation, Cantleman rationalises instinctive reactions of his own body which, if kept “without interference from [his] consciousness”<sup>433</sup>, “feels itself at one with Nature and is beguiled by the sensuality of spring.”<sup>434</sup> Finally suppressing his desire to “remain amongst his fellow insects and beasts, which were so beautiful”<sup>435</sup>, Cantleman, in a mock-gesture of Promethean defiance, plans his revenge on Nature by wooing, misusing and eventually discarding its symbolic incarnation - a naive country girl of a symbolic name – Stella.

He, Cantelman, did not want to owe anything to life, or enter into league or understanding with her! The thing was either to go out of existence: or, failing that, remain in it unreconciled, indifferent to Nature’s threat, consorting openly with her enemies, making a war within her war upon her servants. In short, the spectacle of the handsome English spring produced nothing but ideas of defiance in Cantleman’s mind. As to Stella, she was a sort of Whizbang. With a treachery worthy of a Hun, Nature tempted him towards her. He was drugged with delicious appetites. Very well! He would hoist the unseen power with his own petard. He would throw back Stella where she was discharged from (if it were allowable, now, to change her into a bomb) first having relieved himself of this humiliating gnawing and yearning in his blood. As to Stella, considered as an unconscious agent, all women were contaminated with Nature’s hostile power and might be treated as spies or enemies. The only time they could be trusted, or were likely to stand up to Nature and show their teeth, was as mothers. So he approached Stella with as much falsity as he could master. At their third meeting he brought her a ring.<sup>436</sup>

Cantleman is not a true “lover of stars”<sup>437</sup> and neither is he striving to establish a living connection with his vital surroundings and use it as a way to reach the lost unity with “the romantic One.” Quite the opposite, Nature and its emanations have nothing to offer but falsity and deception. For these reasons the main hero rationally *chooses* to keep himself detached and remain unspoiled by “life” at all costs.

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<sup>432</sup> Lewis, Cantleman 8.

<sup>433</sup> Lewis, Cantleman 9.

<sup>434</sup> Robert T. Chapman, *Wyndham Lewis, Fictions and Satires* (London: Vision Press, 1973) 62.

<sup>435</sup> Lewis, Cantleman 9.

<sup>436</sup> Lewis, Cantleman 13.

<sup>437</sup> Stella’s name can be seen as direct reference to Lewis’ “Enemy of the Stars”, which will be discussed in one of the following sections.

As we have seen, the loss of identity is one of the main problems for Lewis and Anti-Natural heroes such as Cantleman or Arghol in *Enemy of the Stars*. “Dissecting his [own] laugh, [and] comparing it to the pig’s grunt and the bird’s cough”<sup>438</sup>, Cantleman’s rational self detects the hidden threat which Nature presents to the uncompromisingly rational character of his “detached” existence as an individual by affecting the animal instincts that stir in his body. “In the midst of his cogitation of the surrounding life”<sup>439</sup>, Cantleman decides to tackle the “madness of natural things”<sup>440</sup> by a conscious counterattack that consists in deliberately defiling and misusing one of nature’s prominent agents - a woman. Being a woman, Stella, like for example Anastasia in *Tarr*, is more easily “tainted” by her bodily functions and instincts, i.e. by her “wild body”. From Lewis’ perspective this represents a problem not only because she identifies herself her body and by extension with Nature, but also because she thereby loses her independence, autonomy and individuality which should be safeguarded by her rationality and her ability to consciously reflect on her actions. Representing “life”, both Stella and Anastasia, embody the direct opposite to Lewis’ idea of art as an essential deadness. The opposition between art and life, the relationship between natural impulses and rational reflection, as two spheres of existence, introduces another strict duality in Lewis’ thought, is extremely important for the following discussion.

### 3.4 Life vs. Art/ Art vs. Life

The idea of an essential ontological difference between Life and Art is perhaps most famously present in a famous dance scene from Lewis’ *Tarr*. In this scene, an artist named Tarr, the main protagonist and (like Cantleman), Lewis’ alter-ego, is asked by another character named Anastasia a seemingly simple question: “what is Art?” The resulting dialogue presents perhaps the most straightforward definition of art in Lewis’ fiction:

“Life is art’s rival and vice versa.” “I don’t see the opposition.” “No, because you mix them up. You are the archenemy of any picture.” “I ? Nonsense! But art comes out of life, in any case. What is art ?” “My dear girl—life with all the nonsense taken out of it. Will that do?” “Yes. But what is art—especially?” She insisted with her hands on a plastic answer. “Are we in life, now? *What is art?*” “*Life* is anything that could live and die. *Art* is peculiar; it is

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<sup>438</sup> Lewis, Cantleman 10.

<sup>439</sup> Lewis, Cantleman 8.

<sup>440</sup> Lewis, Cantleman 12.

anything that lives and that yet you cannot imagine as dying.” “Why cannot art die? If you smash up a statue, it is as dead as a dead man.” “No, it is not. That is the difference. It is the God, or soul, we say, of the man. It always has existed, if it is a true statue.” But cannot you say of some life that it could not die?” “No, because in that case it is the *real* coming through. *Death* is the one attribute that is peculiar to *life*. It is the something that it is impossible to imagine in connexion with art. Reality is entirely founded on this fact, that of *Death*. All *action* revolves round that, and has it for motif. The purest thought is totally ignorant of death. Death means the perpetual extinction of impertinent sparks. But it is the key of life.” “But what is *art*? You are talking about it as though I knew what it was!” “What is life, do you know? Well, I know what art is in the same way.” “Yes, but I ask you as a favour to define it for me. A picture is art, a living person is life. We sitting here are *life*; if we were talking on a stage we should be *art*. How would you define art?” [...] “It is ourselves disentangled from death and accident.” “How do you know?” “I feel that is so, because I notice that that is the essential point to grasp. *Death* is the thing that differentiates art and life. Art is identical with the idea of permanence. It is a continuity and not an individual spasm. Life is the idea of the person.” “Deadness, then,” Tarr went on, “in the limited sense in which we use that word is the first condition of art. The second is absence of *soul*, in the sentimental human sense. The lines and masses of the statue are its soul. No restless, quick, flame-like ego is imagined for the *inside* of it. It has no inside. This is another condition of art; *to have no inside*, nothing you cannot *see*. Instead, then, of being something impelled like a machine by a little egoistic fire inside, it lives soullessly and deadly by its frontal lines and masses.”<sup>441</sup>

This passage is taken from the original 1917 version of the novel which was for the first time published only a month before the publication of “Cattleman’s Spring Mate”<sup>442</sup> in the September issue of *The Egoist*. The resemblance between Lewis’ ideas on women, Life and Art, as expressed in the two texts, is thus not coincidental. Lewis’ aesthetics of the Schopenhauerian “deadness of art” is based on the “absence of soul in the sentimental human sense”. Art is further defined by its opacity and its “having no inside”, “nothing you cannot see on the surface”. Importantly, these assumptions permeate Lewis’ ethics and can be seen as an extension of his principle of detachment and detached observation. Lewis’ statement that art is “ourselves disentangled from death and accident” (emphasised in the quote) is particularly illuminating in this respect and helps us to define human nature in terms of what is accidental, e.g. Time, Life, Nature, the human body, sentimentalism, individual and social habits, and what is essential, e.g. Space and the detached intellect of a laughing observer.

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<sup>441</sup> Wyndham Lewis, “Tarr: Part VII: The Swagger Sex,” *The Egoist* IV, No. 8 Sept. 1917: 125.

<sup>442</sup> “Cattleman’s Spring Mate” was for the first time published in the October issue of *The Little Review*.

This detachment, both aesthetic and ethical, is in Lewis' definition systematically expressed in purely spatial terms. Replacing the sentimental soul "in the human sense," the essence of art is essentially "plastic"<sup>443</sup> and its existence depends on the "lines and masses", i.e. on its external appearance and surface rather than on its intuitive-instinctive interiority.<sup>444</sup> The emphasis on the plastic foundation of the work of art is even more emphasised in the 1928 revision of the very same dialogue:

A statue is art. It is a dead thing, a lump of stone or wood. Its lines and proportions are its soul. Anything living, quick and changing is bad art always; [...] *Soft, quivering and quick flesh is as far from art as it is possible for an object to be.* [...] The armoured hide of the hippopotamus, the shell of the tortoise, feathers and machinery, you may put this in one camp; naked pulsing and moving of the soft inside of life - along with the elasticity of movement and consciousness - that goes in the opposite camp. Deadness is the first condition of art; the second is the absence of soul, in the human and sentimental sense. With the statue its lines and masses are its soul, no restless inflammable ego is imagined for its interior: it has no *inside*: good art must have no inside, that is capital.<sup>445</sup>

Though seemingly inconsiderable, the differences between the two editions of this particular passage are of some significance for our discussion. The discrepancies between the 1917 and 1928 versions of the text all favour Lewis' increased emphasis on the strict and uncompromising duality of Life and Work of Art in terms of their spatial or "plastic" qualities and in terms of the difference between internal vs. external, sentimental vs. plastic, soft vs. hard and elastic vs. proportionate. Lewis' mild shift from his Vorticist aesthetics of "dynamic forms"<sup>446</sup> to a more static version of art is clearly visible here. These principles are also apparent in Lewis's critique of the chaotic temporality of natural phenomena, which represent the "hypocritical" madness of nature, in which "everything was enchanted with itself and with everything else."<sup>447</sup> The confusion and instability of Nature starkly contrasts with the clear, distinctive and "honest" spatial phenomena. There is a further key difference between the ways in which each category can be "accessed" - the natural, fluid and internal presupposes an

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<sup>443</sup> As we will see in the discussion to follow, the word "plastic" does not in Lewis' texts stand for changeable or soft but spatial and hard and is opposed the fluidity of music or time.

<sup>444</sup> Compare Lawrence's definition of art on page x, quote x.

<sup>445</sup> Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 264 -265. My italics.

<sup>446</sup> Dasenbrock 162.

<sup>447</sup> Lewis, *Cantleman* 8.

instinctive-intuitive, subjective and “private” approach while the external calls for the visual and tactile, common-sense, objective and self-evident attitude.

In “Cantleman’s Spring Mate” we may further observe that Cantleman’s “revenge” on the unseen powers of nature which attempt to drag him into Life. This revenge takes the form of a deliberate “performance” (quite typically for Lewis’ fiction as we will see) in which Cantleman pretends to step down from his detached position only to be able to observe the effects of his staged actions on his body and on other characters. In other words, Cantleman’s dubious transcendence inheres in a gesture by which he *deliberately* chooses to act according to Nature’s bidding, refusing to be a “link reluctant in a fleshy chain”, and thus steps out of the mechanical causality of the procreative instincts. As the narrator informs us, “[Cantleman] had his programme [and] since he was forced back, by his logic and body, among the madness of natural things, he would live up to his part.”<sup>448</sup> In a scene which could be read as a parody of Lawrence’s vitalist phenomenology of touch, Cantleman observes what he feels when he touches his lover:

In the narrow road where they got away from the village, Cantleman put his arm around Stella’s waist and immediately experienced all the sensations that he had been divining in the creatures around him; the horse, the bird and the pig. The way in which Stella’s hips stood out, the solid blood-heated expanse on which his hand lay, had the amplitude and flatness of a mare. Her hips had at once no practical significance, but only the aesthetic blandishment of a bull-like flower. With the gesture of a fabulous Faust he drew her against him, and kissed her with a crafty gentleness.<sup>449</sup>

The torrent of emotional sensations, which results from Cantleman’s haptic contact with the “unconscious agent of nature”<sup>450</sup>, is very close to Lawrence’s instinctive idea of touch. This sense represented to Lawrence the gateway to the “most vital parts of cosmos” through which one may feel the “sympathy [...] and submission to the great impulses”<sup>451</sup> that unite the human being with whatever it touches. Claiming that “the

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<sup>448</sup> Lewis, Cantleman 12

<sup>449</sup> Lewis, Cantleman 12.

<sup>450</sup> Lewis, Cantleman 13.

<sup>451</sup> In one of his letters Lawrence gives the following definition of touch: “Somehow, I think we come into knowledge (unconscious) of the most vital parts of the cosmos by touching things. You do not know how I feel my soul enlarged through the contact with the soft arms and face and body of my Hilda Mary – who is 9months today. I know my phraseology is vague and impossible. But there must be some great purposeful impulses through everything to move it and work it to an end. The world says you feel the press of these impulses, you recognise them, in knowledge - in science – but I, joining hands with the

*tactual* idea must rise ever fresh, ever displaced, like the leaves of a tree, from out of the quickness of the snap, and according to the for ever incalculable effluence of the great dynamic centres of life”,<sup>452</sup> Lawrence’s tactilism represents an epistemological strategy that matches with Lewis’ definition of Life and Nature. As such, the tactile immersion stands for all that Cantleman (and consequently Lewis) wants to avoid. Lawrence’s sympathetic communion with Nature is first of all based on the idea of connectivity, a vitalist emphasis on the dynamic interrelationship between man and his surrounding, and the “impossible vagueness” of this “sympathetic” (i.e. internal) form of communication which is the complete opposite of Lewis’ principles of intellectual detachment and plastic art of external forms.

It is again useful to recall Lewis’ definition of art as “having no *inside*”: “No restless, quick, flame-like ego is imagined for the *inside* of it” (viz. above). Further, any such idea of an esoteric or private (i.e. intuitive, instinctive, emphatic) form of communication according to Lewis, so to say, turns an individual into an open structure, i.e. positions him outside himself into an heterogeneous state of *in-between-ness*. The essential affinity between the feminine Stella and Nature is clearly visible in the final scene which captures Cantleman’s intercourse with her:

Her *melting* gratitude was immediately ligotted with long arms, full of the contradictory and offending fire of the spring. On the warm earth consent flowed up into her body from all the veins of the landscape. The nightingale sang ceaselessly in the small wood at the top of the field where they lay! He grinned up towards it, and once more turned to the devouring of his mate. He felt that he was raiding the bowels of Nature: not fecundating the Aspasias of our flimsy flesh, or assuaging, or competing with, the nightingale. Cantelman was proud that he could remain deliberate and aloof, and gaze bravely, like a minute insect, up at the immense and melancholy night, with all its mad nightingales, piously folded small brown wings in a million nests, night-working stars, and misty useless watchmen.<sup>453</sup>

The outcome of Cantleman’s revenge is, however, rather dubious. First of all, it could be argued that Cantleman’s indifference and detachment were clearly lost in his obsession with his revenge but also that willingly or not, he in fact followed Nature’s

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artists, declare that also and supremely the sympathy with and submission to the great impulses comes through the *feeling* – indescribable – and, I think, unknowable” (Lawrence, Letters 40). Lawrence’s own doubts about the “vagueness” of his phraseology and of the whole concept as if echo with Lewis’ satirical critique.

<sup>452</sup> Lawrence, *Fantasia* 83

<sup>453</sup> Lewis, *Cantleman* 14. My italics.

initial scheme - to procreate and produce new life. This interpretation, which surprisingly turns the whole short story upside down into a narration of foolish self-deception, Lawrentian Idealism and hypertrophied desire to achieve the “maximum of being”<sup>454</sup>, is supported by a brief summary supplied by the narrator:

Cantelman on his way to camp had a smile of severe satisfaction on his face. It did not occur to him that his action might be supremely unimportant as far as Stella was concerned. He had not even asked himself if, had he not been there that night, someone else might or might not have been there in his place. He was also convinced that the laurels were his, and that Nature had come off badly. He was still convinced of this when he received six weeks afterwards, in France, a long appeal from Stella, telling him that she was going to have a child. She received no answer to that nor any subsequent letter. They came to Cantelman with great regularity in the trenches; he read them all through from beginning to end, without comment of any sort. And when he beat a German's brains out, it was with the same impartial malignity that he had displayed in the English night with his Springmate. Only he considered there too that he was in some way outwitting Nature; he had no adequate realization of the extent to which, evidently, the death of a Hun was to the advantage of the animal world.<sup>455</sup>

The foolish idea of “outwitting Nature” is a rare moment in Lewis’ fiction in which the author openly question the capacity of human intellect to fight one’s instincts. As such, it reveals the insufficiency of the “Nietzschean concept of ‘Will’ in this struggle” and instead suggests that “it is impossible to remain ‘indifferent to nature’s threat,’ even if the essence of this threat is intellectually recognised. To be in life is to be tainted by life.”<sup>456</sup>

We can thus see a clear connection between the aesthetic principle of deadness and exteriority in art, and the philosophical and aesthetic principle of detachment. This connection, however, raises a very important question: If the ideal ontological status of the work of art is the state of deadness does it follow that, once this aesthetic principle is translated into “real life” as a principle of detachment, the goal of an individual is to reach the status of “a dead thing, a lump of stone or wood”? What is the ontological status of man in the light of Lewis’ aesthetics?

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<sup>454</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 403.

<sup>455</sup> Lewis, Cantleman 14.

<sup>456</sup> Chapman 63.

### 3.5 The Lesson of Plastic Art: Lewis' Aesthetic Anthropology of the 1920's

Beauty occurs in the way that is met in motor-car construction  
of the human body.<sup>457</sup>

Further exploration of Lewis's philosophy and aesthetics, especially in the post-war period of the 1920's, will allow us to relate Lewis' short stories to Lawrence's and Woolf's philosophical aesthetics. This period is marked by two extremely important works: a lengthy critique of the so called Time-Cult in *Time and Western Man* (1927) and an immensely important transitional text which revisits and reintroduces some of the significant notions of Lewis' aesthetics and follows his steady move away from Vorticism: *Essay on the Objective of Plastic Art in Our Time* (1922).

In the definition of art in *Tarr*, Lewis mentions "death" as one of its essential features. This conception connects Lewis' definition with the aesthetics of a philosopher who played an important role in the previous discussion of the work of D. H. Lawrence, namely Arthur Schopenhauer. As we have seen in the discussion of the Sublime and the Beautiful in Lawrence's fiction, Schopenhauer's aesthetics relies on a gesture that transcends phenomenal and subjective relations between objects and individuals and aspires towards a vision of unrelated, ideal existence. A work of art or a Sublime/Beautiful vision "plucks the object of its contemplation out of the stream of the world's course, and has it isolated before it"<sup>458</sup>. Though Lewis' use of Schopenhauer's aesthetics might seem surprising, the concept of detachment understood as transcendence of temporal and spatial relations between objects in fact fits into Lewis' anti-vitalist attitude quite neatly.

After introducing a lengthy extract from Schopenhauer's *World as a Will and Phenomenon* (which includes precisely the above quoted passage) Lewis proceeds to contrast Schopenhauer's method with the method of "Bergsonian impressionism." According to Lewis' interpretation, Bergson's philosophy, instead of stripping the contemplated object of anything that is not essential to it (i.e. of its spatio-temporal relations), "would urge [us] to leave the object in its vital *milieu*"<sup>459</sup>. Lewis continues:

We might contrast this [Schopenhauer's aesthetics] with a Bergsonian impressionism, which would urge you to leave the object in its vital *milieu*. Again, the 'presence of mind' in the

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<sup>457</sup> Lewis, Objectives of Plastic Art 32.

<sup>458</sup> Schopenhauer 239.

