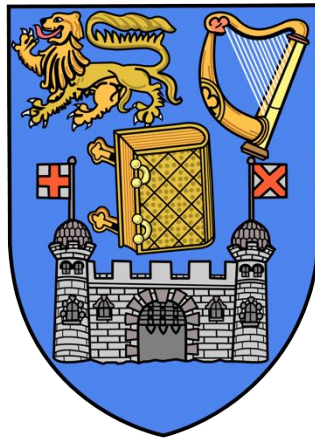


Intermedial Modernism: Mina Loy, E. E. Cummings, and Poet-Painter Artisthood



Bowen Wang

School of English
Trinity College, the University of Dublin

Supervisor: Prof. Philip Coleman

*A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor in Philosophy*

January 2024

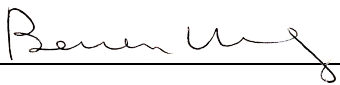
Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is entirely my own work and that it has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university.

I have read and I understand the plagiarism provisions in the General Regulations of the University Calendar for the current year, found at <http://www.tcd.ie/calendar>.

I consent to the examiner retaining a copy of the thesis beyond the examining period, should they so wish (EU GDPR May 2018).

I agree that this thesis will not be publicly available, but will be available to TCD staff and students in the University's open access institutional repository on the Trinity domain only, subject to Irish Copyright Legislation and Trinity College Library conditions of use and acknowledgement.

Signed: 

Date: 5 January 2024

Abstract

This study focuses on the figure of modernist *poet-painters*, specifically Mina Loy and E. E. Cummings, within a redefined context of *intermedial modernism* in the early twentieth century. Through an in-depth exploration of their verbal-visual artistries, it examines the dialectical dynamics and collaborative nature of intermediality as the substrate to reformulate the formalist or materialist aesthetics of modernism. Both Loy and Cummings were adept in modernist poetics and artworks, actively engaging in a wide range of avant-garde art movements such as Italian Futurism, New York Dada, Fauvism and Cubism in Paris. Their transcontinental exchanges across the Atlantic and the Pacific provide valuable insights into the fluid, transformative agency of their dual identities. Furthermore, this dissertation explores how the poetics of intermedial artishood realigns typeset words and phrases with spatial layout and construction. Loy's manifestic designs, verbal readymades, painterly abstractions and Cummings' gestural line-drawings, vital still lifes, landscapes, are extensively investigated to showcase a captivating series of modernist representations of word, image, object and identity. In defying the preordained boundaries and hierarchies between the sayable and the seeable, they shed light on the alternative medialities or modalities in a broad narrative for us to experience and reimagine the tangible world.

Loy's cosmopolitan avant-gardism and intermedial portraiture, along with Cummings' intercultural influences and intermedial prosody, demonstrate the profound creativity achieved through this image-text convergence which is integral to a medium-specific modernist aesthetics and the reconfiguration of artistic and social spaces in that historical epoch. As such, the dissertation delves into their bold experimentation, illuminating the significance of intermediality in the modernist refashioning of style, form, and material. The separate realms of reading and spectatorship are bridged with cultural, technological, and ideological implications. In contrast to traditional textual criticism, this study highlights an intermedial reading that brings Loy's and Cummings' art practices, including not only paintings or drawings in various materials but also designs as *objet d'art*, illustrations, collages, murals, and sketches with written notes, into close consideration. It thus sets the stage for new crossroads of modernist studies and intermedial studies, and poses important questions about the nature of discourse and expression, the interplay between text and vision, the transgression of artistic disciplines, and the potential prism of intermediality to challenge and reshape our linearist or literalist conception of language and art.

Summary

The dissertation conducts a comparative study of avant-garde poet-painters Mina Loy and E. E. Cummings, aiming to explore intermedial, transcultural modernism as an eclectic movement rather than a monolithic being. Positioned at the intersection of modernist studies and intermedial studies, the research focuses on the vital, plastic materiality of poetic language and its broader social, political, and ideological implications. This project is structured into three main components: a threshold chapter providing historical and theoretical context for what I address as “intermedial modernism,” followed by two sections with two chapters each. These sections delve into Loy’s and Cummings’ engagement with transcultural influences and their intermedial artistries across various artistic genres. The first section examines their involvement in cosmopolitan avant-garde movements among different nations and cultures, while the second section investigates their modernist experimentation through a range of mediums, such as fashion design, portraiture, abstraction, line-drawing, still life, and landscapes.

Chapter 1 “Medialising Modernity: From *Ut pictura poesis* to Intermediality” reformulates the concept of intermediality, proposing it as an alternative framework for analysing the artishood of poet-painters. It pays attention to the emergence of the visual or pictorial turn in the early twentieth century and advocates for an intermedial perspective and approach that questions the traditional comparison and contrast between different mediums and artforms. Modernist intermediality, embracing a poststructuralist stance of in-betweenness, remediates binaries and interrogates the intertwined connections between form and content, body and mind, icon and symbol, and the visible and the articulable.

Chapter 2 “‘Evolve the language of Future’: Loy’s Cosmopolitan Avant-Gardism” emphasises Loy’s (inter-)artistic journey as she navigated and transcended national, sexual, and cultural boundaries throughout her life. It traces her transatlantic experience from Italian Futurism to New York Dada, and regards her *Lunar Baedeker* as radical discourses articulating feminist politics and other societal appeals. The chapter scrutinises Loy’s Futurist and Dadaist experiments with printed word, typographic language, and structural layout as her opposed or mongrel poetics. By refashioning the critical articulations of sex, race, and class, she constitutes an ambitious activism to challenge these repressive forces in modern society.

Chapter 3 “‘An author of pictures, a draughtsman of words’: Cummings’ Intermedial Prosody” concentrates on Cummings’ modernist craftsmanship of intermediality, considering painterly aesthetics as much as a poetic one. It specifically explores his dynamic exchange with Continental avant-gardes and East-Asian classics, including his correspondence with Ezra Pound and exposure to movements like Fauvism and Cubism in Paris. This chapter highlights Cummings’

intermedial prosody to transgress distinguishing boundaries and integrate new energies from the historically separate realms of word and image, the textual and the graphic, subject and object, and the West and the East.

Chapter 4 “‘The word made flesh’: Intermedial Portraiture in Loy’s Ekphrases and Art Poems” examines Loy’s modernist experiments with visionary artforms and techniques, such as manifestic design, readymade, and abstraction, in her ekphrases and art or artist-portrait poems. It analyses her formal poetics of designing, which replaces masculine, elitist consistencies with feminine, fluid contingencies. In doing this, Loy seeks for a stylistic capture of the transformative process of re-presentation and identification, recasting conventional styles and materials to reimagine alter selfhoods, narratives, and worldviews.