<sup>459</sup> Lewis, Objectives of Plastic Art 31.



midst of the empirical reality which Schopenhauer cites as the characteristic of genius, this coldness is a self-isolation, in any case; for he who opens his eyes wide enough will always find himself alone. Where the isolation occurs, of subject or object, outside or inside the vortex, is the same thing. *The impressionist doctrine, with its interpenetrations, its tragic literalness, its wavy contours*, its fashionable fuss, points always to one end: the state in which life itself supersedes art: which as Schopenhauer points out, would be excellent if people knew how to use their eyes. But if they did it would no longer be ‘life’ as we commonly mean it.<sup>460</sup>

The difference between the two approaches is in their treatment of the artistic object as a stable and closed structure, or as a substance on one hand, and as an open and dynamic object, or a flux, on the other.<sup>461</sup> Consistently with his classicist orientation, Lewis clearly favours Schopenhauer’s aesthetics to the loss of contours, interpenetrations and general haziness of spatial form. With this being said, the foundation of Lewis’ anthropology of the 1920s relies on the contrast between the time-philosophy of Bergson, which Lewis relates to organicism (from his perspective quite correctly), and the pessimism of Schopenhauer’s idealistic philosophy. In his own words:

The ‘organic’ life-doctrine of the time-philosophy, advertising itself as the enemy of ‘materialism’ or of matter, of all that is too ‘concrete’, makes upon the surface and with some speciousness, if not looked at too closely, a considerable sentimental appeal. It is an appeal away from ‘material or matter,’ in the direction of ‘life’ and ‘mind.’ [...] From a popular point of view, then, the main feature of the space-time doctrines (and with Bergson it was precisely the same thing) is that they offer, with the gestures of a saviour, *something* (that they call ‘organism,’ and that they assure us tallies with the great theory of Evolution – just to cheer us up!) – something *alive*, in place of ‘mechanism’: ‘organism’ in place of ‘matter.’<sup>462</sup>

This quote from Lewis’ *Time and Western Man* (1927) summarizes and brings together all the different threads of our discussion so far. Bergson’s philosophy is understood here as primarily concerned with continuity and discontinuity of objects, their mutual relation and the “ontological” value of their discrete (spatial), fluid or continuous (temporal) existence. According to Lewis, by defining an object as “organic” part of its vital milieu we dangerously compromise its discrete existence and thereby make it

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<sup>460</sup> Lewis, Objectives of Plastic Art 31.

<sup>461</sup> Note that Lewis’ idea of the work of art almost exactly matches the definition of art given by “an anonymous correspondent from Rome” in the extract from Boccioni’s essay, see note. 345.

<sup>462</sup> Lewis, Time 174.

ontologically unstable. “Safe” existence of objects is in Lewis’ aesthetics clearly connected with the stability of its form, surface and contour. This recurrent motif of our discussion naturally applies to man and his subjectivity and individuality as well as to material objects.

Attempting the strictest application of this metaphysics, Cantleman’s effort to hold his own against Nature’s threat (regardless of its success) should thus be seen as a struggle for unrelated, i.e. uncompromised existence, independent of the organic whole of Nature. Unlike Stella, in whose mind and body “warm earth consent flowed up [...] from all the veins of the landscape”<sup>463</sup>, Cantleman’s identity remains, or at least aspires to remain, uncompromised, precisely because he keeps himself detached and clearly separated from the unpredictable organism of Nature in which “everything is enchanted with itself and with everything else.” Moreover, Stella, who is depicted in the story as extremely passive, a mere personification of the blind, procreative will of the spring Nature, has no existence as an individual precisely since she does not, or cannot, choose not to follow Nature’s bidding. Stella’s “melting gratitude” thus becomes a perfect embodiment of a pseudo-Lawrentian “renunciation of the will to self [...] exacted as the first step in all mystical ‘merging.’”<sup>464</sup>

Cantleman’s story can be further understood to work with two contrary approaches to reality: one intuitive and sympathetic and the other alert and detached. These two attitudes exhibit a number of analogies with the two basic *Kunstwollen* of Worringer’s influential *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908). Inspired by the aesthetic theories of his mentor, Alois Riegl, Worringer offers an interpretation that transcends materialistic and mimetic aesthetics in favour of psychological interpretations based on two contrasting psychological poles – abstraction and empathy. On the one hand, there is a naturalistic, mimetic art which is fond of “organic” structures (Classical Greek Art, European art from Renaissance to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) and on the other, there is the non-mimetic, non-representational, abstract aesthetics of Egyptian, Byzantine and primitive art.

Worringer’s and Riegl’s thought was imported to England in the work of T. E. Hulme, in particular in his essay “Modern Art and Its Philosophy” (delivered as a lecture in

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<sup>463</sup> Lewis, Cantleman 13

<sup>464</sup> Lewis, Time 328.

January 1914 and published posthumously in *Speculations* in 1924). Hulme exploits Worringer's theory of empathy and abstraction and expands it to a commentary of modern art, which in certain respects goes beyond Worringer's original intention.<sup>465</sup> Hulme claims that "there are two kinds of art, geometrical and vital, absolutely distinct in kind from one another" and "each of these arts springs from and corresponds to a certain general attitude towards the world."<sup>466</sup> Importantly for our discussion, Hulme enhances Worringer's thesis by attaching positive value to "geometric art", whose re-emergence in modern art he sees as "the precursor of the corresponding attitude towards the world, and so, of the break up of the Renaissance humanistic attitude."<sup>467</sup> For Hulme, the "Renaissance attitude" is "the opposite of the doctrine of original sin, [i.e. opposite to] the belief that man as a part of nature was after all something satisfactory,"<sup>468</sup> which he finds incompatible with his classicist adherence to the idea of limit and closed structures.

Lewis, who nicknamed his friend "Hulme of the Original Sin" on account of his insistence on this theory, nevertheless shares some of the pessimism of Hulme's anthropology. As we will observe in the following discussion, this is particularly evident in his theory of the comic, and the essentially limited, mechanic and animalistic nature of human existence. The "ultimate attack upon the [human] Subject" is understood in Lewis' psychology as a "universal attack upon 'Substance,' and upon common-sense of Schoolmen, or [...] upon the believes of Classical world."<sup>469</sup> To be detached from the surrounding madness of natural things as well as from one's wild body thus means to keep oneself separate from the corrosive effects of losing one's substance and integrate into natural organicism and spatio-temporal relativity of mechanical existence, i.e. into life. Analogically to the effects of the organicist doctrines:

The inner meaning of *time-philosophy*, from whatever standpoint you approach it, and however much you paste it over with confusing advertisements of 'life,' of 'organism,' is the doctrine of a mechanistic universe; periodic; timeless, or nothing but 'time,' whichever you prefer; and above all, essentially *dead*. A certain *deadness*, a lack of nervous power, an

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<sup>465</sup> The most obvious difference is that Worringer's analysis was not meant as a comment on the newly emerging geometric or abstract arts such as Cubism or Vorticism.

<sup>466</sup> Hulme 77 – 78.

<sup>467</sup> Hulme 78.

<sup>468</sup> Hulme 80.

<sup>469</sup> Lewis, *Time* 406.

aversion to anything suggesting animal vigour, characterizes all the art, as has already been pointed out, issuing from this philosophy. Or in the exact mixing in the space-time is scheme of all the 'matter' and all the 'organism' together, you get to a sort of vegetable or vermiform average. It is very mechanical; and according to our human, aristocratic standards of highly organized life, it is very dead. The theoretic truth that the time-philosophy affirms is a mechanistic one. It is the conception of an aged intelligence, grown mechanical and living upon routine and memory, essentially; its tendency, in its characteristic working, is infallibly to transform the living into the machine, with a small, unascertained, but uninteresting margin of freedom.<sup>470</sup>

Two points in this passage should be emphasized. First, everything that is "organic", for the reasons suggested above, compromises human intellect-based individuality and turns human life into the "life" of the body or an abstract Life driven by some external pantheistic or organic principle.<sup>471</sup> This pantheistic and mechanistic world represents "the 'organic' world of chronological mentalism, [where] you lose not only the clearness of outline, the static beauty, of the things you commonly apprehend; you lose also the clearness of outline of your own individuality which apprehends them."<sup>472</sup> For Lewis, this represents a process of effectual transfer of control from the rational inside (intellect) to the mechanical and deterministic outside which at best introduces heterogeneity into the Self and makes it lose its (substantial) unity. Such "life" is mechanical, absurd and essentially "dead", because it is not "alive" enough to make a free choice as an independent and self-determining individual.<sup>473</sup>

Allowing oneself to be constituted by an external principle is thus seen as the death of a human being, understood as a unique, free, autonomous, self-aware individual, independent of the life of a wild, uncontrolled body. To make matters even more complicated, the deadness here should not be confused with the related but not identical deadness of the work of art in the above quoted extract from *Tarr*. In *Tarr*, and elsewhere, while defining art, its deadness means the absence of the sentimental quality brought by "life" (qua Nature), which is essentially mechanical and therefore "dead", because it is not based on freedom and individuality. Analogically, "life" can, as the opposite of art, understood as the organic life of body and Natural instinct which, again

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<sup>470</sup> Lewis, *Time* 88. My italics.

<sup>471</sup> Examples of these principles would be instinct, intuition, empathy, duration, forces of the living Cosmos, telepathy, etc.

<sup>472</sup> Lewis, *Time* 175.

<sup>473</sup> Dasenbrock 176.

paradoxically, deadens those who are not “alive” enough to transcend its effects. As the following passage neatly summarizes, all of these notions are in Lewis’ (but also Lawrence’s and Woolf’s thinking) inseparably connected with spatial phenomena such as line, mass, form, outline, unity and multiplicity, discontinuity or distinction.

Dispersal and transformation of the space-phenomenon into time-phenomenon throughout everything – that is the trick of this doctrine [Bergson’s impressionism]. Pattern, with its temporal multiplicity, and its chronologic depth, is to be substituted for a thing, with its one time, and its spatial depth. A crowd of hurrying shapes, a temporal collectivity, is to be put in place of a simple object of what it hostilely indicates as the ‘spatializing’ mind. The new dimension introduced is the variable mental dimension of time. So the notion of the transformed ‘object’ offered us by this doctrine is plainly the nature of a ‘futurist’ picture, like a running dog with a hundred legs and a dozen backs and heads. In place of the characteristic static ‘form’ you have a ‘formation’ – as it is characteristically called – a repetition of a particular shape; you have a battalion of forms in place of one form. In your turn, ‘you’ become the series of *temporal repetitions*; you are no longer a centralized self, but a spun-out, strung-along series, a pattern-of-a-self, depending like a musical composition upon time; an object, too, *always in the making*, who are your states. So you are a history: there must be no Present for you. [...] The valuable advantages of being a ‘subject’ will perhaps scarcely be understood by the race of historical objects that might be expected to ensue.<sup>474</sup>

Grouping Bergsonism, impressionism and Italian Futurism under the joint banner of organic “Time-philosophy” may seem rather harsh, however, as we have seen in the discussion of Woolf’s and especially Lawrence’s fiction and aesthetics in the previous chapter, it makes perfect sense and is fully consonant with Lewis’ critique of these art movements ever since his Vorticist period. The “plastic” logic behind Lewis’ reasoning and his adherence to the classical, common-sense attitude “of the great sixteenth-century realists”<sup>475</sup>, forces Lewis to focus his attention exclusively on “positional” relations between individual objects and discard all “relations” that could question their individual ontological status. In other words, all relations represented in Lewis’ art<sup>476</sup> express only juxtapositions and compositions that do not compromise the essential integrity of the juxtaposed objects. On the contrary, Time-philosophies replace the clear and distinct form of objects as closed structures with temporal successions, and turn

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<sup>474</sup> Lewis, Time 181.

<sup>475</sup> Lewis, Time 380.

<sup>476</sup> Unlike Lawrence’s “soft flow” that connects objects on an instinctive level and thereby questions their individual status as “thinks in themselves.”

these into open structures that show objects as interpenetrating each other (Futurism) or with blurred and vague contours (Impressionism).

Every process which replaces static substances of classical philosophy by chronological explanations of time philosophy compromises and disintegrates “intellectual centre[s] of control” in individual beings and thereby threatens their autonomy and individuality. Commenting on William James’ conversion [...] of “the *Me* of common-sense into a meeting-place of abstract *actions* and *objects*” and condemning the statement that: “our belief that the *Me* of yesterday is the same as the *Me* of today is ‘a mere subjective phenomenon’”<sup>477</sup>, Lewis writes:

One of the aspects of this question that should interest us most is that, in this jamesian [sic] dispensation, the one *Me* or *Subject* of tradition becomes a *class of Me’s* or a crowd of *Me’s*. ‘Nothing,’ it is said, ‘necessitates the use of nominal entities of this sort. *Classes* or *series* can perform these functions as well as they.’ The distinction between sense-datum and sensation disappears.<sup>478</sup>

This situation results in what Lewis systematically tries to avoid in his work, namely the loss of the centralised and coherent idea of human individuality, personality and autonomy with regards to the external world. In the time philosophies that promote this world view:

You are forced to a fusion of the world of objects with the fact of apprehension, so that when you see a tree, you *are* the tree - or, since there is no ‘you,’ *the seeing of the tree is the tree*. If there is no you this must be so: there is only the tree -which, however, is not a tree properly speaking. There are trees, kettles, chairs, dogs, men, billiard-balls (of sorts). But it is undemocratic to suggest that the man sitting on the chair thinks but not the chair. [...] Animism is reinstated. If *you* are not, but the tree you see is, if only physical objects are (though for ‘object’ you must understand some dynamical group of stated duration, not the ‘object’ of general perception) then they must be admitted into the psychic league of minds. The ‘psyche’ disappears; but everything becomes psychic.<sup>479</sup>

Crucially for our discussion, Lewis’ scathing analysis picks up precisely the question which Virginia Woolf, echoing the discussion of subjectivity in James’ *Principia Ethica*, asks herself in “Street Haunting” when she writes that:

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<sup>477</sup> Lewis Time 360.

<sup>478</sup> Lewis Time 362.

<sup>479</sup> Lewis Time 362.

[w]hen [Nature] set about her chief masterpiece, the making of man, she should have thought of one thing only. Instead, turning her head, looking over her shoulder, into each one of us she let creep instincts and desires which are utterly at variance with his main being, so that we are streaked, variegated, all of mixture.<sup>480</sup>

Woolf's texts, discussed in chapter one, confirm that the qualitative heteronomy, or "mixture" of human nature is only a reformulation of the problem of identity of the Self in time: "Is the true self this which stands on the pavement in January, or that which bends over the balcony in June?"<sup>481</sup> Both Woolf's and Lawrence's work in this respect point against Lewis' classicist maxim, which is at the same time one of the main motives of his fiction, which states that the "essence of our personality, or of an 'individual consciousness,' is that it should be *stable*."<sup>482</sup> Stability, which Lewis postulates as the main criterion of subjective identity, becomes in Lewis' 1920's writings the first condition for an intelligible, objective and common-sense world. The individuality of human subject and the common sense, autonomous nature of clearly outlined and discrete objects depend precisely on this stability.

In his essay "Humanism and the Religious Attitude" (1915-1916) Hulme addresses precisely these problems and, referring directly to Bergsonian metaphysics, writes: "We constantly tend to think that the discontinuities in nature are only *apparent*, and that a fuller investigation would reveal the underlying continuity."<sup>483</sup> Despite formulating a more nuanced argument than Lewis and suggesting that "we must make use both of the categories of continuity and discontinuity", Hulme is quick to add that: "[t]his shrinking from a *gap* or jump in nature has developed to a degree which paralyzes any objective perception, and prejudices our seeing things as they really are."<sup>484</sup>

Sharing with Hulme the Schopenhauerian pessimism and classicist faithfulness to "the conception of limit"<sup>485</sup>, Lewis' other main objection against organic and time philosophies (like Bergson's) aims at the way these philosophies sentimentally reject matter and space and thereby conceal the pessimistic and limited reality of human existence. It is precisely the limited nature of human existence which Lewis' art aims to

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<sup>480</sup> Virginia Woolf, Selected Essays 182 - 183.

<sup>481</sup> Virginia Woolf, Selected Essays 182 - 183. My italics.

<sup>482</sup> Lewis, Time 192.

<sup>483</sup> Hulme 3.

<sup>484</sup> Hulme 4.

<sup>485</sup> Hulme 120.

satirize, for example in Cattleman's story. Echoing Hulme's conviction that "man is an extraordinarily fixed animal whose nature is absolutely constant"<sup>486</sup>, which is part of his doctrine of original sin (viz. above), Lewis summarizes the role of the work of art and claims that:

The art impulse reposes upon a conviction that the state of limitation of the human being is more desirable than the state of the automaton; or a feeling of the gain and significance residing in this human fallibility for us. To feel that our consciousness is bound up with this non-mechanical phenomenon of life; that, although helpless in face of the material world, we are in some way superior to and independent of it; and that our mechanical imperfection is the symbol of that. In art we are in a sense playing at being what we designate as matter. We are entering the forms of the mighty phenomena around us, and seeing how near we can get to being a river or a star, without actually *becoming* that.<sup>487</sup>

Organic art tends to fail in its educative or social function because it prevents viewers from seeing the essentially limited condition into which their existence is about to collapse and instead invites them to emphatically embrace the illusions it creates. Lewis' aesthetics thus gains an important social or educational dimension. To put the matter crudely, Lewis does not paint machines and other mechanical devices because he "likes them" or approves of them philosophically but because he uses the "dehumanized style in the interest of making a comment about the dehumanisation of the modern world."<sup>488</sup> This is something that no organicist art can achieve, due to its optimism and sentimental fallacies. In this respect Lewis adheres to the general principle of the Worringer's and Hulme's distinction between optimistic-emphatic and pessimistic-geometrical aesthetics. The representation of a man-machine, which is at the heart of Lewis' theory of the comic, thus serves him as:

a mode of satiric representation of the modern. His drawings of the Vorticist period often depict man as a kind of machine. No *emphatic identification* with the figures in these drawings is invited or allowed: both artist and beholder stand off and engage in detached observation. Lewis is not judging these figures as much as reflecting upon what it means to be modern, to live in a mechanized environment, and to be controlled by mechanization.<sup>489</sup>

In the following discussion we will examine the main targets of Lewis' satire of the mechanical principle of being dead or not sufficiently alive in the short stories and

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<sup>486</sup> Hulme 116.

<sup>487</sup> Lewis, Objectives of Plastic Art 26.

<sup>488</sup> Dasenbrock 47.

<sup>489</sup> Dasenbrock 46. My italics.



examine various representations of human bodies: the wild body, the dancing body, the body immersed in habit and the body immersed in its environment.

### 3.6 A Lecture in Human Entomology

“There was no intention in these stoppages on my zigzag course across Western France of taking a human species, as an entomologist would take a *Distoma* or a *Narbonne Lycosa*, to study.”<sup>490</sup>

In the following discussion we will attempt to apply the discussed theoretical background and focus on one of the most typical features of Lewis’ fiction, namely, on his treatment of human body. For Lewis, human body is one of the most prominent symbols of the essentially limited nature of human condition. Understood in this way, it is always referred to as “The Wild Body - that small, primitive, literally antediluvian vessel in which we set out on our adventures.”<sup>491</sup>

As was already evident in the discussion of “Cantleman’s Spring Mate” and in the above quoted definition of detachment, Lewis’ theory of the comic relies on the contrast between the mechanical nature of the body which is never sufficiently alive, and human intellect which would ideally guide it. The existence of a comic object is for Lewis necessarily connected with an explicitly Cartesian dualism of mind and body, the later passive and immersed in life and the former, as detached as possible, laughing (at itself as well as at others) and observing. This observation is usually confined to the detached observer, or the “one that never enters into life, but that travels about in a vessel to whose destiny it is momentarily attached. That is, of course, the laughing observer, and the other is the Wild Body.”<sup>492</sup> As Lewis rather straightforwardly and without much arguing puts it: “to assume the dichotomy of mind and body is necessary here, without arguing it; for it is upon that essential separation that the theory of laughter here proposed is based.”<sup>493</sup>

In a short essay fittingly entitled “The Meaning of the Wild Body”, Lewis explains the principles of his comic using following examples: (a) the “animal life” of human bodies (“there is nothing that is animal, and we as bodies are animals, that is not absurd”), (b) “the sensations resulting from the observations of a *thing* behaving like a person” and

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<sup>490</sup> Wyndham Lewis, *The Wild Body* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1928) 120.

<sup>491</sup> Lewis, *Time* 239.

<sup>492</sup> Lewis, *Body* 244-5.

<sup>493</sup> Lewis, *Body* 244.

finally with (c) “the movement or intelligent behaviour of matter, any autonomous movement of matter”.<sup>494</sup> He proceeds to expand on these ideas and observes what promises to be an ideal incarnation of a comic moment - the spectacle of dance, music and public performances in stories like “Beau Sejour”, “Franciscan Adventures”, “Cornac and His Wife”, “Brotcotnaz”, “The Death of the Ankou” and *Tarr*.

The majority of Lewis’ stories feature a main character who is very often the narrator of the story and embodies Lewis’ comical, aesthetical and philosophical principles. Cantleman, Frederic Tarr or Ker - Orr, are all Lewis’ avatars, observers of life, emissaries of reason in the wasteland of mechanical existence, “soldiers of humour” and “laughing machines.” Given the presence of this vigilant and ever-observing audience, which constantly searches for the queerest specimen to observe and manipulate into situations which best display its bodily nature, Lewis’ fiction acquires a markedly performative quality which turns the world into an involuntary stage. This inevitably causes life and art, which should have been clearly distinguished as a clear cut duality, to become intermingled and difficult to dissociate in Lewis’ fiction. As Anastasia points out in *Tarr*: ““You say that the actors upon the stage are pure life, yet they represent something we do not. But ‘all the world is stage,’ isn’t it?””<sup>495</sup>

This performative quality reaches the height of its intensity in scenes which themselves portrait a performance. Such scenes often rely on a triple chain of observation - the reader observes the narrator as he observes a “wild body”, whether his own or someone else’s, which may, in an extreme situation, observe yet another “wild body.” These proverbial plays within a play, fully exploit their didactic potential and mercilessly reveal the comic “[b]eauty [which] occurs in the way that is met in motor-car construction or the human body.”<sup>496</sup> As in the case of Hamlet, Lewis’ stories reveal the truth about the protagonists as well as about the audience. This situation of multiple observation is presented in the most instructive way in Lewis’ short story “The Cornac and his Wife”.

Originally published in 1909 in the October volume of *The English Review* under the title “Les Saltimbanques” and later substantially reedited for *The Wild Body* (1927) collection as “The Cornac and His Wife”, the story combines all the principles of

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<sup>494</sup> Lewis, *Body* 248.

<sup>495</sup> Lewis, *Tarr* 264.

<sup>496</sup> Lewis, *Objectives of Plastic Art* 32.

Lewis' aesthetics: detached observation, mechanical performance of wild bodies and an anthropological study of the "machine men." "The Cornac and His Wife" is a story of a pitiful family of wandering circus performers "lost in a land peopled by sodden mammoths possessed of a deeply rooted taste for outdoor performances."<sup>497</sup> The story systematically works with a whole range of animal, entomological and naturalistic metaphors that describe human bodies, human behaviour and human nature in general. The circus owner looks like a "rooster who is about to crow"<sup>498</sup>, he performs like "a cheerful automaton"<sup>499</sup> and is affected like a "droll gay bird"<sup>500</sup>. His wife is daily forced to "exhibit her shrivelled legs in a pantomime horse"<sup>501</sup> as a part of her performance in which she is required to "crucify herself with a scarecrow abandon, this iron and blood automaton, and affect to represent the factor of sex in a geometrical posturing."<sup>502</sup>

The story is an ideal example of Lewis' main artistic strategy – the method of detached observation. Based on a complex structure of observations, the story features an omniscient narrator, who observes the performers but also their audience. The audience in turn observe the performers, both before, during and after their performance, and finally, the performers, with "unanimity and brutal hatred"<sup>503</sup>, observe the crowd. The complexity of this structure of mutual observation and savage hatred between the audience and the performers can be seen in a memorable scene in which the proprietor secretly watches his wife and child during one of their "artistic" numbers from the auditorium:

The proprietor stood some distance away and observed this event as one of the public. I leant on the barrier near him, and wondered if he ever willed his family to fall. I was soon persuaded, on observing him for a short while, that he could never be visited by such a mild domestic sensation. He wished steadily and all the time, it was quite certain, that the earth would open with a frantic avulsion, roaring as it parted, decorated with heavy flames, across the middle of the place set aside for his performance; that everybody there would immediately be hurled into this chasm, and be crushed flat as it closed up. The Public on its

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<sup>497</sup> Lewis, Body 138.

<sup>498</sup> Lewis, Body 144.

<sup>499</sup> Lewis, Body 146.

<sup>500</sup> Lewis, Body 141.

<sup>501</sup> Lewis, Body 92.

<sup>502</sup> Lewis, Body 139.

<sup>503</sup> Lewis, Body 140.

side, of course, merely wished that the entire family might break their necks one after the other, the clown smash his face every time he fell, and so on.<sup>504</sup>

The observational interplay, together with the enclosed space of the observed microcosm, constitutes the typical spatial arrangement of Lewis' short fiction. Lewis' stories are usually bipolar and show an unequal relationship between observer and observed, in which the main observer, i.e. the narrator, always remains (or thinks he remains) "above" the situation, i.e. above life. Lewis' stories are in this respect extreme topological, or rather presenting a topological pattern of bizarre encounters. As Lewis puts it in the introduction to his "Soldier of Humour": "I am *never* serious about anything. I simply cannot help converting everything into burlesque patterns."<sup>505</sup> An enclosed structure "burlesque patterns" is perhaps the most suitable description of the spatial arrangement of Lewis's stories.

As a part of this strategy, Lewis' fiction observes characters as they build their subjective worlds, their living spaces that would stabilise their monotonous existence in a machine-like habitat. Not unlike in Lawrence's fiction<sup>506</sup>, these habitats present an enclosed semiotic environment which, together with Lewis' practise of describing characters using insect and animal metaphors, justifies the use of the term Umwelt, as described by the founder of biosemiotics, Jakob von Uexküll. In a section titled "Utilisation of Meaning" of *Theory of Meaning*, von Uexküll, offers a description of an environment that can be read as an exhaustive portrayal of Lewis' microcosms:

The habitat of an animal, which spreads out around it, transforms itself before its eyes into its Umwelt (subjective universe), where the most varied meaning-carriers scurry about. The habitat of the plant, which is limited to the area around its location, transforms itself, from the plant's point of view, into a dwelling-integument consisting of various meaning factors that are subject to regular change. The life-task of the animal and the plant consists of utilizing the meaning-carriers and the meaning-factors, respectively, according to their particular building-plan.<sup>507</sup>

The setting of Lewis' stories reminds us of a fixed battle-plan that mechanically pre-determines every action of its "inhabitants", reminding us of the habitual behaviour of

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<sup>504</sup> Lewis, Body 139 - 140.

<sup>505</sup> Lewis, Body 4.

<sup>506</sup> Such as for example in Lawrence's at length discussed "The Shades of Spring" (see section 2.4) or "The Man Who Loved Islands".

<sup>507</sup> Jakob von Uexküll, "The Theory of Meaning, *Semiotica* 42 1982: 36.

Lewis' characters, especially in stories like "Bestre", "Death of the Ankou", or "The Cornac and His Wife", as well as a number of his pictures, such as *The Plan of War* (1914). More importantly, like Uexküll's insects, Lewis' mechanical-men plan and assess the "meaning-factors" and "meaning-carriers" that enter their subjective environment only through the prism of their habitual existence. The method of detached observation is the only way to penetrate the deadening mechanical reality in this situation. A short extract from Lewis' "Franciscan Adventures" can serve as a useful example of this tendency. In this passage the narrator tries to find out what is the meaning ascribed to him by a homeless singer whom he approaches:

What was I? That did not exercise him. Once or twice he looked at me, not certainly with curiosity, but with a formal attention. An inscrutable figure had beckoned to him, and was now treating him for no reason beyond that he was. (This might be a strange circumstance. But it possessed no monopoly of strangeness.) His cigarettes though not strong, were good. He was a foreigner. That was sufficient. François was not interested in other people, except as illustrations of elementary physics. Some people repelled him, violently on occasion, and set up interferences, resulting in hunger and thirst. He lived in outer space, outcast, and only came to earth to drink and get a crust. There people mattered, for a moment, but without identity.<sup>508</sup>

This passage also illustrates another characteristic quality of Lewis' fiction, namely, a considerable attention paid to violence, cruelty and certain vileness of the wild bodies of both the observer and the observed. Lewis' idea of comicality goes in this respect beyond mere satire and his humour is quite different from the naïve and good-hearted nudging of Woolf's stories and essays. In its focus on violence, bodily anomaly and deformity (viz. the following discussion of "Death of the Ankou") it is much closer to Lawrentian stories like "The Blind Man", "The Old Adam", "The Prussian Officer" or stories from the Nottinghamshire mining community, especially "Miner at Home", which stands quite close to Lewis' portraits in its attention to the animal-like aspects of the miner-species.

The violence of Lewis' stories might occasionally seem excessive. Perhaps the best example would be from Lewis' story "The French Poodle" in which the protagonist brutally kills his dog because he is "physically as well as psychologically scarred"<sup>509</sup> by his war experience. Despite this, it is still possible to see the violence as a necessary

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<sup>508</sup> Lewis, *Body* 192.

<sup>509</sup> Chapman 59.

component of the human condition, habit, or simply the routine of one's mechanical existence. Consequently, violence is according to Lewis of the essence for the observer's *laughter*, as distinguished from smiling wit, as Lewis himself adds:

I have described the nature of my own humour—how, as I said, it went over into everything, making a drama of mock-violence of every social relationship. Why should it be so *violent*—so mock-violent—you may at the time have been disposed to enquire? Everywhere it has seemed to be compelled to go into some frame that was always a simulacrum of mortal combat. Sometimes it resembled a dilution of the Wild West film, chaplinesque in its violence. Why always *violence*? However, I have often asked that myself. For my reply here I should go to the modern Circus or to the Italian Comedy, or to Punch. Violence is [...] merely the inversion or failure of *force*.<sup>510</sup>

Setting aside the potentially problematic nature of Lewis' argument and the relevance of the adjective "chaplinesque" in describing his fictional cruelty, the role of violence is most strikingly visible in stories like "Bestre", "Beau Sojour" or "Brotcotnaz", alongside war stories such as "King of the Trenches". "Brotcotnaz" in particular relies for its effect on a repetitive cycle of violent beating which the main character, Brotcotnaz, inflicts on his wife Julie. This mechanical cycle of violence is not broken by narrator's intrusion or by some other moral gesture but by an accident in which Julie is almost killed in a cart accident and loses her arm and leg. The severity of his wife's injuries leads to a sadly grotesque pseudo-epiphany which drives Brotcotnaz out of his "habit" of beating his wife himself. The resulting confusion, and the fact that his wife was injured through some other agent than himself, created a "vacuum of [Brotcotnaz's] mind, out of which all the machinery of habit had been momentarily emptied".<sup>511</sup>

### 3.7 The Dance of the Wild Body

"Our Vortex Will not Hear of Anything But Its Disastrous Polished Dance"<sup>512</sup>

The bizarrely grotesque nature of this story is enhanced by the fact that besides being one of Lewis' woman-beating brutes, Brotcotnaz is also extremely fond of dancing. As the narrator puts it: "the tread of this timid giant is softer than a nun's—the supple quick-giving at the knees at each step that I have described is the result no doubt of his fondness for the dance, in which he was so rapid, expert, and resourceful in his

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<sup>510</sup> Lewis, *Body* 159.

<sup>511</sup> Lewis, *Body* 230.

<sup>512</sup> Wyndham Lewis, "Our Vortex," *Blast!* 1 Jun. 1914: 147.

youth.”<sup>513</sup> The narrator, being a skilful observer, is quick to connect Brotcotnaz dexterity with his fondness of dancing and provokes his victim to confess more:

‘You are fond of dancing,’ I said. His large tender steady blue eyes, suffused with the witchery of his secret juices, smiled and smiled: he informed me softly: ‘J’suis maître danseur. C’est mon plaisir!’ The buzzing breton drawl, with as deep a ‘z’ as the dialect of Somerset, gave a peculiar emphasis to the *C’est mon plaisir!* He tapped the table, and gazed with the full benignity of his grin into my face. ‘I am master of all the breton dances,’ he said. ‘The aubade, the gavotte——?’ ‘Why, yes, the breton gavotte.’ He smiled serenely into my face. It was a blast of innocent happiness. I saw as I looked at him the noble agility of his black faun-like figure as it must have rushed into the dancing crowd at the Pardon, leaping up into the air and capering to the *biniou* with grotesque elegance, while a crowd would gather to watch him. Then taking hands, while still holding their black umbrellas, they would spread out in chains, jolting in a dance confined to their rapidly moving feet. And still like a black fountain of movement, its vertex the flat, black, breton hat, strapped under the chin, he would continue his isolated performance. [...] ‘Is Madame fond of dancing?’ I asked. ‘Why, yes. Julie can dance.’ He rose, and extending his hand to his wife with an indulgent gallantry, he exclaimed: ‘Viens donc, Julie! Come then. Let us dance.’ Julie sat and sneered through her vinous mask at her fascinating husband. He insisted, standing over her with one toe pointed outward in the first movement of the dance, his hand held for her to take in a courtly attitude. ‘Viens donc, Julie! Dansons un peu!’ Shedding shamefaced, pinched, and snuffling grins to right and left as she allowed herself to be drawn into this event, she rose. They danced a sort of minuet for me, advancing and retreating, curtsying and posturing, shuffling rapidly their feet. Julie did her part, it seemed, with understanding. With the same smile, at the same pitch, he resumed his seat in front of me.<sup>514</sup>

The “softness” and “indulged gallantry” of this little performance stands in stark contrast with the implied violence of the master dancer, whose beating of his wife is never represented directly in the story that only portrays Julie after she had been beaten. Nevertheless, given the paradoxical and, from a certain perspective, perverted logic of Lewis’ anthropology, both activities - dance and beating - are identical manifestations of the mechanical, repetitive and rhythmical nature of the human machine, or human animal and are subject to the same “comical logic”. As a token of this, Brotcotnaz’s description fits into the general “burlesque” pattern of metaphors and associations connected with a typical specimen of the human animal/machine:

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<sup>513</sup> Lewis, *Body* 215.

<sup>514</sup> Lewis, *Body* 218.

The dimensions of his eyes, and their oily suffusion with smiling-cream, or with some luminous jelly that seems still further to magnify them, are very remarkable. They are great tender mocking eyes that express the coquetry and contentment of animal fats. The sides of his massive forehead are often flushed, as happens with most men only in moments of embarrassment. Brotcotnaz is always embarrassed. But the flush with him, I think, is a constant affluence of blood to the neighbourhood of his eyes, and has something to do with their magnetic machinery. The tension caused in the surrounding vessels by this aesthetic concentration may account for it. What we call a sickly smile, the mouth remaining lightly drawn across the gums, with a slight painful contraction—the set suffering grin of the timid—seldom leaves his face.<sup>515</sup>

Dancing, as a special kind of performance, is a recurrent motif in Lewis' texts. The significance of dance as a medium of finer perception and changed ontological character which threatens the notion of individual existence, as we have seen it in our discussion of dance in D. H. Lawrence, takes quite a different, satiric dimension in Lewis' stories. Lewis' dance is a demystified, machine-activity which does not deliver truths of transcendental states or visions but rather illustrates the mechanical nature of our "wild bodies". We will consider three important instances of dance scenes in the following discussion. These are scenes from "Beau Sejour", "Brotcotnaz" (already discussed) and *Tarr*.

"Beau Séjour" is a narrative which emerged from Lewis' very first published tale "The Pole" (1909) and later appeared in a revised form in *The Wild Body* (1927) collection. Like many of Lewis' stories, it benefits from his observation tour in Spain, France and Brittany and examines one of the "species" Lewis met there, namely the "Pole". Defined as a "national variety of Pension-sponger"<sup>516</sup> a "Pole" is a favourite object of Lewis' observation. A Pole is first of all a long-term occupant of pensions and small hotels "who made 'art' the excuse for a never-ending holiday."<sup>517</sup> The narrative of

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<sup>515</sup> Lewis, *Body* 213.

<sup>516</sup> Lewis, *Body* 66.

<sup>517</sup> Lewis, *Body* 109. A full definition of a Pole goes as follows: In pre-war Europe, which was also even more the Europe of before the Russian Revolution, a curious sect was established in the watering-places of Brittany. Its members were generally known by the peasants as 'Poles.' The so-called 'Pole' was a russian [sic] exile or wandering student, often coming from Poland. The sort that collected in such great numbers in Brittany were probably not politicians, except in the sentimental manner in which all educated Russians before the Revolution were 'radical' and revolutionary. They had banished themselves, for purely literary political reasons, it is likely, rather than been banished. Brittany became a heavenly Siberia for masses of middle-class russian [sic] men and women who made 'art' the excuse for a never-ending holiday. They insensibly became a gentle and delightful parasite upon the French. Since the Revolution (it being obvious that they cannot have vast and lucrative estates, which before the Revolution it was easy for them to claim) they have mostly been compelled to work (Lewis, *Body* 110).



“Beau Séjour” is based on an encounter with an extraordinary “Pole” named Zoborov. The first part of the story consists of a close observation and description of this particular Pole and his classification in the context of his social relations with other Poles who live in the pension, with the owner of the place, Mademoiselle Péronette and with her partner, Mademoiselle Maraude.

After successfully gaining “an insight into the inner social workings of the pension”<sup>518</sup>, the narrator discovers that what makes Zoborov interesting is that he intrigues and carefully manipulate other Poles as well as the owners of the pension with an intention of becoming a partner in the hotel. A complex structure of observation ensues. Not unlike the narrator himself, Zoborov is a “person in the background”. As part of his schemes, Zoborov cultivates his relationship with another inhabitant, a fellow Pole and a violent sociopath named Carl, whose ferocious and completely unpredictable relationship with Mademoiselle Péronette completely destabilises the life of the hotel. Similarly to Brotcotnaz, Carl’s violent escapades reach their maximum in his relationship to women.