Chapter 5 “‘Little painted poem’: Modernist Experiments in Cummings’ ‘Poempicture’” probes into Cummings’ invention of “poempicture,” an intermedial enterprise revealing what is ostensibly hidden in the visible realm of a poetic text. Through his innovative manipulation of letters, spaces, and punctuation marks, Cummings’ “poempictoriality” entangles with his artistic attempts in line-drawing, still life, and landscape in terms of their common structures and subject matters. From his early abstractions to late representational works, the modernist affordance subverts the hierarchal status of literary meaning over pictorial form, conflating the static and the motional, the interior and the external, and the natural and the sociocultural.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Philip Coleman, for his exceptional guidance, mentorship, and consistent support during my doctoral journey spanning the last four years. He consistently provided me with inspiring ideas and resources in modernist poetry studies, while nurturing my ability to be an innovative and critical literary researcher. I also extend my sincere appreciation to the faculty at the School of English, especially Prof. Andy Murphy, Prof. Aileen Douglas, Dr. Paul Delaney, Dr. Bernice Murphy, and Dr. Jane Suzanne Carroll, who served as members of my Thesis Committee. Special thanks are sent to my internal and external examiners, Dr. Tom Walker and Prof. Alex Goody (Oxford Brookes), for their constructive feedback and engaging discussions throughout the *viva voce* session. Their expertise has brought significant depth and valuable insights to my dissertation.

I am immensely grateful to the Trinity Long Room Hub Arts & Humanities Research Institute, where I was fortunate enough to spend a three-year residency as an Early Career Researcher. Thanks to Prof. Eve Patten, Dr. Caitriona Curtis, and all the other peer and visiting research fellows from diverse disciplines, I was encouraged to share my ongoing project at different phases. Being part of this community allowed me to benefit from activities such as weekly coffee mornings, poster sessions, SoE Staff-Postgraduate Seminars, and affiliation with the International Network for the Comparative Humanities, which is co-anchored by Princeton and Notre Dame. Additionally, as a Visiting Doctoral Student at the Oxford Centre for Life-Writing during Trinity 2023, I would like to express my gratitude to my proposer Prof. Dame Hermione Lee, Prof. Elleke Boehmer, Dr. Alice Little, and other visiting scholars at Wolfson College. Their fruitful inputs from multiple perspectives on cross-generic life narratives greatly enriched my research.

This PhD project would not have been possible without the financial support of the China Scholarship Council. I am also indebted to the European Association for American Studies' Transatlantic Travel Grant, the Irish Association for American Studies' Postgraduate Conference Bursary, and the Trinity Trust Travel Grant. These grants funded my archival research in the United States to explore the Mina Loy Papers at Yale's Beinecke Rare and Manuscript Library and the E. E. Cummings Papers at Harvard's Houghton Library in October 2022. The extensive collections of their verbal-visual artworks contributed to the unique findings in my dissertation. I would also like to acknowledge the stimulating discussions I had through correspondence with Prof. Michael Webster (Grand Valley State University) and Prof. Gillian Huang-Tiller (University of Virginia's College at Wise), both from the E. E. Cummings Society, as abundant sources of inspiration and strength for my project.

Over the past four years, I have had the honour of presenting my research on Loy studies and Cummings studies around the world – either virtually or in-person. I extend my thanks to all those insightful comments and productive exchanges from my fellow panelists and the audiences at various conferences. Some panels include “Mina Loy’s Hopes” at the British Association for Modernist Studies conference in Bristol, “Modernism in Motion” at the European Society for the Study of English conference in Mainz, “Cummings’ Contact(s): Vision, Eco-Vitalism, and the Actual World” at the American Literature Association conference in Boston, and “Modernist Orientalisms: Verse and Visual Art” at the Modernist Studies Association conference in Portland, among others. I am also obliged to Mengdi Wang and Jun Qiang for inviting me to deliver guest lectures and talks on intercultural/transmedial poetics at Dublin City University’s School of Applied Language & Intercultural Studies and York’s Centre for Modern Studies.

The International Society for Intermedial Studies has been a wonderful platform for developing my ideas on intermedial modernism. I want to express my appreciation to Dr Cecilia Brioni for her continuous support in accommodating my special panel titled “Intermedial Poetry and the Poetics of Intermediality” at the 6th biannual conference held at Trinity last summer. I am also thankful to my great panellists, Dr. Amelia McConville, Gerald Jia Ding (Stanford), and Kaiwen Hou (Durham), for their fantastic presentations and thoughtful conversations on the topic of intermedial poetics from alternative methods and practices. Lastly, I must mention Dr. Shuangyi Li (Bristol), whom I befriended during the conference and who has offered me intellectual and professional support ever since.

To my beloved parents Ziqiang Wang and Yingzheng Zhang, my friends Qiwei Peng and Huayu Yang, and my puppy Maiya, I owe the greatest and largest debt for their spiritual companionship and lifelong investment in my academic pursuit and career development. I am more than appreciative for their constant understanding, unwavering tolerance, and enduring love throughout my life.

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	xi
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xv
Introduction: Poet-Painters and Intermedial Modernism	1
Chapter 1: Medialising Modernity: From <i>Ut pictura poesis</i> to Intermediality	31
i. A Genealogy of <i>Ut pictura poesis</i>	34
ii. Intermediality and the Philosophy of In-Between(ness)	43
iii. Modernist Dialogic Collaboration	55
Part I Transcultural Modernism and Intermedial Identities	73
Chapter 2: “Evolve the language of Future”: Loy’s Cosmopolitan Avant-Gardism	75
i. The Expatriate, Transatlantic <i>Lunar Baedeker</i>	79
ii. Loy’s Feminist Anglo-Mongrel Futurism	96
iii. From Europe to America: A Dadaist Refashioning	109
Chapter 3: “A draughtsman of words”: Cummings’ Prosodic Intermediality	125
i. Being Primitive: A Modernist “Poet-Painter of China”	130
ii. Intermedial Prosody in Transcontinental Avant-Gardes	149
iii. Cummings’ Cubo-Fauvist Palette	157
Part II Experimental Modernism and Intermedial Artistries	171
Chapter 4: “Word made flesh”: Intermedial Portraits in Loy’s Ekphrases and Art Poems	173
i. Fashion and Design: The Art of Manifesto/Aphorism	177
ii. The Readymade Word in Loy’s Verbal-Visual Portraiture	190
iii. Painterly Abstraction as Aesthetic Archetype	201
Chapter 5: “Little painted poem”: Modernist Experiments in Cummings’ “Poempicture”	217
i. Sketched Pages: The Gestural Narrative of Line-Drawing	220
ii. Vital Materiality and Cummings’ Still Lives	237
iii. Scenography in Landscaping	257
Conclusion	273
<i>Bibliography</i>	279
<i>Appendix 1: Letter to a Toy Merchant from Mina Loy</i>	299
<i>Appendix 2: “E. E. Cummings” by Marianne Moore</i>	301