The tempestuous relationship between Carl and Mademoiselle Péronette results in a particularly burlesque sequence of events: Carl’s attempt to shoot Mademoiselle Péronette with his revolver, Zoborov’s musical performance in the hotel orchard and the concluding dance sequence. This seemingly arbitrary sequence of bizarre scenes can be found to form the very structure of the story and as such it characterizes Lewis’ stories in general. Having no idea of the social world of the pension, the narrator creates his own idea of it by overhearing apparently disconnected pieces of dialogues, witnessing a number of very violent scenes during his night walks in the hotel corridors, listening to chats at breakfast and collecting other fragmentary observations. These “mysterious messages from arrangements of objects, or the attractive electrical dreaming of landscapes” make full sense to him only in their “after-event-history”<sup>519</sup>, when the narrator contemplates them many years after the events in the pension took place.

As R. W. Dasenbrock has also observed, this event sequence can be seen as a narrative strategy, where the specific events do not simply follow a linearly temporal narrative but “follow one another in the text because they stand in a meaningful relationship, not

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<sup>518</sup> Lewis, Body 74.

<sup>519</sup> Lewis, Bodies 68.

because they follow one another in historical time.”<sup>520</sup> As Dasenbrock points out, Lewis’ departure from traditional chronological narration is already evident in the syntax-based experiments of his “phrase based style”<sup>521</sup> *Enemy of the Stars*, which later inspired Eliot’s *Wasteland*, and in this Vorticist tendency towards the “spatial form” based on non-chronological sequence of images.<sup>522</sup>

Let us start our detailed discussion “Beau Séjour” of with an important scene which takes place immediately after the shooting<sup>523</sup> in which “no one was hurt except a pensionnaire, who was asleep at the time and was hit in the calf.”<sup>524</sup> After this happens, the narrator decides to bring Zoborov, whose presence he feels “was required” and whose reaction he would like to observe. He finds him in the hotel orchard and calmly reports the main events of the incident in short, simple sentences:

I found him [Zoborov] at the bottom of the orchard with two other Poles, in the moonlight, playing a flute. As he lifted his little finger from a stop and released a shrill squeak, he raised one eyebrow, which he lowered again when, raising another finger, he produced a lower note. I sat down beside them. Zoborov finished the tune he was playing. His companions lay at right angles to each other, their heads propped on their bent forearms. ‘Carl has broken out,’ I said. ‘Ah. He is always doing that,’ Zoborov said. ‘He’s been firing a pistol at the proprietress.’ Zoborov lifted one eyebrow, as he had when he released the squeak on the flute. ‘That doesn’t surprise me,’ he said. ‘No one was hurt except a pensionnaire, who was asleep at the time. He hit him in the calf.’ ‘Who was it?’ ‘I don’t know his name.’ [...] The three of them now remained quite immobile, stretched out on the dewy grass in different directions. I got up. [...] I walked back to the house. [...] The little shot pensionnaire was once more back on the bench, by the fire, with his bare leg, bandaged, stretched out horizontally in front of him, his two hands behind his head. At the table sat Carl, his face buried in a large handkerchief, which he held against his forehead,

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<sup>520</sup> Dasenbrock 142.

<sup>521</sup> Dasenbrock 137.

<sup>522</sup> Dasenbrock 141.

<sup>523</sup> The description of the scene goes as follows: “Next night I was sitting in the kitchen reading *l’Eclair de l’Ouest*. Mademoiselle Péronnette and Mademoiselle Maraude were sitting near the lamp on the kitchen table and mending the socks of several pensionnaires, when Carl came in at the door, shouted: ‘Gourte! Brend za bour don rhume!’ . . . and fired three shots from a large revolver at Mademoiselle Péronnette. Two prolonged screams rose from the women, rising and falling through a diapason at each fresh shot. Mademoiselle Péronnette fell to the floor. Carl withdrew. Mademoiselle Péronnette slowly rose from the floor, her hands trembling, and burst into tears. A little Pole who had been curled up asleep on the bench by the fire, and who no doubt had escaped Carl’s notice, got up, and limped towards the table. He had been hit in the calf by a bullet. The women had not been hit, and they rolled up his trousers with execrations of the ‘bandit,’ Carl, and washed and dressed the wound, which was superficial. I went to look for Zoborov (Lewis, Body 80).

<sup>524</sup> Lewis, Body 80.

his shoulders heaving. A great volume of sound rose from him, a rhythmical bellowing of grief.<sup>525</sup>

Despite the shared absurdity, the static, almost geometric composition of the moonlit scene in the orchard sharply contrasts with the dynamic mayhem of the kitchen where the gunfire took place. The narrator finds Zoborov and other “Poles” (in what normally could be described as an idyllic chronotope of contemplation) recumbent under the trees, relaxing, playing flute and stretching their bodies, juxtaposed “at right angles to each other”.<sup>526</sup> However, Lewis is not Lawrence and Zoborov is no Pan, but rather a human-machine whose actions are tied to his squeaking instrument, which squeaks higher or lower tones based on the height of Zoborov’s eyebrow. In a situation in which it is impossible to decide whether the flute is playing Zoborov or Zoborov is playing the flute, the imagery falls in line with the general characterisation of a Pole as a human-machine. In addition to Zoborov’s squeaking, Lewis satirically exploits Futurist fondness for inhuman “noises”, which have become the “language of the new human-mechanical life.”<sup>527</sup> Consequently, all wild bodies in Lewis’ fiction communicate in energetic “rattling”<sup>528</sup>, “spluttering buzz,”<sup>529</sup>, “rumble”<sup>530</sup>, “prolonged screams”<sup>531</sup>, “trumpeting” of a “brazen crow” or “sickly rumble.”<sup>532</sup>

Lewis’ science of noise is an integral part of his conceptualisation of the human body and its comparison with the machine or mechanism on one hand, and, as we have seen in “Cantleman’s Spring Mate”, with animals and insects, on the other.<sup>533</sup> These metaphors help Lewis to formulate his preference for individuality over the collective or natural deadness. Lewis thus elegantly uses zoological and etymological similes to comment on both the nature of the solitary laughing observer and the insect-like nature of wild bodies. For example in *Time and the Western Man* he writes in support of his theory of detachment that: “the life of the large-sized mammal is ‘individualistic’ and free, but is also lived under conditions of relative solitariness; whereas the swarming of

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<sup>525</sup> Lewis, *Body* 82.

<sup>526</sup> Lewis, *Bodies* 80.

<sup>527</sup> F. T. Marinetti, “Manifesto of Futurist Dance,” *Futurism, An Anthology*, Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, Laura Wittman, eds. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009) 236.

<sup>528</sup> Lewis, *Bodies* 73.

<sup>529</sup> Lewis, *Bodies* 75

<sup>530</sup> Lewis, *Bodies* 77.

<sup>531</sup> Lewis, *Bodies* 79.

<sup>532</sup> Lewis, *Bodies* 89.

<sup>533</sup> Later Lewis will add a new, political dimension to the wild body - a communist.

insect life is lived more in accordance with a rigid communistic plan – it is the community that lives, not the individual.”<sup>534</sup>

Lewis uses this poetic strategy not only in his fiction but also in his poetry. For example is one his few poems, the “Engine Fight Talk” (1933):

I said (and I always say these things with the same voice)  
‘Say it with locomotives! Mark well the animal puff!’  
[...]  
‘Say it’ said I ‘with half-machines!’ And then, sublimely hoarse  
With horrid pleasure they *said* it, with puff-puffs - roars upon roars.<sup>535</sup>

Lewis’ description of the wild body in “Beau Sejour” culminates in a dance scene which starts shortly after Zoborov’s arrival. After the calf of the nameless wounded Pole is taken care of, more Poles suddenly flood into the common room of the pension, a piano is brought in and one of the pensionnaires starts to play Blue Danube. In a scene which, in the style of a bizarre stage masque, appears out of the sense happiness after the averted tragedy, we are quite unexpectedly informed that:

Carl and Mademoiselle Péronnette danced. She was a big woman, about thirty. Her empty energetic face was pretty, but rather dully and evenly laid out. Her back when *en fête* was a long serpentine blank with an embroidered spine. When she got up to dance she held herself forward, bare arms hanging on either side, two big meaty handles, and she undulated her *nuque* and back while she drew her mouth down into the tense bow of an affected kiss. While she held her croupe out stiffly in the rear, in muscular prominence, her eyes burnt at you with traditional gallic gallantry, her eyebrows arched in bland acceptance (a static '*Mais oui, si vous voulez!*') of french sex-convention, the general effect intended to be ‘witty’ and suggestive, without vulgarity.<sup>536</sup> I was very much disgusted by her for my part: what she suggested to me was something like a mad butcher, who had put a piece of bright material over a carcase of pork or mutton, and then started to ogle his customers, owing to a sudden shuffling in his mind of the respective appetites. Carl on this occasion behaved like the hallucinated customer of such a pantomime, who, come into the shop, had entered into the spirit of the demented butcher, and proceeded to waltz with his sex-promoted food. The stupid madness, or commonplace wildness, that always shone in his eyes was at full blast as he jolted uncouthly hither and thither, while the proprietress

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<sup>534</sup> Time 318.

<sup>535</sup> Wyndham Lewis, *Collected Play and Poems*, ed. Allan Munton (Manchester: Carcanet New Press, 1979) 21.

<sup>536</sup> Lewis, *Body* 77.

undulated and crackled in complete independence, held roughly in place merely by his two tentacles.

The first section of the dance sequence only adds to the derogatory description of human bodies, this time likened to a mere “piece of material”, or lifeless flesh. Lewis uses the dance scene, a genuine play within a play, to reveal the instinctive, habitual and machine-like nature of human bodies and consequently of the dancers. Using the language of procreative economy, the intoxicating movement reduces both dancers to instinctive consumers of each other, swaying in a dance of a “demented butcher with his sex-promoted food.”

These metaphors are further highlighted by the disgusted comments of the observer, who, keeping himself detached, observes life from the outside of life. Reducing human beings to animals that are bound up in the mechanical cycle of their physiological activities expands on the imagery of body-as-flesh that characterised “Cattleman’s Spring Mate”, but also other stories such as “French Poodle” or “Brotcotnaz.” The imagery of appetite and consumption is a very strong motif that is systematically employed in Lewis’ stories. Lewis extensively uses this image in another of the “Wild Body” texts, namely “Bestre”.

Delivering another lecture in human entomology, the narrator describes in “Bestre” an insect “hive world” inhabited by an innkeeper who grows particularly fond of his obsessive provocations and verbal fights with strangers who pass by his hotel. Bestre, who is another sub-specimen of Lewis’ observer, is systematically compared in the course of the story to an animal or insect that possesses “the anatomical instinct of the hymenopter” and whose nature is to wait in his Umwelt “for its prey’s most morbid spot; for an old wound; for a lurking vanity. He goes into the other’s eye, seeks it, and strikes”. As a consequence, his physical features are adapted to serve this purpose:

His very large eyeballs, the small saffron ocellation in their centre, the tiny spot through which light entered the obese wilderness of his body; his bronzed bovine arms, swollen handles for a variety of indolent little ingenuities; his inflated digestive case, lent their combined expressiveness to say these things; with every tart and biting condiment that eye-fluid, flaunting of fatness (the well-filled), the insult of the comic, implications of indecency, could provide. Every variety of bottom-tapping resounded from his dumb bulk. His tongue stuck out, his lips eructated with the incredible indecorum that appears to be the monopoly of liquids, his brown arms were for the moment genitals, snakes in one massive twist beneath his mammillary slabs, gently riding on a pancreatic swell, each hair on his

oil-bearing skin contributing its message of porcine affront. Taken fairly in the chest by this magnetic attack, I wavered. Turning the house corner it was like confronting a hard meaty gust.<sup>537</sup>

It is important to underline Lewis' stress on the fluidity of animal fats and the "monopoly" of liquids, oils and swelling tissues that accompany Bestre's fondness for procreation and consumption.<sup>538</sup> Further, it is interesting and at the same time paradoxical to observe how Lewis' announced preference for hard shells, ossatures and surfaces contrasts with his obsession with the soft, inert and "unintelligent" elements of human anatomy. This tendency is further marked by Lewis' emphasis on the process of consumption, which is, as any other bodily processes, beyond one's voluntary control, but at the same time is necessary to keep the body alive. Thus, pointing out the fact that Bestre's "war-food" is consists exclusively of people he does not know, the narrator notes that Bestre's "interest die[s] down in his eyes, at the end of twenty-four hours, whether you have assimilated him or not. He only gives you about a day for your meal. He then assumes that you have finished him."<sup>539</sup>

The imagery Lewis uses to describe both Bestre's predatory animalism and the procreative consumption of the dance scenes contributes to the general idea of the human "wild" body in Lewis' anthropology and aesthetics. Especially the "play within the play" of the dance scene in "Beau Séjour" serves to illustrate and confirm truths which were hidden but at the same time silently suspected. What is revealed is first of all the tragic reality of the human condition of all the characters with the exception of the observer. Similar to the dance scenes we have studied in D. H. Lawrence's work, Lewis' interpretation of dance also becomes an occasion in which those who dance are

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<sup>537</sup> Lewis, *Body* 118.

<sup>538</sup> More examples of Lewis' similar treatment of the animal bodies can be found. For example in a short story "The French Poodle" we might encounter the following passage: But the dog soon settled down to novel life. Cairn became excessively fond of it. He abused a man in the street who insulted it. It was a large fat and placid brute that received Rob's caresses with obedient steadiness, occasionally darting friendship back at him. As he held it against his legs felt a deep attachment for this warm bag of blood and bone, whose love was undiluted habit and an uncomplicated magnetism. It recognised his friendliness in spasms of servile good nature, as absentminded as its instincts. Cairn noted all the modes of its nature with a delighted care. Its hunger enthralled him; its ramping gruff enthusiasm at the prospect of the streets filled him with an almost Slavic lyricism and glee. He was calm in the midst of its hysteria; but there was a contented pathos in his quietness. Its adventures with other dogs he followed with indulgence. The amazing physical Catholicism of its taste he felt was a just reproach to his fastidiousness and maturity. It would have approached a rhinoceros with amorous proposals, were it not for elementary prudence. He called his dog Carp. He loved him like a brother" (*The Egoist*, March 1916, 40 - 41).

<sup>539</sup> Lewis, *Body* 126.

subject to changes in their psyche and temporarily find themselves on the edge of inhumanity. In fact, it is possible to push this analogy even further and suggest that for both Lawrence and Lewis, dance reveals something of the true nature of human existence that is kept hidden or unuttered under normal circumstances.

Lawrence's account of the physical instinctive-intuitive or "procreative body"<sup>540</sup> which is together with the "primary human psyche" the main agent of "the true correspondence between the material cosmos and the human soul"<sup>541</sup>, becomes for Lawrence a medium of a different type of sensitivity which eventually questions the coherence of our intellect-based identity. This was particularly evident in Lawrence's dance scenes discussed in the second chapter of this thesis. Understood as a principle which pushes individuals beyond the reach of their intellectual faculties and disables the possibility of detached self-observation, Lawrence's conceptualisation of the human body introduces a mild version of "the fascinating imbecility of the creaking men machines"<sup>542</sup> of Lewis' fiction.

This analogy can be pushed yet one step further. In his "Introduction to These Paintings", Lawrence describes what he calls "the grand rupture"<sup>543</sup> in human consciousness. This rupture started with the Elizabethans and asserts itself in modern man, who consciously and systematically abandons the "procreative" body, "horrified at the merest suggestion of physical connection, as if it were an unspeakable taint."<sup>544</sup> Given the similarities in Lawrence's and Lewis' description of this procreative/ wild body, it is possible to suggest that Lawrence's description of modern man's horror of the physical body finds its truest propagator in Lewis' detached observer, the fiercest promoter of the essential chasm between our rational mind and the wild body. It is crucial to note that Lewis' project is in this sense essentially a project of control, centralisation and struggle against the continual disintegration of the human subject which spins away from its centre as it dances out of the control of the rational. The kitchen dance continues:

With the exception of Mademoiselle Maraude and the bonne amie of a parisian schoolmaster on his vacation, all the guests were men. They danced together timidly and

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<sup>540</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 552.

<sup>541</sup> Lawrence, Symbolic 176.

<sup>542</sup> Lewis, Body 91.

<sup>543</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 552.

<sup>544</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 552.

clumsily; Zoborov, frowning and squinting, stamped over to the schoolmaster's girl, and with a cross gruff hauteur invited her to dance. He rolled his painful proletarian weight once or twice round the room. The 'Blue Danube' rolled on; Carl poured appreciative oily light into Mademoiselle Péronnette's eyes, she redoubled her lascivious fluxions, until Carl, having exhausted all the superlatives of the language of the eyes, cut short their rhythmical advance and, becoming immobile in the middle of the room, clasped her in his arms, where she hung like a dying wasp, Carl devouring with much movement the lower part of her face, canted up with abandon.<sup>545</sup>

The continuation of the dance scene, which further expands Lewis' entomological and animalistic similes, reveals an important contrast between Lawrence's and Lewis' depictions of dancing: none of Lewis' dancers can actually dance. Dance in Lewis' fiction always betrays the limited nature of the dancers and exposes them to ridicule. By contrast, there are almost no bad dancers in Lawrence's fiction. This observation can easily be explained by the different value judgement which both authors ascribe to human bodies and, consequently, their dance which so ostentatiously exposes their true nature. Despite the fact that their conceptions of bodily instincts are essentially the same, both authors judge the physical body differently – Lewis negatively, as something that condemns the life of man to the life of his body (i.e. of an animal, insect or machine), and Lawrence positively, as an agent of “physical communion” not only with other bodies but first of all with “the circumambient cosmos.”<sup>546</sup>

Lawrence and Lewis in this respect share similar ideas on several issues, particularly in rejecting the mechanical aspects of human existence. For Lawrence, this rejection can be achieved in two steps: 1) rejection of the Ideal, i.e. mechanical existence of the ego-based structures of our consciousness, of the mortifying social habits and traditions, and of rational, mental and intellectual approach to reality etc., and 2) re-establishing the *instinctive* vital connection with the forces of the cosmos. For Lewis, whose art depicts a very similar Ideal and mechanical condition of human existence, the only escape from this mechanical existence lies in a conscious, rational gesture, in which the laughter of the detached observer lifts him over the life he lives. The peculiar attraction of Lewis' fiction lies, however, in those moments that reveal the essentially problematic or restricted potential of the redemptive gesture of observation, as in Cattleman's attempt at besting nature. As Lewis has it:

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<sup>545</sup> Lewis, *Body* 92.

<sup>546</sup> Lawrence, *Symbolic* 176.