List of Figures

- 1-1 Nicolas Poussin, *The Institution of the Eucharist* (1640). Oil on canvas, 325 by 250 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.
- 1-2 Titian, *Diana and Actaeon* (1556-59). Oil on canvas, 185 by 202 cm. National Gallery, London.
- 1-3 Leonardo da Vinci, *Comparison of Scalp Skin and Onion* (1489). Pen, ink and red chalk on paper, 20.3 by 15.2 cm. Royal Library, Windsor.
- 1-4 Charles-François Hutin, *Ut Pictura Poesis* (1745-46). Cream laid paper, 53.2 by 38 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland.
- 1-5 Nick Sousanis, *Unflattening* (2015). Comics. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015, pp. 25-26.
- 1-6 André Masson, *In Pursuit of Hatchings and Germinations* (1967). Oil and sand on canvas, 100 by 149.9 cm. Mobilier National, Paris.
- 1-7 Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas* (1656). Oil on canvas, 318 by 276 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.
- 1-8 Edouard Manet, *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882). Oil on canvas, 96 by 130 cm. Courtauld Gallery, London.
- 1-9 Charles Demuth, *I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold* (1928). Oil on paperboard, 90.2 by 76.2 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
- 1-10 Pablo Picasso, *The Old Guitarist* (1903-1904). Oil on panel, 122.9 by 82.6 cm. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.
- 1-11 Umberto Boccioni, *Dynamism of a Cyclist* (1913). Oil on canvas, 70 by 95 cm. Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice.
- 1-12 Jean Metzinger, *La Femme au Cheval* (1911-12). Oil on canvas, 162 by 130.5 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.
- 1-13 John Berger. *Confabulations* (2016). Illustration. London: Penguin, 2016, pp. 142-43.
- 2-1 Mina Loy, *L'Amour dorloté par les belles dames* (1906). Drawing and gouache. *Mina Loy: Apology of Genius*, by Caws, London: Reaktion Books, 2022, p. 146.
- 2-2 Mina Loy, *Househunting* (1950). Assemblage. Private collection.
- 2-3 Mina Loy, *Moon I* (1932). Mixed media on board, 66.7 by 89.5 cm. Private collection
- 2-4 Mina Loy, *Les Etoiles* (1927). Ceiling light and wall sconces. *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy*, by Burke, New York: Picador, 2021.
- 2-5 Mina Loy, *Globe Céleste* (1927). Lampshade design. *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy*, by Burke, New York: Picador, 2021.

- 2-6 Mina Loy, *Designs* (1941). Colour illustrations. Mina Loy Papers, YCAL MSS 6, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, Yale University.
- 2-7 Mina Loy, *Self-Portrait* (1905). Graphite on brown paper, mounted on cardboard, 31.3 by 24 cm. Joella Bayer Collection.
- 2-8 Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Zang Tumb Tumb* (1914). Cover design, 20.4 by 13.5 cm. Milan: Edizioni Futuriste di "Poesia."
- 2-9 Mina Loy, "Aphorisms on Futurism" (1941). Page with notes. Mina Loy Papers, YCAL MSS 6, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
- 2-10 Umberto Boccioni, *The Street Enters the House* (1911). Oil on canvas, 100 by 100.6 cm. Sprengel Museum, Hanover.
- 2-11 Mina Loy, *Illustrations* (n.d.). Still image, 22 by 28 cm. Mina Loy Papers, YCAL MSS 6, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
- 2-12 Mina Loy, *Sketch of Forte dei Marmi* (ca. 1911). Pencil on paper, 50.8 by 63.5 cm. Private collection.
- 2-13 Mina Loy, *Portrait of Man Ray* (ca. 1925). Graphite on paper, 50.8 by 30.5 cm. Private collection.
- 2-14 Mina Loy, *Consider Your Grandmother's Stays* (1916). Drawing, 10.16 by 12.7 cm. *Rogue*, vol. 3, no. 2, November 1916, p. 7.
- 2-15 Mina Loy, *The Bewitched* (1932). Mixed media on board, 69.9 by 88.9 cm. Private collection.
- 2-16 Mina Loy, *Untitled* (1923). Wall Painting. *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, edited by Conover, Manchester: Carcanet, 1985.
- 3-1 E. E. Cummings, *Moon Park* (1920s). Brush and ink and wash on paper, 26 by 21 cm. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.
- 3-2 E. E. Cummings, *Untitled* (1958). Watercolour, 34.3 by 23.8 cm. Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, Rochester.
- 3-3 E. E. Cummings, *Scofield Thayer* (ca. 1920). Brush, ink, and graphite on paper, 34.6 by 30.5 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
- 3-4 E. E. Cummings, *The Road (Tao)* (n.d.). Oil painting. Private collection.
- 3-5 E. E. Cummings, *Tower in France* (n.d.). Ink on paper, 20.3 by 30.5 cm. Ken Lopez, Hadley, MA.
- 3-6 E. E. Cummings, *Tall Tree and Woods* (n.d.). Watercolour, 45.2 by 30.5 cm. Ken Lopez, Hadley, MA.
- 3-7 Constantin Brancusi, *Mlle Pogany* (1913). Bronze with black patina, 14.6 by 15.6 by 18.7 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.
- 3-8 E. E. Cummings, *Bullfight* (1924). Brush, ink, and graphite on paper. *The Dial*, vol. 76, no. 1, January 1924.

- 3-9 Gaston Lachaise, *Portrait Bust of E. E. Cummings* (1927). Bronze, 36.83 by 21.59 cm. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Cambridge, MA.
- 3-10 E. E. Cummings, *Scofield Thayer* (1921). Oil on artist board, 44.5 by 21.5 cm. National Portrait Gallery of Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
- 3-11 Henri Matisse, *Notre-Dame, une fin d'après-midi* (1902). Oil on paper mounted on paper, 72.5 by 54.5 cm. Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo.
- 3-12 E. E. Cummings, *Untitled* (1945). Watercolour, 25.3 by 35.5 cm. Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, Rochester.
- 3-13 E. E. Cummings, *Sound No. 2* (1919). Oil on paper, 47.8 by 60.6 cm. Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, Rochester.
- 3-14 E. E. Cummings, *Head – Crazy Quilt* (1919). Pencil on paper, 27.6 by 21.6 cm. The Kidder Collection.
- 3-15 E. E. Cummings, *Figurative Abstraction* (n.d.). Pencil on paper, 26 by 21 cm. Ken Lopez, Hadley, MA.
- 4-1 Mina Loy, *Build Your Own Alphabet* (1941). Colour illustrations. Mina Loy Papers, YCAL MSS 6, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
- 4-2 Mina Loy, *The Alphabet that Builds Itself* (1941). Colour illustrations. Mina Loy Papers, YCAL MSS 6, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
- 4-3 Mina Loy, *Design for Dress Material* (1941). Colour illustrations. Mina Loy Papers, YCAL MSS 6, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
- 4-4 Mina Loy, *Ring Designs* (1941). Sketch. Mina Loy Papers, YCAL MSS 6, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
- 4-5 Mina Loy, *Fashion Designs* (1914). Watercolour. *Mina Loy: Navigating the Avant-Garde*, edited by Suzanne W. Churchill et al. University of Georgia, 2020.
- 4-6 Mina Loy, *Surreal Scene* (1930). Collage and gouache, 32.2 by 24.6 cm. Roger L. Conover Collection.
- 4-7 Marcel Duchamp, *Bicycle Wheel* (1951). Readymade, 129.5 by 63.5 by 41.9 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.
- 4-8 Mina Loy, *James Joyce* (1922). Sketch. *Vanity Fair*, March 1922, p. 65.
- 4-9 Constantin Brancusi, *Golden Bird* (1919-20). Bronze, stone, and wood, 217.8 by 29.9 by 29.9 cm. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.
- 4-10 Constantin Brancusi, *Brancusi, Tristan Tzara, Berenice Abbott, Mina Loy, Jane Heap et Margaret Anderson dans l'atelier* (1921-22). Photo, 12.7 by 18 cm. Centre Pompidou, Paris.
- 4-11 Mina Loy, *Constantin Brancusi* (1924). Drawing. *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, edited by Conover, Manchester: Carcanet, 1985.
- 4-12 Wyndham Lewis, *The Starry Sky* (1917). Drawing. *The Little Review*, vol. 4, no. 7, November 1917, p. 29.

- 4-13 Wyndham Lewis, *Timon of Athens: Alcibiades* (1912). Process engraving, 29.5 by 28 cm. Private collection.
- 5-1 E. E. Cummings, *Untitled (Couple Dancing with Grid)* (1920s). Graphite pencil on paper, 23 by 12.7 cm. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.
- 5-2 E. E. Cummings, *Unspecified* (n.d.). Drawing. Box 1, MS Am 1892.14 (1), E. E. Cummings Drawings, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
- 5-3 E. E. Cummings, *Untitled (Male Dancer)* (n.d.). Graphite on paper, 40 by 19.4 cm. Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, Rochester.
- 5-4 E. E. Cummings, *Untitled (Man and Woman Dancing)* (1920s). Graphite pencil on paper, 28.1 by 21.7 cm. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.
- 5-5 E. E. Cummings, *Untitled (Woman Dancing)* (1920s). Graphite pencil on paper, 28.1 by 21.7 cm. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.
- 5-6 E. E. Cummings, *Untitled* (n.d.). Charcoal on paper. Private collection.
- 5-7 E. E. Cummings, *Still Life of a Vase of White Flowers in a Gallery* (n.d.). Oil on canvas, 29.2 by 29.2 cm. Thomaston Place Auction Galleries, Thomaston, ME.
- 5-8 Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Apples* (1893-94). Oil on canvas, 65.4 by 81.6 cm. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA.
- 5-9 E. E. Cummings, *Still Life with Pumpkins* (n.d.). Oil on canvasboard, 40.6 by 30.5 cm. Ken Lopez, Hadley, MA.
- 5-10 E. E. Cummings, *Floral Still Life* (1958). Watercolour on paper, 35.6 by 25.4 cm. Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, Rochester.
- 5-11 E. E. Cummings, *Mountain Road* (1947). Oil on canvas, 78.7 cm by 104.1 cm. Private collection.
- 5-12 E. E. Cummings, *Unspecified* (n.d.). Crayon on paper. Box 2, MS Am 1892.14 (3), E. E. Cummings Drawings, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
- 5-13 E. E. Cummings, *Sketch: Joy Farm, with Road* (n.d.). Pencil on paper, 27.9 by 21.6 cm. Ken Lopez, Hadley, MA.
- 5-14 E. E. Cummings, *Untitled* (n.d.). Watercolor on paper, 23.5 by 30.8 cm. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC.

Abbreviations

- AM* E. E. Cummings. *A Miscellany*, edited by George J. Firmage, New York: Liveright, 2018.
- BL* J. Alison Rosenblitt. *The Beauty of Living: E. E. Cummings in the Great War*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2020.
- BM* Carolyn Burke. *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy*. New York: Picador, 2021.
- CP* E. E. Cummings. *E. E. Cummings: Complete Poems, 1904-1962*, edited by George J. Firmage, New York: Liveright, 2016.
- ER* ---. *The Enormous Room*, edited by George J. Firmage, New York: Liveright, 1978.
- I* Mina Loy. *Insel*, edited by Elizabeth Arnold, Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1991.
- LaLB* Mina Loy. *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, edited by Roger L. Conover, Manchester: Carcanet, 1985.
- LoLB* ---. *The Lost Lunar Baedeker: Poems of Mina Loy*, edited by Roger L. Conover, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1997.
- P/C* Ezra Pound and E. E. Cummings. *Pound/Cummings: The Correspondence of Ezra Pound and E. E. Cummings*, edited by Barry Ahearn, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996.
- SE* Mina Loy. *Stories and Essays of Mina Loy*, edited by Sara Crangle, Champaign, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 2011.
- SL* E. E. Cummings. *Selected Letters of E. E. Cummings*, edited by F. W. Dupee and George Stade, London: André Deutsch, 1972.