[i]t is comparatively easy to see that another man, as an animal, is absurd; but it is far more difficult to observe oneself in that hard and exquisite light. But no man has ever continued to live who has observed himself in that manner for longer than a flash. Such consciousness must be of the nature of a thunderbolt. Laughter is only summer-lightning. But it occasionally takes on the dangerous form of absolute revelation. This fundamental self-observation, then, can never on the whole be absolute. We are not constructed to be *absolute observers*. *Where it does not exist at all, men sink to the level of insects*. That does not matter: the ‘lord of the past and the future, he who is the same today and tomorrow’—that ‘person of the size of a thumb that stands in the middle of the Self’—departs. So the ‘Self’ ceases, necessarily. The conditions of an insect communism are achieved.<sup>547</sup>

It is in fact the *imperfect* nature of our capacity to observe that is more typical of life than its pure, absolute form. Observation, understood as a form of self-reflection, is therefore a necessary condition of the human existence, a moment of freedom in which we momentarily step out of the mechanism and reach beyond life.

### **3.8 In-human Humanity and the Elemental Consciousness**

On a number of occasions, Lewis proclaims what has been only implicit in Lawrence’s work, namely that an existence based solely and exclusively on natural and unconscious instincts is just as de-humanizing as an existence based on the machine principle, including Lawrence’s Ideal. The main difference between Lewis and Lawrence is that the former formulates this analogy explicitly whereas Lawrence, while seemingly aware of it, does not turn it into a programmatic statement. Lawrence comes perhaps closest to explicitly formulating this problem in his discussion of what he calls “elemental consciousness” in his *Symbolic Meaning*. Analyzing Roderick Usher’s nervous malady in Poe’s famous *Fall of the House of Usher*, Lawrence writes:

It is a question how much, once the rich centrality of the self is broken, the instrumental consciousness of man can register. When man becomes self-less, wafting instrumental, like a harp in an open window, how much can his elemental consciousness express? It is probable that even the blood as it runs has its own sympathies and responses to the material world, quite apart from seeing. And the nerves we know vibrate all the while to unseen presences, unseen forces. So Roderick Usher quivers on the edge of dissolution.<sup>548</sup>

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<sup>547</sup> Lewis, *Body* 246 - 7.

<sup>548</sup> Lawrence, *Symbolic* 126.

Despite being in possession of some “inordinate sensitivity” and a feeling of being “woven into physical oneness” with the “stones of the house, the fungi, [and] the water in the tarn”<sup>549</sup>, Roderick Usher, now reduced to an “elemental”, or as Lawrence here calls it “instrumental” or “mechanical” consciousness, represents an in-human human who exists in a “post-mortem reality of a living being”<sup>550</sup>. In such a state of existence, “human creatures are absorbed away from themselves”, from their individuality and autonomy, and drawn “into a unification in death”<sup>551</sup>. The Gothic or even Grotesque nature of Lawrence’s fictions such as “The Borderline”, “Glad Ghosts”, or “The Man Who Loved Islands”, or even the *The Trespasser*, explicitly uncovers gaps in all rationalistic, religious or other optimistic accounts of human nature. Similarly to authors such as Poe or Brown, in whose works the “dark irrational power not only destroys the ideal world but splits the subject”<sup>552</sup>, Lawrence postulates a close psychological or even physiological relation to the circumambient cosmos. Lawrence’s affinity between the physical and psychological was, as was argued, inspired by Italian Futurism. It is symptomatic that for both Lawrence and the Futurists, the desired regeneration of human spirit and sensibility, but at the same time seriously compromises its “human” character.

Lawrence expands on these problems in a very important letter to Amy Lowell form 14<sup>th</sup> November 1916. Appraising the “non-emotional aestheticism” of some of Lowell’s poetry, Lawrence goes on to argue that the Americans are “beyond” the English, precisely because they find themselves:

in the last stages of human apprehension of the physico-sensational world, apprehension of the things non-human, not conceptual. We still see with concepts, but you, in the last stages of return, have gone beyond tragedy and emotion, even beyond irony, and have come to the pure mechanical stage of physical apprehension, the *human* unit almost lost, the primary elemental forces, kinetic, dynamic - prismatic, tonic, the great, massive, active, *inorganic* world, elemental, never softened by life, that hard universe of Matter and Force where life is not yet known, come to pass again. [...] Of course, it seems to me this is a real *cul de sac* of art. You cannot get any further. [...] You see it is *uttering pure sensation without concepts*, which is what this futuristic art tries to do. One step further and it passes into

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<sup>549</sup> Lawrence, Symbolic 127.

<sup>550</sup> Lawrence, Symbolic 126.

<sup>551</sup> Lawrence, Symbolic 127.

<sup>552</sup> Hrbata, Procházka 151.

*mere noises*, as the Italian Futurismo poems have done, or mere jags and zig-zags, as the futuristic paintings.”<sup>553</sup>

By claiming that the Americans are “in the last stage of return”, the letter confirms the idea of human psychology as based on the myth of return and the romantic “metaphysics of integration”<sup>554</sup> into unity with the One. The “last stage” which Lawrence mentions, is qualified with an important “almost”, which stands for the last step that prevents the human from getting lost, or to use Lewis’ terms, to sink to the level of insects. Recalling Lawrence’s dual model of human subjectivity as consisting of two opposing drives – the will to the maximum of being and the will towards dissolution - this “final stage” refers to the complete dominance of the latter of the two. At this stage, the human psyche excels in its understanding of the “primary elemental forces, kinetic, dynamic - prismatic, tonic, the great, massive, active, *inorganic* world, elemental, never softened by life” but only at the cost of losing its human character – its intellect, volition and all social, linguistic, moral and other “conceptual” traits.

This stage of return is at the same time extremely close to the vegetative states of consciousness we have observed in Woolf’s fiction and interpreted using Bergson’s hypothetical state of pure perception. Using “pure sensation” instead of “pure perception”, Lawrence’s comment articulates an almost identical inhuman state which is based on “an impersonal basis [...] in which perception coincides with the object perceived”<sup>555</sup> and does not contain any addition of “personal” memory. In Bergson’s conical scheme of human perception<sup>556</sup>, as in Lawrence’s “pure sensation” the point “S” represents pure perception which would capture only the “sensori-motor mechanisms”<sup>557</sup> of the body as it mechanically and causally reacts to the stimuli that come from its surroundings. An existence at the point “S”, hypothetical though it may be, would have the same consequences as the total dominance of the will to dissolution in Lawrence’s psychological model.

The above quoted passage is the last direct mention of Futurism in Lawrence’s letters and it is tempting to speculate that one of the reasons for this is the limitation of art

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<sup>553</sup> Lawrence, Letters III 31

<sup>554</sup> M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1971) 182.

<sup>555</sup> Henri Bergson, Matter and Memory 71.

<sup>556</sup> See Bergson’s cone scheme in the “Interlude No.1”.

<sup>557</sup> Bergson, Matter and Memory 121.

which presents the human subject on the verge of dissolution, becoming one with what it perceives - a pure sensation wherein the subject loses all coherence and unity and eventually dies, “melt[s] out into the darkness and sway[s] there, identified with the great Being.”<sup>558</sup> As we have seen, Lawrence’s fiction contains numerous other images of dissolution.

It is the death of the dissolving body which Gerald experiences on the mountain top in chapter thirty of *Women in Love* and it is the same death which disperses the islander in the final pages of ‘The Man Who Loves Islands’:

[The islander] felt ill, as if he were dissolving, as if dissolution had already set in inside him. Everything was twilight outside, and in his mind and soul. [...] For some moments he swooned unconscious. [...] Like some strange, ethereal animal, he no longer realised what he was doing. Only he still derived his single satisfaction from being alone, absolutely alone, with the space soaking into him.”<sup>559</sup>

Analogous states of mind are experienced by Gerald during one of his discussions with Ursula in *Women in Love*:

He was listening to the faint near sounds, the dropping of water-drops from the oar-blades, the slight drumming of the lanterns behind him, as they rubbed against one another, the occasional rustling of Gudrun’s full skirt, an alien land noise. His mind was almost submerged, he was almost transfused, lapsed out for the first time in his life, into the things about him. For he always kept such a keen attentiveness, concentrated and unyielding in himself. Now he had let go, imperceptibly he was melting into oneness with the whole. It was like pure, perfect sleep, his first great sleep of life. He had been so insistent, so guarded, all his life. But here was sleep, and peace, and perfect lapsing out.<sup>560</sup> (207-8)

Lawrence’s inhuman humanism implies that this dissolution always escapes the control of those who dissolve. The dissolved body, being at the same time a “returned body” in the romantic sense of return to the whole, marks the allegorical termination of human existence and ostensibly shows that the deconstruction of “the human” can be undertaken only at the risk of “losing” the human completely. The dissolution threatens to result in a kind of Lewisean version of vague pantheism where “the human” is placed on the same ontological level as the environment which shapes it.

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<sup>558</sup> Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers* 325.

<sup>559</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Complete Short Stories* 1189 - 90.

<sup>560</sup> Lawrence, *Women in Love* 207 - 8.

### 3.9 Mechanical Animals and the “Artifice of Eternity”

Lewis’ negative, or naturalistic description of the human body when dancing can be compared to other Modern authors. For example in Yeats’ “Byzantium” poems, we find similar images that convey the frail and limited nature of the human body, contrasted, however, with the technological. In “Sailing to Byzantium” (1928), Yeats compares human life in an aging body to a “paltry thing/ A tattered coat upon a stick/ unless soul clap their hands and sing/ for every tatter in its mortal dress.”<sup>561</sup> The duality of mystical guidance and technological existence in Yeats is, however, still very different to Lewis’. Yeats continues:

O sages standing in God’s holy fire  
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,  
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,  
And be the singing-masters of my soul.  
Consume my heart away; sick with desire  
And fastened to a dying animal  
It knows not what it is; and gather me  
Into the artifice of eternity.  
Once out of nature I shall never take  
My bodily form from any natural thing,  
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make  
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling  
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;<sup>562</sup>

Yeats’ poem describes man’s existence as essentially limited by his body (“sick with desire/ And fastened to a dying animal”) and seeks alternative ways of escape from the “sensual music” and “all complexities of mire and blood”. This existence is similar to Lewis’ conception of the mechanical-organic life of the body. Claiming that “[l]ife, simply, however vivid and tangible, is too material to be anything but a mechanism, and a sea-gull is not far removed from an aeroplane”<sup>563</sup>, Lewis sees no essential difference between an animal and a machine as models for humanity, because both represent the same threat to the freedom and independence to those who are unable to transcend their

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<sup>561</sup> W. B. Yeats, *The Major Works*, ed. Edward Larrissy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 95; II, 9- 12.

<sup>562</sup> Yeats, *Works* 95; III, 19 - 32.

<sup>563</sup> Wyndham Lewis, “The Caliph’s Design,” *Wyndham Lewis on Art: Collected Writings, 1913 - 1956*, ed. W. Michel and C. J. Fox (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967) 155.

situation and reflect upon themselves “from the outside”. Seen from Lewis’ perspective, the biggest problem with Yeats’ retreat from bodily forms of natural things to the “artifice of eternity” is no solution to the original situation. The reason for this is Lewis’ belief that both mechanical and bodily existence is in fact equally dehumanising.

This line of argument is also taken by Yeats’ critic, friend and correspondent, T. S. Moore, who in his response to “Sailing to Byzantium” formulates an almost Lewisian argument:

Your *Sailing to Byzantium*, magnificent as the first three stanzas are, lets me down in the fourth, as such a goldsmith’s bird is as much nature as man’s body, especially if it only sings like Homer and Shakespeare of what is past or passing or to come to Lords and Ladies” .<sup>564</sup>

In the light of Lewis’ critique, Moore’s remark makes perfect sense. There is no essential difference between a being entrapped in a human body and a mechanical bird with a limited repertoire. It is possible to summarize Moore’s comment in Lewis’ words and point out that there is no “life” that could be compared to “human, aristocratic standards of highly organized life”<sup>565</sup> in a “life” of a mechanical bird and that such existence should be avoided rather than desired.

Being nothing else but mechanical birds that endlessly keep on repeating their learned numbers, the wild bodies satirised in Lewis’ stories can also be described as “intricately moving bobbins”<sup>566</sup> bound to the burlesque patterns of their private little worlds.

A man is made drunk with his boat or restaurant as he is with a merry-go-round: only it is the staid, everyday drunkenness of the normal real, not easy always to detect. We can all see the ascendance a ‘carousal’ has on men, driving them into a set narrow intoxication. The wheel [...] imposes a set of movements upon the donkey inside it, in drawing water from the well, that it is easy to grasp. But in the case of a hotel or fishing-boat, for instance, the complexity of the rhythmic scheme is so great that it passes as open and untrammelled life. This subtle and wider mechanism merges, for the spectator, in the general variety of nature. [...] These studies of rather primitive people are studies in a savage worship and attraction. The inn-keeper rolls between his tables ten million times in a realistic rhythm that is as intense and superstitious as are the figures of a war-dance. He worships his soup, his damp napkins, the lump of procreative flesh probably associated with him in this task.

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<sup>564</sup> W. B. Yeats, *W. B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore: Their Correspondence 1901 – 1937*, ed. Ursula Bridge (New York, Oxford University Press, 1953) 162.

<sup>565</sup> Lewis, Time 88.

<sup>566</sup> Lewis, Time 91.

[...] All religion has the mechanism of the celestial bodies, has a dance. When we wish to renew our idols, or break up the rhythm of our naïveté, the effort postulates a respect which is the summit of devoutness.<sup>567</sup>

Stating that “all such fascination is religious”, Lewis pinpoints the essentially mechanical nature of any form of life that is based or patterned on rhythmic schemes which, if unobserved and un-reflected “merge with the general variety of nature”<sup>568</sup> and disguised as life, drive human existence like a “great stationary engine”<sup>569</sup>. Lewis’ notion of mechanism is very broad and includes all artificial forms of human relation to his environment, objects in it, and even other people. It is interesting to point out that Lewis’ thought on mechanism and mechanical nature of our existence as driven from the outside resonates with Lawrence’s critique of the Ideal and idealism by which “we understand the motivizing of the great affective sources by ideas mentally derived” and applying it “to the affective soul as a fixed motive.”<sup>570</sup>

Using exactly the same metaphoric language of machines and mechanisms, and conceiving of idealism as “the IDEA, that fixed gorgon monster, and the IDEAL, that great stationary engine” which destroy “all natural reciprocity and all natural circuits, for centuries”<sup>571</sup>, Lawrence the vitalist and Lewis the classicist identify the same essential problem - lack of life. However, as we have seen, they offer very different solutions. Lewis cannot accept any resolutions based on the idea of return to Nature, but rather promotes the reinforcement of the ideal unity, homogeneity and autonomy of the rational observer. Lewis’ claim that “all religion has the mechanism of the celestial

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<sup>567</sup> Lewis, *Body* 234.

<sup>568</sup> Lewis, *Body* 91.

<sup>569</sup> Lawrence, *American Literature* 124.

<sup>570</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Psychoanalysis* 210. The full quote of this section goes as follows: “idealism we understand the motivizing of the great affective sources by ideas mentally derived. As for example the incest motive which is first and foremost a logical deduction made by human reason, even if unconsciously made, and secondly is introduced into the affective passionate sphere, where it now proceeds to serve as a principle for action. This motivizing of the passionate sphere from the ideal is the final peril of human consciousness. It is the death of all spontaneous, creative life, and the substituting of mechanical principle. It is obvious that the ideal becomes mechanical principle, if it be applied to the affective soul as a fixed motive. An ideal established in control of the passionate soul is no more and no less than a supreme machine-principle. And a machine, as we know is the active unit of material world. Thus we see how it is that in the end pure idealism is identical with pure materialism, and the most ideal peoples are the most completely material. Ideal and material are identical. The ideal is but the god in the machine – the little fixed, machine-principle which works the human psyche automatically” (Lawrence, *Psychoanalysis* 210).

<sup>571</sup> Lawrence, *American Literature* 124.

bodies, has a dance<sup>572</sup>, further suggests that his conceptualisation of the machine includes phenomena, such as the dance, that Lawrence would see as essentially natural and liberating, including the proverbial dance of celestial bodies.

### 3.10 Lewis' Dance of the Pantheistic Machines

As Lewis has it in his Vorticist masterpiece, *The Enemy of the Stars* (1916), the dance of stars might be just as impersonal and mechanical as the influence of any other “natural machine”.<sup>573</sup> The reason behind this claim is that for Lewis the fixed movement of celestial bodies imposes its deterministic pattern on human existence and might be counted among the fetishes of inferior religions. At the very beginning of this drama depicting the traditional conflict between individuality and society, which recurs in Lewis' work as the fight between the one and many, or between individuality and community, the stars are lucidly depicted as opponents of the violently Nietzschean autonomy of an anti-social individual. Right at the very beginning of the play, the stars are described as “machines of prey”, “cadaverous gleaming force” and “pantheistic machines” that attempt to crush the individuality of the main protagonist, Arghol:

His [Arghol's] eyes woke first, shaken by rough moonbeams. A white, crude volume of brutal light blazed over him. Immense bleak electric advertisement of God, it crushed with wild emptiness of street. The ice field of the sky swept and crashed silently. Blowing wild organism into the hard splendid clouds, some will cast its glare, as well, over him. The canal ran in one direction, his blood, weakly, in the opposite. The stars shone madly in the archaic blank wilderness of the universe, machines of prey. Mastodons, placid in electric atmosphere, white rivers of power. They stood in eternal black sunlight. [...] Throats iron eternities, drinking heavy radiance, limbs towers of blatant light, the stars poised, immensely distant, with their metal sides, pantheistic machines. The farther, the more violent and vivid, Nature: weakness crushed out of creation! Hard weakness, a flea's size, pinched to death in a second, could it get so far. He rose before this cliff of cadaverous beaming force, imprisoned in a messed socket of existence, Will Energy some day reach Earth like violent civilisation, smashing or hardening all? In his mind a chip of distant hardness, tugged at dully like a tooth, made him ache from top to toe. But the violence of all things had left him so far intact.<sup>574</sup>

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<sup>572</sup> Lewis, *Body* 234.

<sup>573</sup> As it was shown, for Lewis, organic and mechanic are in fact synonyms.

<sup>574</sup> Wyndham Lewis, “Enemy of the Stars,” *Blast!* 1 Jun. 1914 64 - 65.



Arghol's fight with the "white rivers of power" calls to mind the sublime cosmic struggle in Lawrence's fiction. For Lewis, however, the solution lies in an assertion of personal individuality and intellectual independence against the homogenizing forces of the mechanical universe and the "communizing" forces of human society. This solution is completely different from Lawrence's call for the recognition of the vital forces of the cosmos. Though slightly different from Lewis' later work in its emphasis on individual existence in opposition to the homogenizing forces of Nature, Lewis' assertion that a true individual is always alone, anticipates the later principle of detachment as a means of preserving autonomy and integrity of the self. The dance of both celestial and human bodies should be seen as a "wild dance" of mechanical, impersonal animals deprived of the freedom of "aristocratic life", reducing subjects to dancing flesh-puppets, soft, fluid and dissolving, as in the following scene which depicts Arghol's death.