Introduction

Poet-Painters and Intermedial Modernism

Far from being irrelevant and obsolete, the aesthetic of early modernism has provided the seeds of the materialist poetic which is increasingly our own.

– Marjorie Perloff, *21st-Century Modernism: The “New” Poetics* (6)

Word and image are woven together to create a new reality.

– W. J. T. Mitchell, *Image Science: Iconology, Visual Culture, and Media Aesthetics* (42)

Mina Loy’s autofiction or biofiction *Insel*, written between 1932 and 1933, tells the story of the friendship between a German Surrealist painter named Insel and an English writer, Mrs. Jones. It is loosely based on her real-life encounter with Richard Oelze, the prototype of “Insel,” during the years when she worked for Julian Levy Gallery as an art agent. In the novel, these two artists become each other’s “collaborative audience” (Loy, *I* 173) in cafés of Paris, chatting about avant-garde norms, discussing artworks in progress, and sharing aesthetic visions or the societal challenges they face. Loy, through the introspective voice of Mrs. Jones, delves into this interartistic exchange and intellectual stimulation shared between poet and painter as a rich tapestry – a “liberal exchange of confidences between the most heterogeneous people” (23). As they converse along the streets, Mrs. Jones becomes associated with the infectious, “radial starfish underpattern of [Insel’s] life,” and captivated by his “serial choreography” along an “incalculable itinerary” (151). Seeing her obscured self from Insel’s otherness, the poet-heroine observes and explores the otherworldly qualities of the painter-hero’s artistic commitment, developing a distinctive cosmic terminology to conceptualise her own unique worldview.¹

Likewise, we find this dialogic narrative, which construes artistry or artistic selves as “narratable” (Scuriatti, *Critical Modernism* 143) rather than being fixed, in E. E. Cummings’ theatrical writing.² In his play *Him*, first performed in 1928, the main action also revolves around the conflicting interaction between two characters: a playwright anonymously referred to as Him and his lover Me. Metatheatrically shown in the intensive form of dialogues in Act 2, they grapple over the process of writing a play and its connection to the complex identification with their own selves in both dramatic and actual realities. As the dramaturgist, Cummings even sets the stage with “a window and a mirror for the Him-Me scenes” (Friedman, “Theatre” 195) in a symbolic manner, reinforcing the intrinsic phase of reconciling the relationship between self and other. His verbal

¹ In analysing Loy’s autobiographical poems and fiction, Laura Scuriatti conceives of her artistic selfhood as “inherently dialogic and narrative,” which designates “a voice needing to speak to and about itself through another, and positing a constantly dialogic and shifting self, which becomes itself only in the dialogue with another or through the narrative of another” (14).

² On the concept of “narratable self,” see Adriana Cavarero, *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, translated by Paul A. Kottman (Routledge, 2000).

and visual designs aim to navigate the representation of “elusive” selfhood as dynamic and evolving entities intertwined with (inter)artistic self-expressions in “heterogeneous signs” and mediums (Heusser, *I Am My Writing* 1).³ In the dialogic sense of their *Künstlerromane*, Loy and Cummings as modernist poet-painters share their journey of intermedial collaboration between artists and artistic mediums beyond any homogenic tradition, a trend that has become increasingly noticeable since the early twentieth century.

As stated in Mary Ann Caws’ *Creative Gatherings: Meeting Places of Modernism* (2019), the assembling or “gathering thread” (7) of poets and painters in many locations, from their private hangouts or studios to public bookshops and coffee houses, was a prominent cultural phenomenon at the beginning of the last century.⁴ Examples include Loy’s Parisian group centred around Shakespeare & Co. with Sylvia Beach, Djuna Barnes, and Gertrude Stein, as well as Cummings’ companions in Boston like Scofield Thayer, James Sibley, and later Marianne Moore on the editorial board of *The Dial*.⁵ These physical meeting places came to be constructive spaces where a dynamic sense of intermediality within modernist aesthetics was nurtured, allowing “creative communities [to] assemble, around a table or an idea or in a recurring meeting of minds, like or unlike” (Caw, *Creative Gathering* 7) of artists of all kinds. Across traditional medial borders, the interpersonal exchange of various arts brings “all of these assembled creators a renewed imagination and determination beyond their individual ways of being” (7) within an intermedial assembly:

[...] large or small, around a table: for some sort of sustenance physical and mental, perhaps habitual, perhaps occasional. It would have to do with the excited transfer of conversation from the surface of the table, for material sustenance, to the surface of the canvas or the paper or the score: from table to tableau, to text and so on. (7)

The mode or mood of collaboration, as the “central substance to encourage and enliven the life of arts” (8), takes place physically and mentally, either regularly or occasionally, between the tableau on the canvas and the text on the paper, releasing sustaining energies and transferring reciprocal forces from one side to the other. This intermedial communication abandons “individualist models of literary history in favour of more inclusive, wide-ranging attitudes to modernism that call attention to collectivity, secession from and inclusion in the group, teamwork, and plurality”

³ For a systematic study of Cummings’ writings of selfhood in terms of indeterminate multiplicity and unity in duality, see Heusser’s “Notions of Selfhood,” in *I Am My Writing* 13-120.

⁴ On how a variety of grouping places conducts creative-minded persons to the sustenance of interartistic powers, see Caws, Introduction: A Gathering Thread, in *Creative Gatherings* 7-28; Robyn Middleton et al., eds, *Artists & Writers Colonies: Retreats, Residences, and Respite for the Creative Mind* (Portland, OR: Blue Heron Publishing, 2000).

⁵ About Loy’s artistic community, see Laura Scuriatti, “Together, on Her Own: A Survey of Mina Loy’s Textual Communities,” in *Groups, Coteries, Circles and Guilds* 71-96. About Cummings’ friendship, see Richard S. Kennedy, “E. E. Cummings at Harvard: Verse, Friends, Rebellion,” *Harvard Library Bulletin*, vol. XXV, no. 3 (1977) 253-91.

(Waddell 742). From the singular to the plural, modernism, or rather modernisms as it is inherently multifarious, serves as a collaborative site for the generation of new poetic and artistic creations, mediations, and interpretations.