Then like a punch-ball, something vague and swift struck him on face [sic], exhausted and white Arghol did not hit hard; Like something inanimate, only striking *as* rebound. He became soft, blunt paw of Nature, taken back to her bosom, mechanically; slowly and idly winning. He became part of responsive landscape.<sup>575</sup>

From this perspective, various forms of deadening mechanism which compromise the freedom of truly human existence can be found in all geometrical or mathematical accounts of human psychology or history that imply a fixed pattern or a repetition of phases. For example, in his discussion of the periodic time philosophy of Oswald Spengler in his *Time and the Western Man*, Lewis notes that:

the emphasis on the *periodic* goes hand in hand always with a doctrine of *organism*. The universe becomes an animal, whose organic periodicity we study. [...] The 'world-as-history' could equally well be explained as 'world-as cycles.' It involves insistence upon the pervasive existence of a fatal, mechanical periodicity, in the working of the empirical flux: in short, the reference is directly to the organic mechanisms of our body, with systole and diastole, periodic changes, and its budding, flowering and decaying. The 'mind' has ceased to exist. The universe is an animal resembling our body, with a mind composed of *time*. You are invited to listen for the creaking and churning of the world as it whirls round upon its axis, the beat and thunder of its movement, for the repetitive music of the spheres, for the *breathing*, the 'heart beats' of the sun (which instruments, it is thought, very soon may be invented to register), and for the 'chung-chung' of your own blood, the rhythmical

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<sup>575</sup> Lewis, *Enemy of the Stars* 75.

vibration of your own circulative machinery, as you forge ahead, like a gently-heated, purring steamer, upon the breast of the river Flux.<sup>576</sup>

This delightful passage brings together all of the terms of our previous discussion and joins seemingly disparate images such as human body, universe, animal body, organicism and mechanism, flux and history under the single umbrella term called the machine. It is impossible not to notice the almost direct reference (systole – diastole, breathing universe) to Lawrence’s cosmology. Lewis’ disapproving account of the “wild universe”, which leaves no space for the working of mind, rationality or free will, can be also fruitfully compared to W. B. Yeats’ occult system of his *A Vision*.

### 3.11 Varieties of the Time-Cult in Yeats’ “A Vision”

On a drowsy October morning in 1934, Virginia Woolf, perplexed and perhaps a little offended, wrote in her diary: “Old Yeats. What he said was, he had been writing about me. The Waves. That comes after Stendhal he said. I see what you’re at - But I want more humanity.”<sup>577</sup> Commenting on these lines in his *Quantum Poetics*, Daniel Albright is equally uncomfortable with Yeats’ reproach and rushes in to defend the lady by insisting that: “[it] is strange to imagine anyone, even Yeats, telling Virginia Woolf to her face that her novels lacked humanity.”<sup>578</sup> Albright develops his commentary by adding that Yeats’ works that employ scenes of the fight against the ocean, such as “Chuchulain’s Fight with the Sea” (1892), *On Baile’s Strand* (1904), and finally *Fighting the Waves*, in fact depict the fight of an individual human subject with the modernist “deluge of experience breaking over, melting limits whether of line or tint; man [is] no hard bright mirror dawdling by the dry sticks of a hedge, but a swimmer, or rather the waves themselves. In this new literature [...] man in himself is nothing.”<sup>579</sup>

As we have seen in the discussion of Woolf’s vegetative states of consciousness and the instances of pure perception in *The Waves* and some of her short stories, the problem of “inhuman humanity” is a legitimate issue in Woolf’s fiction. Yeats’ response to this fluid “assault against the human” which “dissolves every boundary between subject and object, leaves mankind naked, skinless, wispy, glass-transparent, a kind of jelly

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<sup>576</sup> Lewis, *Time* 283.

<sup>577</sup> Woolf, *Diary IV* 255.

<sup>578</sup> Albright 66.

<sup>579</sup> W. B. Yeats, *Explorations* (New York: Collier, 1973) 373.

indistinguishable from the ocean in which it floats”<sup>580</sup> was an attempt to develop an “occult system” which would coordinate and synchronise “personality and history with the twenty eight days of the lunar moon - [...] an attempt to develop a refuge from the waves.”<sup>581</sup>

The analogy between Yeats’ struggle against Woolf’s or Joyce’s “waves of consciousness” and Lewis’ anti-romantic project can be conveniently explored in Yeats’ mentions of Lewis’ work in his introduction to *A Vision* (1928). Yeats refers to Lewis’ criticism in *Time and the Western Man* as a counter-example of art “where everything rounds or thrusts without edges, without contours – conventions of intellect – from a splash of tints and shades; [... for example in] a work as characteristic of the art of our time as the paintings of Cézanne [... or] as *Ulysses* and its dream associations of words and images”<sup>582</sup>. The message of Yeats’ paraphrase of Lewis’ philosophy seems to capture the main message of Lewis’ thought: if we disregard the “forms and categories of intellect, there is nothing left but sensation, ‘eternal flux’”<sup>583</sup>.

Despite Lewis’ and Yeats’ shared hostility to the flux of irrational and unstructured experience of Woolf’s and Joyce’s experimental texts, the two radically differ in the alternative solutions they embrace. Whether Yeats regarded his occult system as a mere “stylistic arrangement of experience comparable to the cubes in the drawing of Wyndham Lewis or ovoids [sic] in the sculpture of Brancusi” or, using a more Lewisian metaphor, as the “hard symbolic bones under the skin”<sup>584</sup>, from Lewis’ perspective *A Vision* should nevertheless be interpreted as equally mechanical and de-humanizing as the fluid texts of modernist authors. Yeats, who is “clearly evoking to Lewis’ earlier, Vorticist work, as by the 1930s Lewis is no longer producing such geometric ‘cubes’ in his drawings”<sup>585</sup>, does not seem to be aware that the “cubic” nature of Lewis’ paintings, which is based on the same didactic and ethical principles as his short stories and novels, represents and treats all mechanisms and machines in an uncompromisingly satiric vein.

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<sup>580</sup> Albright 66.

<sup>581</sup> Albright 67.

<sup>582</sup> W. B. Yeats, *A Vision*, ed. 1937 (London: Macmillan, 1962) 4.

<sup>583</sup> Yeats, *A Vision* (1937) 4.

<sup>584</sup> Yeats, *A Vision* (1937) 24.

<sup>585</sup> Miranda Hickman, *The Geometry of Modernism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005) 198.

It is necessary to recall that Lewis objected to the fluidity and absence of edges in organic art first of all as a means to disguise the essentially mechanical nature of behavioural, psychological and historical patterns. This is one of the main reasons why his stories combine the fluid imagery of “animal fats and oils” with the geometrical juxtaposition of surfaces. Yeats’ historical and psychological system in *A Vision* relies on precisely those mechanical-sequential principles that are the main target of Lewis’ critique in Vorticist “Enemy of the Stars” and later in his stories. Constructing his human psychology on a geometrically patterned scheme of four esoteric principles of Will, Mask, Body of Faith, and Creative Mind, and then structuring a system on a repetitive pattern of 28 phases of the Moon not only grounds human subjectivity in the Heracleitean and Jungian battle of opposites or antinomies, but first of all insists on a claim that “every man was a continuously altering *image*, a water-reflection changing from nature-child to hero to poet to philosopher to fool, as he was born and reborn around the circumference of the great wheel.”<sup>586</sup>

Yeats’ vision of the cosmos, representing a Plotinian hierarchy leading to the whole of One, resembles “rotating four dimensional sphere”<sup>587</sup> or an intersected “number of eggs that [...] turn inside out perpetually without breaking the shell”<sup>588</sup> and creates an essentially romantic picture of an organic world driven by a hidden mechanical principle. Yeats’ short story “Dance of Four Royal Persons” that was included in the original 1925 edition of *A Vision* is exemplary in this respect. The story provides an allegorical account of the so called “Great Wheel of human faculties” which is an esoteric scheme that gives a complete explanation of human nature. The main hero of the story is a Caliph who seeks knowledge that would “explain human nature so completely that he should never be astonished again.”<sup>589</sup> The other day, four strangers come to Caliph’s palace and perform for Caliph a dance sequence which is supposed to reveal to him all that he desires to know. However, the Caliph, angry that he cannot comprehend their dance, has the four executed only to find out later that the mystery was revealed in a geometrical diagram drawn by the dancers into the desert sand under their feet.

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<sup>586</sup> Albright 44.

<sup>587</sup> Albright 40.

<sup>588</sup> W. B. Yeats, *A Vision: The Original 1925 Version* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney: Scribner, 2008) xiv.

<sup>589</sup> Yeats, *A Vision* “1925” 10.

The predictable movement of the four faculties, whose pattern constitutes the human psyche, hidden behind the seemingly natural and untrammelled life (dance) cannot be closer to the main object of Lewis' satire. It is no coincidence that it resembles of the habitual life of the puppets-like people observed by Lewis' narrators in the *Wild Body* stories:

the complexity of the rhythmic scheme is so great that it passes as open and untrammelled life. This subtle and wider mechanism merges, for the spectator, in the general variety of nature. Yet we have in most lives the spectacle of a pattern as circumscribed and complete as a theorem of Euclid. So these are essays in a new human mathematic.<sup>590</sup>

For Lewis, Yeats' system in *A Vision*, which embraces the cyclical movement of psychical "faculties", of history and of heavenly spheres in a single mechanical scheme, threatens human autonomy and individuality by inserting it into the inhuman machine-universe. As such, it can be subjected to the same criticism as the stars qua "rivers of white power" in Lewis' *Enemy of the Stars*.

### **3.12 Art as a Form of Revelation**

The main difference between the organic and conservative approaches to reality is perfectly visible in Lawrence's and Lewis' aesthetics. For both Lawrence and Lewis, art is supposed to "reveal the relation between man and his circumambient universe"<sup>591</sup>. For Lewis, however, this "revelation" is "only" a part of his strategy of "detached observation" which aims to unmask (and thereby to transcend) "the complexity of the rhythmic scheme" which patterns our life and makes us realise the essentially "comic" (viz. above) nature of our existence. Lewis explicitly formulates his rejection of Lawrence's idea of the essentially romantic revitalisation of human life by re-establishing a true relationship with the cosmos:

To put this matter in a nutshell, it is *the shell* of the animal that the plastically-minded artist will prefer. The ossature is my favourite part of a living animal organism, not its intestines. My objection to Mr. D. H. Lawrence were chiefly concerned with that regrettable habit of his incessantly to refer to the intestinal billowing of "dark" subteranean passion. In his devotion to that romantic, abdominal *Within* he abandoned the sunlit pagan surface of the earth.<sup>592</sup>

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<sup>590</sup> Lewis, *Body* 233.

<sup>591</sup> Lawrence, *Phoenix* 527.

<sup>592</sup> Wyndham Lewis, *Paleface*; quoted in: Dasenbrock 164.

Utilizing an already familiar set of spatial metaphors such as inside vs. outside, connected vs. discrete, and solid vs. soft, Lewis rejects Lawrence's idea of the regenerative potential of the merging between the human and the cosmos as a sentimental and romantic appeal which conceals the true nature of human existence.

For Lewis, the solutions suggested by both Lawrence and Yeats only contribute to the "human" predicament, because these solutions do not promote human freedom, autonomy and self-control but instead introduce different types of historical or cosmological "mechanisation". Lewis opts instead for an increased awareness of our fallibility and the limited nature of our existence which we can achieve through the essential deadness of works of art and moments of detached (self-)observation. Thanks to this awareness "although helpless in face of the material world, we are in some way superior to and independent of it; and [...] our mechanical imperfection is the symbol of that. In art we are in a sense playing at being what we designate as matter."<sup>593</sup>

It is interesting to point out that the "play" which Lewis in this quotation from his "Essay on The Objective of Plastic Art" now sees as the essence of art, resembles Lawrence's praise of the American in his letter to Lowell quoted above. Lewis writes:

In art we are in a sense playing at being what we designate as matter. We are entering the forms of the mighty phenomena around us, and seeing how near we can get to being a river or a star, without actually *becoming* that. [...] Our modern "impersonality" and "coldness" is in this sense a constant playing with the fire; with solar fire, perhaps, and the chill of interstellar space—where the art impulse of the astronomer comes in, for instance. [...] Some adjustment, then, between the approach of a conscious being to that mechanical perfection, and the fact of his mechanical incompetence (since mechanical perfection will not tally with the human thing) is the situation that produces art. The game consists in seeing how near you can get, without the sudden extinction and neutralisation that awaits you as matter, or as the machine. In our bodies we have got already so near to extinction!<sup>594</sup>

The similarity between Lawrence's letter to Amy Lowell (viz. above section 3.8) and Lewis' definition of art relies on an important concept of and "almost inhumanity" which both accounts share. In this formulation of his aesthetics, Lewis comes structurally so close to Lawrence's anthropology that it is almost possible to talk about the two systems being identical. Both systems try to avoid mechanical existence which can be loosely defined as repetition of the same principle. However, the two aesthetics

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<sup>593</sup> Lewis, Objective of Plastic Art 26.

<sup>594</sup> Lewis, Objective of Plastic Art 27.

systems choose different ways to attempt to “see how near one can get, without the sudden extinction and neutralisation that awaits you as matter” and “come to the pure mechanical stage of physical apprehension, the *human* unit almost lost” and in both systems it is the human physical body that performs the central role in this attempt.

This difference can be demonstrated on the way both artists represent human subjects, and especially human subjects in dance. Comparing the dance scenes from Lewis’ stories like “Beau Sejour” or *Tarr* with the dance scenes in Lawrence’s *Rainbow*, “The White Stocking”, or *Twilight in Italy* it is possible to distinguish the emphasis on external appearances and visual representation in Lewis and a strong focus on internal states and emotions in Lawrence. These dance scenes present to both authors a chance to reveal human nature in terms of their respective conceptions of humanity: Lawrence shows man in his vital relation to the circumambient cosmos, Lewis as a wild body. Therefore it is possible to use dance scenes as paradigms for their strategies of representation in general.

Lawrence’s description thus relies on instinctive “organic” and vitalist images of fluidity, disintegration and transgression of limits whereas Lewis prefers the plastic sincerity of surface appearances. To illustrate this let us consider another example of a significant dance scene in which it is possible to contrast the metaphysical system of the two authors. The dance is performed by Herr Kreisler and Mrs. Bevelage at the Bonnington Dance Club in the second chapter of the third part of Lewis’ *Tarr*. Kreisler, one of the two important male characters in the novel and main protagonist’s doppelganger, is notorious for his violent and unpredictable behaviour and problems with women. Notably, these qualities place him into the same category as Carl from “Beau Sejour”. In this in many respects typical dance scene, Kreisler causes a scandal by his grotesque inability to dance:

‘Shall we dance?’ he said, getting up quickly. He clasped her firmly in the small of the back and they got ponderously in motion, he stamping a little bit, as though he mistook the waltz for a more primitive music. He took her twice, with ever-increasing velocity, round the large hall, and at the third round, at breakneck speed, spun with her in the direction of the front door. The impetus was so great that she, although seeing her peril, could not act sufficiently as a break on her impetuous companion to avert the disaster. Another moment and they would have been in the street, amongst the traffic, a disturbing meteor, whizzing out of sight, had they not met the alarmed resistance of a considerable English family entering the front door as Kreisler bore down upon it. [...] The widow [Mrs Bevelage] had

come somewhat under the fascination of Kreisler's mood. She was really his woman, had he known it. She felt wrapt in the midst of a swoon — she had not two connected thoughts. All her worldliness and measured management of her fat had vanished. Her face had become coarsened in a few minutes. But she buzzed back again into the dance and began a second, mad, but this time merely- circular career. Kreisler was very careful, whatever he did, to find a reason for it. 'He was abominably short-sighted; he had mistaken the front door for one leading into the third room, merely.' His burden, not in the best condition, was becoming more and more puffed, and heavier every moment. When satisfied with this part of his work he led Mrs. Bevelage into a sort of improvised conservatory and talked about pawnshops for ten minutes or so — in a mixture of French, English, and German. He then reconducted her, more dead than alive, to her seat, and strode off from her with great sweeps of his tall figure. He had during this incident regained complete impassivity. He stalked away to the conservatory.<sup>595</sup>

The mechanical and kinaesthetic representation of dance in Lewis, directly contrasts with the fluid and mysterious quality of Lawrence's dance scenes. As if mocking common descriptions of dance as balancing disparate forces, including Lawrence's centrifugal and centripetal forces of male and female principles, Lewis dooms Kreisler to fail as a dancer and make his partner oscillate away from the "safe orbit outside of the dance hall." With "all the measurement vanishing", the dance becomes a circular movement of flesh, meat and animal fats.

The discussed dance scenes illustrate how Lewis' preference for plastic representation based on "surfaces, lines, and masses" contrasts with Lawrence's instinctive-intuitive method of representation. For Lewis the "abdominal within", which he relates to the mysterious quality of Bergsonian intuition, understood here as a method of capturing the *duration* of things, has a strongly negative connotation since it is essentially romantic, organic and sentimental, or in other words, *temporal*. As Lewis puts it, paraphrasing Pound: "Generally speaking, the normal, the known and the visible, is what Romance is *not*. 'Romance' is what is unusual, not normal, mysterious, not visible, perhaps not susceptible at all of visual treatment."<sup>596</sup> Lewis' preference for the outside is reflected in his attitude towards methods of representation in general.

As part of this, Lewis' criticises writing "from the inside" as he finds it in Joyce's *Ulysses*, which in its "naturalistic" and "organic" approach invites the reader to "plunge into the flux of incredible bric-à-brac where a dense mass of dead stuff is collected,

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<sup>595</sup> Lewis, Tarr 129 - 130.

<sup>596</sup> Lewis, Time 19.



from 1901 toothpaste, a bar or two of Sweet Rosie O'Grady, to pre-nordic architecture."<sup>597</sup> According to Lewis, Joyce's method results from his unfortunate application of time "theory on literature or art."<sup>598</sup> In the same vein, Lewis correctly points out that Lawrence's representation of subjectivity that melts in dance, "locked in one motion, yet, never fusing, never yielding to one another"<sup>599</sup>, represents the human psyche that undergoes significant essential, perhaps even ontological, changes in time and as such it relies *on* time as its main medium. For Lewis, however, everything that is based on *time*, including the idea of human subjectivity taken from time-philosophy and its representation in literature (a time-book) is considered to be negative, suspicious, subjective, private and insincere.

The reasons for Lewis' condemnation of Time and the so-called "Time-Cult" may appear relatively complex, nevertheless, they rely on most of the points made in the previous discussion. The foundation for the following arguments rests on Lewis' passionate rejection of Bergson's Time-philosophy and his condemnation of Time-Cult of philosophers such as Alexander, Spengler, Einstein, or Planck. Based on his argument in *Time and Western Man*, it is possible to pinpoint the following points: First, transfer of "reality" from the outside to the inside:

In all movements we have under consideration the thing to be stressed more than anything else is the disposition to bestow 'reality' upon *the image*, rather than upon *the thing*. The reality has definitely installed itself *inside* the contemporary mind. [...] The external world is no longer our affair, as indeed it ceases to be ours in any civic or political sense. At first sight it is easy [...] to pass itself off as suggestive of an enhance appetite for life. To plunge into sensation, in the *bergsonian* manner, is surely a movement in the direction of 'life'?<sup>600</sup>

Lewis objects to the Bergsonian "hatred for *exteriorisation*", which is expressed in literature as the "telling from the inside method". "The inside" is for Lewis a region which is necessarily accidental, fluid, ungraspable and tainted by the "chronologism" of duration. Furthermore, the emphasis on the mechanical nature of human existence which Lewis' fiction wants to depict, urges him to pursue an "external approach"<sup>601</sup> and

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<sup>597</sup> Lewis, *Time* 86.