During the twentieth century, an intermedial condition emerged, bringing together different mediums and artforms on both collective and individual levels. Dissatisfied with outdated subjects and structures of organising language, artists of the era took equal heed of visual art as literature and began experimenting with the incorporation of methods and expressions from a non-poetic territory. Modernist poetry itself “collaborates and competes with avant-garde movements and their defining productions, especially manifestoes and modernist visual art” (Peppis, “Schools” 47).⁶ The intermedial collaboration of the verbal and the visual is driven by a modernist motivation to shift aesthetic attitudes, break away from historical hierarchies, and foster a collective community or unified identity. By examining the specific artisthood of the poet-painter, this study builds upon Alex Runchman and Tom Walker’s “Modernism’s Collaborative Poetics” (1) with an intermedial focus on its dynamic scenes and complex dialectics across different mediums, disciplines, and cultures:

The question of how modernist poetry might be seen as striving for various forms of collaboration with its readerships, audiences, and publics becomes still more intricate as one considers too the circumstances of its production, mediation, and reception. Read with an eye and ear to their interactions with other genres and media, and their engagements with other works, writers, and contexts, modernist poems can be seen as sites of multifarious collaboration in a sense that goes well beyond traditional notions of literary collaboration as co-authorship. (2)

This “multifarious collaboration,” in my case, goes beyond single authorship or contextual forces and listens to other voices within one’s own multifaceted, intermedial artisthood. As the revolutionarily political “desire to transform society met the aesthetic desire to *represent* and *circulate* the signs of transformation” (Levenson 13), modernist poet-painters could benefit from the cross-pollination of arts to challenge prevailing conventions of modernity and provoke new styles of thinking and perceiving a counterworld. To accomplish this, they draw inspiration from diverse sources and probe into alternative techniques, materials, and concepts to transform the formal significations of the past and push the limits of *representation* and *circulation* within a fertile ground of different artefacts. Their modernist quest for a novel artform addresses the question of meaning and unmeaning in a broader context, supporting the social practice of art called by Michael Levenson as “miscellaneous and inconclusive talk”: “with a great many artifacts, including music and popular fiction, the chatter they stir is not an act of interpretation but a much more

⁶ For a historical taxonomy of early modernist communities in Europe and America, see Milton A. Cohen, *Movement, Manifesto, Melee: The Modernist Group 1910-1914* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004).

heterogeneous activity of exchanging enthusiasms, filling in contexts (including biographical contexts), noticing details, making associations, ruminating without a directed goal” (22). The “heterogeneous” nature of modernist discourse encompasses a range of intermedial, transdisciplinary conversations beyond the confines of a single domain – both obvious and nuanced – happening within or outside one’s artishood. Its heterogeneity and multiplicity highlight the formal or generic richness of modernist artistries with an interconnected tendency of interartistic explorations.

In this vein, the multifarious artforms and their interactive exchange of ideas, perspectives, and interpretations across different mediums hint at the need for a redefined framework of what I call *intermedial modernism*, or an intermedially defined modernism.⁷ This framework characterises intermediality – a dialectical and collaborative interplay between literary and artistic spheres – as the substrate to reformulate the formalist or materialist aesthetics of modernism. Karen Jacobs and Rebecca Beasley are among the critics who have recognised the close relationship between literary modernism and visual culture. Beasley’s *Esra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism* (2007) registers the innate “visuality embedded within *modernist* itself” by conceptualising or intermedialising it as “a visual culture” (4). Jacobs’ *Eye’s Mind: Literary Modernism and Visual Culture* (2001) interrogates the epistemological shift that occurs when visible lines of words encounter the “escalating dominance of the image,” stressing these distinct modalities and their medial transformation as an act of “penetration and mediation of every sphere of social life” (2). To spotlight a Victorianist influence on this aspect, Rachel Teukolsky, in *The Literate Eye: Victorian Art Writing and Modernist Aesthetics* (2009), states that “a multi-stranded, internationalist modernism has an unaccounted strand emerging from Victorian culture” (22), especially from its rising visual culture including photographs, museum exhibitions, decorative objects, and nineteenth-century art writings. In this study, from the lens of culture and with a focus on medium, intermedial modernism seeks not only to visualise and materialise the subjective complications that were previously intangible, but also to mediate between formal embodiment or representation and one’s bodily perception and participation. In this sense, intermediality approaches the medium as a verb rather than a noun, which transcends being the intermediate agency between discursivity and visibility, subject and object, and mind and body as historically divided by the Cartesian hierarchy.

According to Tyrus Miller’s essay “Medium-New,” modernist theorisation about media addresses the age-old debate surrounding the similarities and differences between word and image,

⁷ In terms of its formal diversity and complexity, Cara L. Lewis briefly mentions the concept of “intermedial modernism” (227) in the conclusion of her work, *Dynamic Form: How Modernism Made Intermediality*, without providing a detailed explanation. Additionally, there is another doctoral project that focuses on the idea of “intermedial modernism” specifically within the realms of literature and sound-based arts (e.g., music, dance, and radio), see Leroy Searle, *Intermedial Modernism: Music, Dance, and Sound*, University of Washington (2016), PhD dissertation.

which has been present since the Hellenistic *ut pictura poesis*, the Renaissance paragone, and the Laocoonised dichotomy.⁸ The modernist redefinition of medium considers it not as an unchanging essence, but rather as a processive reappropriation of given materials. Media might exhibit “a certain transhistorical validity despite the flux of historical variations and novelties in their use” (T. Miller, “Medium-New” 123). In other words, medium is not a fixed entity or physical material used solely for artistic expression; it exists in an interdependent relationship with the historical backgrounds and inherited representational traditions that have shaped it over time. In the initial stage, the avant-gardes disrupt medial conventions through political gestures, accelerating this compositional destruction to any former practices and criticisms.

Their inventive new artforms and idioms problematise the notion of “paradoxically singular ‘genres’ of art,” whose contradiction arises from the rupture and transformation of their heterogeneric impulses inside:

But this imperative to invent extended beyond the specific forms and styles to the domain of art itself, where the distribution and hierarchy of media was a defining feature. If traditional forms, idioms and genres were mutually implicated in stable artistic media and vice versa, then the general dialectic of modernism could not have left media unaffected. Accordingly, modernism expresses a paradoxical demand – given the mutually constitutive nature of media, conventions and traditions – to purify or reinvent old media, and, ultimately, to invent new media, freed from the burden of conventions and ungrounded in any precedent tradition, as if the media and the work they supported were to be co-equal objects of composition. (127)

Beyond specific styles or materials, the advent of modernism has naturally delegitimised and reshaped the existing boundaries within the domain of art. The duality of modernist intermediality justifies a “paradoxical demand” to not only incite the reinvention of old mediums by stripping off their material specificity into a pure form, but also the invention of entirely new media and artforms disconnected from pre-existing rules. After analysing the typographical script as a poetic medium in the works of Stéphane Mallarmé and Ezra Pound, Miller leads us to Marshall McLuhan’s media aesthetics in a footnote: the “homogeneous, visual space of thought constructed by literacy was, under the pressure of new technological and electronic media, as well with the impetus of as new scientific and technical paradigms, giving rise to a multidirectional, dynamically fluctuating space of experience and thought” (138). In modernist literature and art, medium itself has become a crucial component of artistic creation to refashion the traditional linear, static ways of receiving and circulating thought and experience. Different media and their modes of mediation vary the power to shape and influence our perception and cognition of reality. As shown from the

⁸ On modernism and medium, see Mark Wollaeger, *Modernism, Media, and Propaganda: British Narrative from 1900 to 1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Sean Pryor and David Trotter, editors, *Writing, Medium, Machine: Modern Technographies* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2016).

titular wit in McLuhan's *The Medium Is the Massage* (1967), they are no longer just means or containers for conveying a message but an integral part to the constructivist process of avant-garde artmaking, with performative qualities and capabilities intrinsically tied to their nature.⁹

This modernist turn from making artworks to re-making mediums emphasises a collaborative, relational nature of mediality. It calls for a fresh approach to delineating intermedial phenomena and their configurations rather than barely classifying or categorising them. In *No Medium* (2013), Craig Dworkin suggests understanding media not as empty or blank “things” but social events or “activities” (28), negating the existence or often-accepted apprehension of any single medium in isolation. Instead, he advocates for a pluralistic sense of media which “if there are such things – are only recognisable as collectives” (30), a communicative and interpretative accumulation actively oscillating between disparate artistic spheres. Aesthetic modernism's significant relationship with new media is identified by Michael North, who argues that “Modernism, after all, stakes its initial claim to fame on new modes and new methods, innovations so drastic they seem not just to change the old arts but to invent new and unrecognisable” (v) mediums and modes of intermediation.¹⁰ Moreover, David Trotter refers to the early decades of the twentieth century as the “First Media Age,” during which modernist textual and visual productions undertook new techniques and materials and subsumed a hybrid mediation of modern experience, with the “look, sound, smell, taste, and feel of the new synthetic and semisynthetic materials that now more than ever before constituted the fabric of every existence” (*Literature in the First Media Age* 1-2).¹¹ The material, technical, and sensory incorporation of multimedia reflects the changing fabric of society at that historical epoch. In *The Literature of Connection: Signal, Medium, Interface, 1850-1950* (2020), though he still sees the development of new media as the institutional spread of mass culture, Trotter shifts his focus from medial technologies to their “connectivity” (4) or “interface” (11) – a middle place or intermediate space for combination and creation. The mediating thresholds of this connection give rise to various identities or avatars across different systems, forming a dynamic network for collaboration and mutual constitution.¹² Mediums or intermedia, to a certain extent, underline the plural and heterogenous presence of modernist articulations, which, as Alex Goody defines, are “not a finished theory or fixed methodology” but “a process of making connections” and “an expressive and interventionist practice” (*Modernist Articulations* 15). They connect modernist studies not only with cultural studies but also with the

⁹ For the title, see Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (London: Penguin, 2008).

¹⁰ New media include photography, film, television, radio, broadcast, popular print culture, and so on, changing the representational relation between word and image.

¹¹ On new media theories mentioned in their discussions, see Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006); Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

¹² Additionally, see David Trotter, “Literature between Media,” in *The Cambridge History of Modernism*, edited by Vincent Sherry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) 386-403.

contemporary study of intermediality, envisioning a critical ecology of intermedial modernism where medial alterity can respond to “anthropocentrism, to the patriarchy and to uncritical technoutopianism” (Goody, *Modernist Poetry* 297).

Julian Murphet, in *Multimedia Modernism: Literature and the Anglo-American Avant-Garde* (2009), declares that “modernism is a structural adjustment within a given social and historical media ecology, or media system” (10), rather than solely on the broader scale of the cultural system of modernity. The “media ecology” is the impersonal, “objective structural relations obtaining between the various media” (10) and the material, stylistic, or formal particulars of multimediality.¹³ Murphet introduces “multimedia modernism” to describe the reciprocal relation and chiasmic interaction between modernist literature and other arts within this expansive “media ecology”:

Convergent differentiation thus transforms the terrain of the arts into media production, and presses literature into the position of acute medial self-consciousness. It confronts writing with that most powerful of challenges within the new media ecology: acquiring meaningful materiality. [...] It is no longer that poetry directly expresses the will of the spirit and allows the other arts to participate in spirit through its metonymic deployment of their own “modes of presentation;” rather, a poetry’s deployment of those foreign medial “modes of presentation” assists its own urgent passage back to matter and sensuous substance. (30)

In his words, the “convergent differentiation” changes the artistic landscape into a realm of media productions, placing poetry, as a literary genre, in a state of heightened awareness of its existence as a specific medium and within the (inter-)medial environment. As a cultural act or an aesthetic strategy to refashion the representative mode, it lays stress on a quest for meaningful forms, styles, and materials. From a multimedial perspective, the materiality of modernist texts encompasses the “matter and sensuous substance,” a concretisation of the tangible and sensory aspects of an artwork. Modernist poetic artforms employ “foreign medial ‘modes of presentation’” from diverse mediums in response to the evolving medial landscape of technological reproduction since the early twentieth century. This highlights the chiasm or interrelation between old and new media ecologies, as well as the interplay between the medial self and its multiple others as historical counterparts. From Murphet’s multimedial to intermedial modernism in this study, it is crucial to recognise that literature and other non-literary arts are equal to each other as multimedia. More importantly, the transcendental intermediality of text and image is essential, as modernist artefacts seamlessly interweave them together to create new articulations and recompositions of aesthetic modernity.¹⁴

¹³ On his notion of media ecology, see Julian Murphet, “Media,” in *Literature Now: Key Terms for Literary History*, edited by Sascha Bru et al. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015) 46-58.

¹⁴ The different prefixes here and their semantic connotations will be discussed in “Intermediality and the Philosophy of In-Between(ness)” section of chapter 1.