<sup>598</sup> Lewis, *Time* 84.

<sup>599</sup> Lawrence, *Rainbow* 315.

<sup>600</sup> Lewis, *Time* 381.

<sup>601</sup> Dasenbrock 164.

to systematically emphasize the “outside of people.”<sup>602</sup> The “external approach” reaches its climax in works such as *Apes of God* (1934) and becomes the main “criterion of value for Lewis”, since “literature in his view ought to aspire towards the condition of painting in direct fashion”<sup>603</sup> that is more suited to “the external nature of the machine-age.”<sup>604</sup> As Lewis himself wrote: “I am for the Great Without, for the method of external approach—for the wisdom of the eye, rather than that of the ear.”<sup>605</sup>

To support these arguments we will briefly review a few examples of the way Lewis describes characters in his fiction. The first example is found in a short story called “A Soldier of Humour” that describes one of Lewis’ “puppets” - a French-American sailor. The hard and dry description of this human machine relies almost exclusively on reading of the character from the outside:

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 violent and 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, a secret unfolded by his subsequent conduct. Had I been of a superior penetration the cut of his clothes in their awkward amplitude, with their unorthodox shoulders and belling hams, might have given me the key. He was not a commercial traveller. I was sure of that. For me, he issued from a void. I rejected in turn his claim, on the strength of his appearance, to be a small vineyard owner, a man in the automobile business and a *rentier*. He was part of the mystery of this hotel; his loneliness, his aplomb, his hardy appetite. In the meantime his small sunken eyes were fixed on me imperturbably, with the blankness of two metal discs.<sup>606</sup>

A very similar approach is found in Lewis’ description of Anastasia in *Tarr*:

When she laughed, this commotion was transmitted to her body as though sharp, sonorous blows had been struck on her mouth. Her lips were long, hard bubbles risen in the blond heavy pool of her face, ready to break, pitifully and gaily. Grown forward with ape-like intensity, they refused no emotion noisy egress if it got so far. Her eyes were large, stubborn, and reflective, brown coming out of blondness. Her head was like a deep white egg in a tobacco-coloured nest. She exuded personality with alarming and disgusting

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<sup>602</sup> Dasenbrock 163.

<sup>603</sup> Dasenbrock 163.

<sup>604</sup> Lewis, *Time* 1.

<sup>605</sup> Wyndham Lewis, *Men Without Art*, ed. Seamus Cooney (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1987) 105.

<sup>606</sup> Lewis, *Body* 17.

intensity. It was an ostentation similar to diamonds and gold watch-chains. Kreisler felt himself in the midst of a cascade, a hot cascade. She seemed to feel herself a travelling circus of tricks and wonders, beauty shows and monstrosities. Quite used to being looked at, she had become resigned to inability to avoid performing.<sup>607</sup>

Or in a scene from “A Soldier of Humour:”

But then, with a sinking of the heart, I saw the rectangular form of my ubiquitous enemy, quartered with an air of demoniac permanence in their midst. A mechanic who finds an unaccountable lump of some foreign substance stuck in the very heart of his machinery—what simile shall I use for my dismay? To proceed somewhat with this image, as this unhappy engineer might dash to the cranks or organ stops of his machine, so I dashed to several of my formerly most willing listeners and talkers. I gave one a wrench and another a screw, but I found that already the machine had become recalcitrant.<sup>608</sup>

Similar renderings of individual characters, which almost exclusively rely on the exterior and “exude personality” of the *inside* of these character, might be found in abundance in Lewis’ fiction and provide an interesting contrast to Lawrence’s descriptions which rely on the “vagueness” of internal representation, such as in:

he had a curious beauty of old breeding, slender and concentrated, coupled with a strange inertia, a calm, almost stoic indifference which her strong, crude, passionate, ethical nature could not understand.”<sup>609</sup>

They can also be easily distinguished from Woolf’s even more “mystical” descriptions in lines like:

She reached the Park gates. She stood for a moment, looking at the omnibuses in Piccadilly. She would not say of anyone in the world now that they were this or that they were that. She felt very young; at the same time unspeakably aged. She sliced like knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on.<sup>610</sup>

Calling himself a “personal appearance artist”, Lewis’ “plastic approach” in literature compels him to avoid the “soft inside” of the psychological chronologisms for yet another, much more “philosophical” reason. This reason is connected with Lewis’s preference of the “wisdom of the eye rather than that of an ear”, which appears to be an important reformulation of the inside vs. outside distinction. Completely rejecting

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<sup>607</sup> Lewis, Tarr 84.

<sup>608</sup> Lewsi, Body 48.

<sup>609</sup> Lawrence, Selected Stories 167.

<sup>610</sup> Woolf, Dalloway 7.

Pater's sentimental and romantic proposition that "art constantly aspires to the condition of music", Lewis' understands music as essentially temporal and a direct threat to his project of "plastic literature" and art which would bring space back into art.

As was noted by various commentators,<sup>611</sup> Lewis' opposition to the art of music resonates from similar ideas in the works of thinkers connected with the ultraconservative group *Action Française*, such as Remy de Gourmont, Georges Sorel or, later, Julien Benda. Lewis was well acquainted with the thought of these thinkers that he met during his Parisian period and that often quotes in his post-war texts (especially *Time and the Western Man*). One of the main lessons Lewis has learned from these authors was to distrust "musical empathy". As Vincent Sherry points out:

[a]lready in 1909 and 1910, in his first attempts at short fiction (based on a year travel through Brittany and Spain in 1908), he [Lewis] expresses an understanding, like Gourmont's, of the susceptibilities of human hearing, and he moves these insights toward antidemocratic conclusions similar to those drawn by Benda a full decade later, in 1918, in *Belphégor*.<sup>612</sup>

Lewis' position on these issues in the late 1920's develops these themes into a self-contained statement which encompasses Lewis' critique of all organic, romantic, vitalist and anti-spatial theories of the "Time-Cult". In the chapter titled "Spatialisation and Concreteness" Lewis further develops these problems into his "spatial critique of music" as having destabilising effects on the psychological unity of the listener:

For locomotion and movement, 'organism' in the making or *becoming*, not *become*, what is that but a machine? Indeed, since it is a function, not anything desirable as a thing, it is a system or process and essentially *mechanistic*. And again, movement, or things apprehended in movement, are very much more abstract than are static things. The object of contemplation is less abstract, evidently, than the object of experience or the object of action. To put this in another way, *time is more abstract than space*. But the process of despatialization, undertaken by Bergson and carried on by the philosophers we are considering, denies any concreteness, except such as can be obtained from a time pattern, like the structure of piece of music. But it can only be apprehended in its totality; you have to take it in bit by bit, you have to *live* it, and its pattern will unfold as a melody unfolds itself. Compare in this connection any two characteristic masterpieces from arts

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<sup>611</sup> See for example Geoffrey Wagner, "Wyndham Lewis and the Vorticist Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Sep., 1954). 4. January 2014. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/427013>>; Vincent Sherry, *Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and Radical Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); or Miranda Hickman, *The Geometry of Modernism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).

<sup>612</sup> Sherry 92.

respectively of music and of painting – a statue, say the Colleoni, and a piece of music, say Beethoven quartet. You move around the statue, but it is always there in its entirety before you: whereas the piece of music moves through you, as it were.<sup>613</sup>

The primitive vitalism of music is, of course, a natural part of all of the discussed dance scenes, most notably in the “squeaking” flute performance of Zoborov, in Kreisler’s mistaking “waltz for a more primitive music”, as well as a singing scene in “Franciscan Adventures”. Here the narrator approaches a homeless tramp, attracted by his musical performance. The rendering of this “old-song bird” employs the familiar set of images:

He [the tramp] suddenly wheeled in my direction, stopped, stretched out the hand with the scarecrow umbrellas, and began singing a patriotic song. I stopped. A half-dozen yards separated us. His voice was strong: it spent most of its time in his throat, wallowing in a juicy bellow. Sometimes by accident the sinuses were occupied by it, as it charged up the octave, and it issued pretty and flute-like from the well-shaped inside of his face. As he sang, his head was dramatically lowered, to enable him to fish down for the low notes; his eyes glared fixedly up from underneath. His mouth was stretched open to imitate the dark, florid aperture of a trumpet: from its lips rich sputum trickled. He would stop, and with an indrawn wheeze or a quick gasp, fetch it back as it was escaping. Then he would burst out violently again into a heaving flux of song. I approached him. ‘That was not at all bad,’ I remarked when he had done, and was gathering up stray drops the colour of brandy with his tongue. ‘No?’ ‘Not at all. It was very musical. Quite good!’<sup>614</sup>

Crucially for Lewis, music, in its chronological and sequential aspect, is the essence of rhythmical repetition and organic cyclical patterns, effecting human beings as a dehumanising and mechanising element. These principles can in turn be connected with rhythmical sequences of biological processes of the human body (the wild body), mechanical or habitual being-in-the-world, social mechanisms (rule of the herd, communism) and natural processes (changing of seasons, “music” of spheres). All of these rhythms determine human existence and limit individual freedom of choice.

The de-humanisation of the time sequence is further related to anything that can be viewed as a sequence of *becoming*, i.e. only as part by part and not “as a whole”. This state leads to the loss of “not only the clearness of outline, the static beauty, of the things you commonly apprehend” but also the loss of “the clearness of outline of your own individuality which apprehends them.”<sup>615</sup> Lewis’ thought in this regard closely

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<sup>613</sup> Lewis, Time 179.

<sup>614</sup> Lewsi, Body 188.

<sup>615</sup> Lewis, Time 175.

resembles a reversed mirror image of the main “spatial argument” of Bergson’s philosophy, with the main theses of “non-Cartesian duality”<sup>616</sup> reversed. This reversal of the fundamental Bergsonian duality of continuous heterogeneous time and discontinuous homogeneous space, however, branches into a whole series of lesser dualities, which have all appeared in our discussion so far. After the establishing the fundamental duality:

the initial opposites start to take different forms with various degrees of distinction. Besides the already mentioned duration and extension, it is possible to include opposites such as continuity-discontinuity, intuition-intellect, inner-outer, reality-symbol, and many others. These can be for the purpose of our discussion expressed by stressing one of the more general features of these opposites, namely the relation between uniqueness and repetition. This relationship was traditionally understood as an opposition between uniqueness, which is conveyed by the sensual apprehension, and universality, which is the product of reason. Bergson considerably changed the relation between these two by ascribing heterogeneity and uniqueness to time and homogeneous discontinuity that allows repetition to space.”<sup>617</sup>

According to the Lewis’ “traditionalist” argument, the main flaw in Bergson’s system is that it “abandoned or destroyed many of the traditional concepts and values Lewis considers essential.”<sup>618</sup> The most relevant examples of these values coincide with Hulme’s attributes of “geometric art”, such as: “the once clear lines between objects and subjects, matter and mind; [...] the order and stability associated with space [destroyed] by seeing everything as time and motion; [the substitution of] the vagueness of emotion for the clarity of intellect”<sup>619</sup>. Further, by claiming that “good art must have no inside”, Lewis implicitly rejects whatever is “in *becoming*” as accidental in favour of that which is finished, external, hard, substantial and “for everybody to see”. “De-humanized art” is based on all that is external, detached, clear cut, visible, solid, rational and objective. In this sense, this art is honest and does not sentimentally attempt to mask the pessimistic reality of our human condition, but makes it accessible to human reflection.

The relationship between the inside and outside with all its connotations is one of the main themes of a rather mysterious short story “The Death of the Ankou”. The story is

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<sup>616</sup> The basic formula of this duality is postulated by Pavel Kouba in his Essay “Pohyb mezi časem a prostorem: Bergsonův zápas s vlastním objevem,” *Filosofie Henri Bergsona* (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 2003) 90 - 91. See also SueEllen Campbell’s ‘Equal Opposites: Wyndham Lewis, Henri Bergson, and Their Philosophies of Space and Time,’ *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Autumn, 1983), 4. January 2014. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/441471>>.

<sup>617</sup> Kouba 91.

<sup>618</sup> Campbell 351.

<sup>619</sup> Campbell 351.

in many respects typical of *The Wild Body* collection: it is set in a microcosm or Umwelt of a country village in which the “laughing observer” preys on a local fool, a strange specimen of a vulgar beggar referred to as Ludo. Like “Cattleman’s Spring Mate” or perhaps also “The French Poodle”, the story features a unique meta-commentary on its own practice which explores the limits of its own literary principles. The story is a classical narrative of detached observation, however, only up to the point of when the observed subject, namely the Ludo, as result of this observation, dies.

Ludo arouses the curiosity of the “rational” observer for a number of reasons: first, by the paradox that “religious crowds” mechanically give him money although he is extremely rude to them and second, by the bizarre appearance of his “smart [clothes], all in rich, black broadcloth and black velvet, with a ribboned hat”<sup>620</sup>, and finally, by the fact that the Ludo is blind. Compared to Lawrence’s romanticising account of blindness in “The Blind Man”, Lewis treats the topic quite naturalistically. Unlike the hero of Lawrence’s story, Pervin, who, as if “rose out of the earth”, moved about “almost unconsciously in his familiar surroundings” and seemed to “know the presence of objects before he touched them”<sup>621</sup>, Lewis’ Ludo dwells with a serving-boy “in a small, verdant enclosure, one end of it full of half-wild chickens, with a rocky bluff at one side, and a stream running in a bed of smooth boulders” among dead “bodies of a number of esculent frogs lay on the ground, from which the back legs had been cut.”<sup>622</sup>

The narrator, interested to examine the local superstition which connects the beggar with a festive character of the red “God of Death”, follows Ludo to his grotesque haunt and engages him in conversation. His attention is inevitably attracted by Ludo’s blind face:

We sat in silence for some minutes. As I looked at him I realized how the eyes mount guard over the face, as well as look out of it. The faces of the blind are hung there like a dead lantern. Blind people must feel on their skins our eyes upon them: but this sheet of flesh is rashly stuck up in what must appear far outside their control, an object in a foreign world of sight. So in consequence of this divorce, their faces have the appearance of things that have been abandoned by the mind. What is his face to a blind man? Probably nothing more than an organ, an exposed part of the stomach, that is a mouth. Ludo’s face, in any case, was *blind*; it looked the blindest part of his body, and perhaps the deadest, from which all the functions of a living face had gone. As a result of its irrelevant external situation, it

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<sup>620</sup> Lewis, *Body* 177.

<sup>621</sup> Lawrence, *Selected Short Stories* 207 - 8.

<sup>622</sup> Lewis, *Body* 180.

carried on its own life with the outer world, and behaved with all the disinvolture of an internal organ, no longer serving to secrete thought any more than the foot. For after all to be lost *outside* is much the same as to be hidden in the dark *within*.—What served for a face for the blind, then? What did they have instead, that was expressive of emotion in the way that our faces are? I supposed that all the responsive machinery must be largely readjusted with them, and directed to some other part of the body. I noticed that Ludo’s hands, all the movement of his limbs, were a surer indication of what he was thinking than was his face. Still the face registered something. It was a health-chart perhaps. He looked very ill I thought, and by that I meant, of course, that his *face* did not look in good health. When I said, ‘You don’t look well,’ his hands moved nervously on his club. His face responded by taking on a sicklier shade.<sup>623</sup>

The blind man’s face, which becomes “dead” because it has been “abandoned by the mind”, is degraded to a “wild body” and compared to his stomach, i.e. an organ which performs its digestive functions automatically, cyclically, and independently of human will. The “normative anatomy”, which Lewis introduces in this passage, is based on opposing inside and outside, automatic and rational, the soft, dark *within* “that express[es] the coquetry and contentment of animal fats” and the “naked pulsing and moving of the soft inside of life”<sup>624</sup> contrasted with the “sharply outlined” brutal world of “hard and dry” objects. As we have seen, this duality can be found in all the authors we have discussed. Let us recall for example the following lines from Woolf’s “Mark on the Wall”:

I want to think quietly, calmly, spatioously, never to be interrupted, never to have to rise from my chair, to slip easily from one thing to another, without any sense of hostility or obstacle. I want to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard and separate facts.<sup>625</sup>

Woolf’s small, dry and clean cut solid objects and pieces of furniture stand for the exact opposite of the “slipping” and fluid world where one can think without “obstacles” of artificial and supposedly obvious clear-cut distinctions between objects. We have encountered this duality throughout this thesis, in Lawrence’s “blood-knowledge”, the instinctive-intuitive “plasmatic” psyche, the Bergsonian distrust of clear divisions between objects, and the theory of force fields and intuitive “physical transcendentalism” in Futurist paintings and sculptures. The criterion for distinguishing

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<sup>623</sup> Lewis, *Body* 180.

<sup>624</sup> Lewis, *Body* 218.

<sup>625</sup> Woolf, *Haunted House* 42.



between the two philosophical attitudes is of an aesthetic origin and resembles the traditional distinction between empathy and abstraction.

Hulme's aesthetics in a typical fashion captures this dualism in spatial terms. Describing the "Worringerean" abstract tendencies of modern geometrical art Hulme writes:

In the endeavour to get away from the flux of existence, there is an endeavour to create in contrast, an absolutely enclosed material individuality [... in which] any division of the surface is as far as possible avoided and unavoidable divisions and articulations are given in no detail. The first gods were always pure abstractions without any resemblance to life.<sup>626</sup>

Lewis shares with Hulme this contempt for the "messiness and confusion of nature and natural things"<sup>627</sup>, as well as his preference for clear cut lines and surfaces, and the generally sombre vision of the limited nature of man. Especially in the post-Vorticist period, Lewis focuses on the static beauty of objects, and rejects intuitive-emphatic art and "biomorphic design which conforms with the design of one's own body"<sup>628</sup>, in favour of detached observation and the "feeling of separation in the face of outside nature."<sup>629</sup>

The phrase from Lewis' description of the Ludo which point out that "For after all to be lost *outside* is much the same as to be hidden in the dark *within*"<sup>630</sup> is very instructive in this sense and confirms Lewis' privileged method of observation - external, detached iteration of those surface clues that supposedly radiate through the more "intelligent" parts of the body (the face, hands). What is "within", i.e. the psychological "bric-à-brac" of time-literature, is beyond the reach, or interest, of representation and its contra-intuitive method.

Lewis' paintings of human figures such as *The Dancers* (1912) or *Figure Composition (Man and Woman With Two Bulldogs)* (1913), which often expose the close relation between the human and the machine, confirm that "[n]o emphatic identification with the figures of these drawings is invited or allowed: both artist and beholder stand off and

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<sup>626</sup> Hulme 89.

<sup>627</sup> Hulme 96. Consider also Lewis quoting Schopenhauer in *Plastic Arts*. The role of Schopenhauer is not a coincidence, both Hulme and Worringerean knew Schopenhauer and Worringerean quotes him several times in *Abstraction and Empathy*.

<sup>628</sup> David Morgan, "The Enchantment of Art: Abstraction and Empathy from German Romanticism to Expressionism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (Apr., 1996) 322. 2. Feb. 2012, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3654101>>

<sup>629</sup> Hulme 85.

<sup>630</sup> Lewis, *Body* 183.

engage in detached observation”.<sup>631</sup> It is important to note that such stance encompasses Lewis’ implicit rejection of the Bergsonian method of “intuition” which is in *Introduction to Metaphysics* confronted with the exterior method of “analysis”. Analysis is first of all based on “moving around the object” in which “[m]y perception of the motion will vary with the point of view, moving or stationary, from which I observe it.”<sup>632</sup>

In diametrical opposition to Lewis’ method of external, detached observation, and Schopenhauerian abstraction from accidental relations, Bergson promotes the “intellectual sympathy” of intuition as a method that captures duration, i.e. continuous existence in time, as an internal method that relies on the absolute movement of the perceived object. As Bergson puts it: “when I speak of an absolute movement, I am attributing to the moving object an interior and, so to speak, states of mind; I also imply that I am in sympathy with those states, and that I insert myself in them by an effort of imagination”<sup>633</sup>. Bergson’s intuitive method is supposed to yield objective, precise knowledge of objects because it unites our own personality in its flowing through time, as well as overcomes and prevents the “dissolution of the observed object” that may result from external observation under various perspectives, Lewis, however, sees the intuitive method as esoteric and imprecise, as an attempt to express the inexpressible qualities of an object, coming “very much nearer to the subjective, or ‘private,’ end of the scale”<sup>634</sup> and consequently standing very close to the aesthetic method of empathy.

The relation between inner or private sensations and their external manifestation is an important theme in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus-Logico Philosophicus* (1921) and *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). In Wittgenstein’s theory of language games, analogically to Lewis’ detached observation, the knowledge of emotional content of our mind in our communication “drops out of consideration”<sup>635</sup> and is replaced by a “performative” gesture or an arbitrary sign which allows the observer (who is familiar enough with the rules of the language game) to act accordingly to the supposed emotion. The observer does not know *exactly* what is going on in the speaker’s mind

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<sup>631</sup> Dasenbrock 46.

<sup>632</sup> Bergson, *Introduction to Metaphysics* 1.

<sup>633</sup> Bergson, *Introduction to Metaphysics* 2.

<sup>634</sup> Lewis, *Time* 381.

<sup>635</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, tran. G. E. M Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 1986) §293.

and so his actions rely on shared language signs and the behaviour of his partner. Similarly, the laughing observer in Lewis' stories disregards the inside and interprets wild bodies through their external traits and performances.

They [characters in my stories] are not creations, but puppets. You can be as exterior to them, and live their life as little, as the showman grasping from beneath and working about a Polichinelle. They are only shadows of energy, not living beings. Their mechanism is a logical structure and they are nothing but that.

Lewis' method of character representation in which one "does not attempt to convey the processes of thinking mind, but rather solidifies and externalizes the mental flux into a clearly defined progression"<sup>636</sup> significantly differs from Lawrence's approach. For Lawrence art should depict "that which should be" - a vital connection with the circumambient cosmos, the "thingness" without social clichés. On the other hand, Lewis' art satirizes and tries to overcome "that which is." Thus, it is possible to conclude that for Lewis there is no need to identify oneself with what is portrayed negatively and satirically, namely with the wild body.

Finally, Lewis' "plastic" aesthetics, despite sharing a number of common points, clearly transcends Hulme's interpretation of Worringer's abstractionism based on the feeling of "space shyness" and a preference for "flatness" as a cure for the three-dimensional "relativism and obscurity of appearance."<sup>637</sup> Uniting aspects of Lawrence's preference of touch to sight and Wittgenstein's analysis of the private language hypothesis, Lewis' dialectics of the outside and inside takes an interesting, seemingly paradoxical turn and questions the total independence of the uncontested individuality.

### **3.13 Individualism Reconsidered?**

As we have seen in Lawrence's theory of the Ideal and in Woolf's fear of the unchecked "helter-skelter" of emotions, the "fluidity" of human existence has to be *balanced* by an impersonal principle. The word "balanced" is of an extreme importance here because neither hypertrophied individuality, which would lead to some form of private solipsism, nor extreme impersonality which would lead to the temporal-successive, instrumental, pure or elemental self, is desired. The idealistic detachment of the observer, which threatens to fold back into itself, is counterbalanced in Lewis'

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<sup>636</sup> Chapmen 50.

<sup>637</sup> Hulme 89.

philosophy by his occasional emphasis on the communal and public aspects of a “common sense” reality. Arguing against the Bergsonian idea of world as a *picture*, Lewis writes:

The disintegration of the world-picture of ‘common sense’ effected by the introduction of private and subjective time-systems, by the breaking up of the composite sense of the assembled senses into an independent space of touch, a space of sight, a visceral space, and so forth: the conversion of ‘the thing’ into a series of discrete apparitions – all this comprehensive and meticulous attack upon the very basis of ‘common-sense’ (the term used in philosophy for the ordered picture of the classic world, and equally the instinctive picture we inherit from the untold generations of men) is as a spectacle impressive at first, no doubt, but it does not seem to bear the mark of a truth-telling or veridical passion, so much as a romantic and fanatical impulse of some description.<sup>638</sup>

What may seem, given our “postmodern condition”, as a blatantly old-fashioned position, is in fact the resistance of classicism faced with the emergence of the relativist world of the post-modern *becoming*. The set of ideas which Lewis uses to legitimize his position is once more typically spatial. It relies on the classicist idea of objective and universal order, which is necessary for man in his attempt to lift himself from his fallen condition.<sup>639</sup> Echoing Eliot’s traditionalism as well as Hulme’s conservative religious anthropology, which describes “man as an extraordinarily fixed and limited animal whose nature is absolutely constant” and claims that “[i]t is only by tradition and organisation that anything decent can be got out of him”<sup>640</sup>, Lewis promotes an “instinctive” common sense world of rationalism and universalism. Lewis’ use of the word “instinct” is in this sense quite surprising and should not be confused with its romantic meaning as used by Lawrence, Bergson, and the Futurists as a means of communication with the irrational forces of nature or natural objects. Lewis uses the word “instinct” rather metaphorically and his phrase “instinctive picture of untold generation of men” can easily be substituted with “tradition”. The above quoted passage, however, introduces one more surprising aspect of Lewis’ thought that extends

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<sup>638</sup> Lewis, *Time* 426.

<sup>639</sup> This order relies on the idea of universally applicable classification of objects and this in turn relies on our ability to tell one object from another. The process of telling objects apart relies on their universal, clear and distinct forms, which are typically spatial, and our belief in universal (natural, essential, God-made) categories. The exact opposite of this approach would be our modern nominalist position which believes that the way objects step out of the continuum of perceived reality is based on the arbitrary nature of the system of signs or names we use to refer to these objects.

<sup>640</sup> Hulme 116.

the discussion of the inside vs. outside duality, namely the duality of “privacy” and “common sense.”

Despite his exalted individualism and anti-communalism, Lewis is, especially in *Time and the Western Man*, very anti-subjectivist and the fact that “individual” does not mean “subjective” is explicitly stressed in all his texts and becomes a cornerstone of his classical thinking on the category of common sense. In the classicist view, the word “common” in common-sense means something that is universally applicable and available to anyone. It is precisely the classicist emphasis on the objective common-sense reality that motivates Lewis to favour the objective space over subjective time which, as we have seen in our discussion of Virginia Woolf: “once it lodges in the queer element of human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or a hundred times its clock length; on the other hand, an hour may be accurately represented on the mantelpiece of the mind by one second.”<sup>641</sup>

Lewis’ critique of the corrupting, chaotic and anti-classical effects of “wild time” bears on this esoteric and fluid quality of time which inhibits all clear and distinct divisions of stable substances. Even worse, due to its effects: “Time present and time past/ are both perhaps present in time future/ and time future contained in time past”<sup>642</sup> and so Time, transplanted into space, results in the programmatic anti-traditionalism of Futurist pictures of dogs with a hundred legs and a dozen backs and heads or streets entering houses, intuitively disrupting the “common sense” divisions between objects. The effects of time on subjectivity are equally disturbing, turning it into a temporal sequence of unsubstantial I’s. This destabilisation of the common sense world order thus necessarily introduces the need for new, alternative and dynamic<sup>643</sup> means of communication (such as intuition, instinct or empathy) that would be capable of capturing reality intuitively its changeability. As we have seen, the esoteric, inner and private quality of these “within” channels and circuits are fundamentally troubling for Lewis’ common sense epistemology.

Lewis’ theory of plastic art thus attempts to prevent the disintegration of the objective, common sense, realm of classical substances, which is for him represented by the disintegration of senses. In his own “hard and dry” classicist version of the return to

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<sup>641</sup> Woolf, Orlando 94.

<sup>642</sup> Eliot 171.

<sup>643</sup> Lawrence’s touch is a fine example of this.

unity, Lewis modifies the exclusive position of vision, and reaches for the sense of touch, which is for him the only means of exercising the “apparitions of the [exclusively] visual sense”:

The eye is, in the sense in which we are considering it, the *private* organ: the hand the *public* one. [...] The eye estranges and particularizes more than the sense of touch, its images are of confusing vivacity and its renderings are readily more subjective. The notion of *one* Space, they say, is due to the sense of ‘touch’: and space is the ‘timeless’ idea. Space is the ‘public’ idea. And in order to be ‘timeless,’ and to be public,’ it must be one. It is our contention here *that it is because of the subjective treatment, of the senses principally of sight and touch, that the external disunity has been achieved.* It is but another case of the *morcellement* of the *one* personality, in this case into a tactile-observer on the one hand and visual-observer on the other, giving different renderings of the same thing. Its results must be the disintegration, finally, of any ‘public’ thing at all.<sup>644</sup>

Serving an entirely different purpose than to Lawrence, touch becomes for Lewis the protector of the lost unity and objectivity of both things and personality and a symbol of the public, commonsense reality that favours the safety and order of separate surface facts. In a section called “The Function of the Eye” of his essay “Essay on The Objective of Plastic Arts”, Lewis refers to “the eye” as to the sense responsible for “an incessant analysis of the objects presented to us for the practical purposes of our lives.”<sup>645</sup> Using the term “Kinema” to stress that “the eye has to pay, emotionally, for its practical empire over our lives” and claiming that “the eye cannot have the apple and eat it too”, Lewis’ position comes structurally very close to Lawrence’s critique of the so called “Kodak” vision and to Lawrence’s insistence that art must “seize us intuitively” so that it wouldn’t remain “purely optical.”<sup>646</sup>

Lewis’ and Lawrence’s critique of the Kodak/ Kinema quality of the (purely) visual perception connects us to the “almost” inhuman character of art which in Lawrence’s case represents the “last stages of human development” before the “human unit is completely lost”<sup>647</sup> and in Lewis’s his re-articulation of the proverbial deadness in art, which he discusses in “Essay on the Objective of Plastic Art.”<sup>648</sup>

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<sup>644</sup> Lewis, Time 419.

<sup>645</sup> Lewis, Objective of Plastic Art 37.

<sup>646</sup> Lawrence, Phoenix 560.

<sup>647</sup> Lawrence, Letters III 30.

<sup>648</sup> This statement is just another reformulation of the impossibility of “absolute observation”.

Bergson's view that the permanence of the work of art, or its continued interest for us, depends on its uniqueness, on the fact that such and such a thing will *never happen again*, would make everything in life a work of art. This uniqueness is a portion of everything, and need not be invoked for the definition of art. In fact, the other factors of the work of art of an opposite and general description are those that distinguish it from the rest of life, cancelling as far as possible its uniqueness. Indeed, as I have shown, it would seem that successful expression occurs exactly at the point where, should this uniqueness be diminished any further, it would lose in force as human expression. Even one of the only standards of measurement we have is the distance to which a personality can penetrate into the general or the abstract, without losing its force and reality for us.<sup>649</sup>

As it was the case with Woolf's art, both Lawrence and Lewis (at least in this rare explicit formulation) invite and embrace that kind of human imperfection which allows their arts to retain the "minimal" human quality. The struggle against the negative aspects of the human condition, i.e. man's alienation from the living cosmos for Lawrence and the life of bodies in Lewis, is for these writers the supreme aim of the work of art. It requires the transcendence of the "human condition" without losing the essential human personality and individuality along the way. What all of Lawrence, Woolf and Lewis look for is first of all a balance between two extremes which are identical in their result: between the absolute negation of the other, be it nature, other people, or classicist order, which results in solipsism of the hypertrophied narcissistic "I" (the "S" point of Bergson's diagram) on one hand and a total dissolution of "the human unity", to an amorphous co-existence, determined by Nature, idealism, One, communism, Cosmos, instinct, etc. Lawrence's and Lewis' insight manifests itself in the fact that they both see the negation of "the human" (despite their difference of opinion about what "the human" is), i.e. the machine in both of these extremes.

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<sup>649</sup> Lewis, *Objective of Plastic* 34.

#### **4. In Conclusion**

Woolf's, Lawrence's as well as Lewis' work is a reaction to the changes in the scientific, philosophical and artistic conceptualisations of classical categories of space and human subjectivity. Despite their differences, for example in the treatment of human body, difference in themes and imagery or use of formal experimentation, Woolf's and Lawrence's texts represent an essentially dynamic conception of the human subjectivity and situate it into a close proximity to the material reality. This materiality then becomes a very important factor which influences the idea human subjectivity in general. The way this happens is of course quite different for both authors and it seems fair to say that Woolf's fiction is in its method and use of images into a certain degree more experimental than Lawrence's. This experimental nature of Woolf's fiction lies in the use of techniques that are less traditional than Lawrence's psychological and spatial application of the cyclical myth of return, use of the Sublime, or work with more or less classical images and metaphors such as water, dance, the or mystical union of man and woman. All of these images and motives seem to be more conventional than Woolf's experiments with contraction and expansion of space, disruption of linear perspective, or work with reflections.

Importantly, the influence of material reality, and in particular spaces and their structures which we have identified as representing the backbone of Woolf's and Lawrence's texts is not without its problems and both of the authors seem to be aware of it. In Woolf's fiction, there was a chance to observe characters undergoing states of consciousness which represent liminal existence of "the human" – either complete dissolution of individuality in instances of disembodied perception, or complete identification with the perceived objects. In Lawrence's stories and novels we examined structurally similar images that rely either on hypertrophied individuality and solipsism or, on the other hand, of complete dissolution. It can be argued that for both Woolf, and particular to Lawrence, these states represent situations in which one of the constitutive elements of human psyche takes complete control of an individual and thereby temporarily cancels the dynamic yet balanced nature of human subjectivity.

Lewis' fiction does not portray the struggle between the intellect and the wild body the way for example Lawrence represents the continuous pulsating struggle between conscious and unconscious constituents of our psyche, but instead relies on a more



“clear-cut” or schematic representation of the mind-body division. Lewis’ stress on static conceptualisations of human nature and his insistence on the classical separation and detachment are the main differences between Woolf’s or Lawrence’s and Lewis’ texts. Where Lawrence seeks the relationship between dynamical pulsation of life forces and their unconscious contact with human psyche Lewis seeks clear detachment and satirical observation. The difference in approach of the two artists can be demonstrated in their relation to the role of art. Art for Lawrence represents a chance to renew our connection with the creative forces of the Cosmos whereas to Lewis the “only” function of art is to enable us to reflect our own limits in a rather dubious version of Kantian teleology.

Consequently, the most valuable moment of Lewis’ fiction, which at times does not restrain from stereotyped repetitions of the central motive, are precisely the moments in which the observation fails and the naivety of the belief in the liberating forces of human intellect is fully exposed. Seen from this perspective, the most interesting stories are “The Death of the Ankou” and first of all “Cattleman’s Spring Mate”. Both of these stories show the observation gone wrong: in “The Death of the Ankou” the studied object dies as a result of his encounter with the narrator and in “Cattleman’s Spring Mate”, even more interestingly, the laughing observer, despite his supposed wit, ends up doing what he tried to avoid. Nevertheless, seen from a purely literary perspective and disregarding the respective philosophical background, even these stories lack in complexity and poetic quality to the majority of Lawrence’s and Woolf’s stories.

The discussion of spatial images in texts of the three analysed authors clearly demonstrates that Modernism as a homogeneous literary movement does not exist and that the differences between individual authors are at least as profound as the correspondences. Despite this, it is the importance of the idea of space and material reality which asserts itself as an important referential point to the era which is often seen as an era of time. As a result of this, it becomes clear that the essentially “modernist” themes discussed in this thesis, such as the idea of continuity and discontinuity, solidity and fluidity, connectivity and discreteness, outside and inside, unity and multiplicity or One and many, cannot be fully conceptualised and understood without taking the philosophy of space really seriously.

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## **Abstract**

The thesis discusses affinities between physical and psychical spaces in selected works of D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf and Wyndham Lewis in connection with the main philosophical and aesthetic problems posed by the changes in modernist representation of character with respect to space and place. In doing so, the argument assesses the “in-human humanism” of D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf which manifests itself in the interrelation between states of mind and material universe, the way in which the consciousness accommodates various material “admixtures” and how subjectivity “escapes” from subject to its own outside.

Using the conservative thought of Wyndham Lewis as a vital source of comparison, the thesis examines how the interaction of these newly constructed modernist subjectivities with space changes and challenges traditional ideas of unity of self, personal identity and autonomous agency. Drawing on a number of themes from visual arts, the discussion connects these psychical factors with the notions of solidity and fluidity/stability and instability of material reality and individual objects, moving bodies or things in space. As a part of this, the thesis incorporates a detailed discussion of Italian Futurism, especially F. T. Marinetti’s and Umberto Boccioni’s theories of physical transcendentalism, force-lines, ambiente and technological sensitivity.

## **Souhrn (Abstrakt) v českém jazyce**

Práce se zabývá problematikou vztahu mezi fyzickým a psychologickým prostorem v díle D. H. Lawrence, Virginie Woolfové a Wyndhama Lewise v kontextu filozofie a estetiky počátku dvacátého století s ohledem na změny ve ztvárnění prostoru, místa a lidské osobnosti. Diskuse se zaměřuje na problematiku jednoty lidské subjektivity v povídkách a románech Virginie Woolfové a D. H. Lawrence a sleduje vztah mezi změnou stavů lidské mysli a její interakce s vnějším světem a jeho proměnlivými strukturami. Diskuse se dále zaměřuje na alternativní způsoby „prostorového“ vyjádření procesu decentralizace lidské subjektivity, její prolínání s materiálním světem, hmotou a prostorem a studuje proměnlivý vztah mezi subjektem a jeho vnějškovostí.

Zásadním přínosem k diskutované problematice je filozofie konzervativního myslitele, malíře a spisovatele Wyndhama Lewise. Lewis ve svém díle zastává opačnou pozici a trvá na autonomním, soběstačném a centralizovaném pojetí lidské subjektivity, nezávisle na vlivech vnějšího prostředí. Diskuse se dále opírá o srovnání s vybranými estetickými problémy a teoriemi výtvarného umění, především o italský futurismus a Cézannův postimpresionismus a zkoumá jejich vliv na dílo D. H. Lawrence a Wyndhama Lewise.