As a theoretical rationale, Fredric Jameson's *A Singular Modernity* (2012) elaborates and reconstructs the varying cultural models and ideologies of modernity. He points out the transfer of such an aesthetics is "so apparently medium-specific – to the other arts" (172). From one medium to another, intermediation is symbolised as "kind of circular flight," where the "various arts – better still, the media of the various arts – affirm their absolute quality only by borrowing representational features from the next (thus, Schelling famously said, 'architecture is a kind of frozen music;' and so forth)" (173). According to Jameson, this dynamic movement of mediums at play shall be understood as a non-linear circulation of their specific representative characteristics in a reflexive manner. On the other hand, as a Lessingian ideologist, Clement Greenberg's "Towards a Newer Laocoon" enforces image/text binarism as a self-assertion of arts' "independent vocations, disciplines and crafts, absolutely autonomous, and entitled to respect for their own sakes" (28) and posits that the "history of avant-garde painting is that of a progressive surrender to the resistance of its medium" (34). Jameson sees Greenberg's emphasis on medial resistance as a defence of aesthetic autonomy. He argues that the teleological narrative of twentieth-century technic progress makes this intermedial problematic "productive" (Jameson, *A Singular Modernity* 153) within the *système des beaux arts*. Jameson believes that it is the absolute "materiality of language" that transcends the Saussurean structuralism and evokes a higher form or "a type of being a good deal loftier than those mere 'vibrations in the air' (of which Marx spoke) or that 'acoustic image' to which Saussure will consign his conception of the dimension of the Signifier" (173). Drawing on material and immaterial mediations, poetic modernism's indebtedness to intermediality is thus a verbivocovisual presentation of word and non-word, which become more typographically radical, stylistically interpenetrable, and ideologically sublime. Both the verbal and the visual are seen as distinct modes and attributes of media, which adopt in their aesthetic communications, "metaphorically, the technical and material accounts the other arts gave of their own structure and internal dynamics" (153). Intermediality, in this context, is not merely concerned with the medium as a communication tool with multiple modalities; instead, it shall be viewed as a multimodal channel itself, mediating the power of linguistic materiality and pictorial texture in a new artform that proliferates through various media.¹⁵

Intermedial critics such as Lars Elleström, Liliane Louvel, and Marion Schmid call into question the dichotomic stability of form/content, image/text, and impure/pure representations. Elleström ontologically defines that all "media are multimodal and intermedial in the sense that

¹⁵ Intermediality is designated to further solve what Jameson summarises as two medium-specific issues of modernist aesthetics as a "two-way street: we have to show not only how a celebration of the materials of oil painting and the surface of the canvas can possibly find any equivalents in, say, the language arts; but also why those arts should need the transfer in the first place, why they could not simply develop their own ideologies of autonomy independently" (*A Singular Modernity* 172).

they are composed of multiple basic features and are understood only in relation to other types” (*Media Transformation 2*). His intermedial transfer conceptualises the “relations among different basic media – relations among media types based on different modality modes” (89). Emphasising the medial interconnectedness and interdependence, medium cannot be seized in isolation but rather in relation to one another. This intermedial ontology empowers modernist poet-painters – as an ontological artisthood of intermediality – to be conscious of the heterogeneous nature of an artform as a composite medium, enabling them to navigate different formal channels of communication and articulate a collective harmony from fragmented voices. As a conceptual methodology in *The Pictorial Third* (2018), Louvel proposes “intermedial transposition” as a means of “*commensuratio*” to investigate the “transaction operating in the economy of the visible-in-text” (1) or “discursive-in-image.”¹⁶ By exploring the “poetics of the pictorial” (2) in literary texts, she offers an intermedial criticism that avoids the imperialism of language or the generalisation of picture. Louvel’s applied theory of intermediality paves the way for my intermedial reading of a “double exposure” (3) of verbal-visual ramifications in the poet-painter artisthood, exploring the interplay between their different media and modes of expression. In addition, Schmid’s *Intermedial Dialogues* (2021) on the French New Wave in 1950s sheds light on the experimental avant-gardes and their iconoclasm, activating an “interface” or “an in-between space where manifold connections and pathways between the arts are being orchestrated” (6). She puts a particular focus on the “contact zones, frictions, tensions, absorptions and remediations” within this intermedial “space of plurality and heterogeneity” (6) influenced by early twentieth-century modernist projects.

As another interpretative strategy of the poet-painter’s artistries, this study on intermedial modernism aims to further explore the teleological significance of intermediality in the modernist reconfiguration of form, style, and material. The convergence of different mediums is thought as having a transformative potential to artistically express and re-present the concreteness and tangibility of the perceptible and conceivable realities. In *The Muses* (1994), Jean-Luc Nancy tries to answer the question “Why Are There Several Arts and Not One” as a “Conversation on the Plurality of Worlds” by confronting the “ontological question of the *singular plural* of the Muses” (3). He illuminates the etymological origin of the term “Muses,” which relates to the meditative dynamics or tension of one’s mind and spirit:

The Muse animates, stirs up, excites, arouses. She keeps watch less over the form than over the force. Or more precisely: she keeps watch forcefully over the form.

¹⁶ Based on her French “*analyse de texte*” (close reading), Louvel has two chapters on her “word/image poetics” elaborating the in-between moment of image-text relationship in architecture, veronica, diptych, still life, art object, *trompe-l’œil* or *anamorphosis*, and so forth. See her “Poetics of the Pictorial (I): Towards Picturo-Criticism: In the Painter-Poet’s Studio: Borrowing from Art History” and “Poetics of the Pictorial (II): In the Painter-Poet’s Studio: Questions of Form,” in *The Pictorial Third* 81-163.

But this force springs up in the plural. It is given, from the first, in multiple forms. There are Muses and not the Muse. Their number may have varied, as well as their attributes, but the Muses will always have been several. (1)

Nancy argues that the force of artistic expression is given in multiple forms, represented by the mythological existence of the Muses themselves. The medial plurality and multiplicity was a given even before Horace's *ut pictura poesis* or Leonardo da Vinci's *paragone*, which submitted the fact of diversity to the "test of a 'classification' or (formerly) a 'hierarchy' of the arts" (2) in the course of Western history.¹⁷ By diagrammatically describing intermediality at its sensuous and intelligible levels, Nancy asserts that their "reciprocal heterogeneity would form a chiasmus" (15) for a teleology with two intersecting circles; as he points out, the world is "dis-located into plural worlds, or more precisely, into the irreducible plurality of the unity 'world': this is the a priori and the transcendental of art" (18). This plurality is emphatic and irreducible, which means it cannot be reduced to a single unified apprehension or representation. The unification of "plural worlds" into a conceptual one has to emerge from the "reciprocal heterogeneity" and "irreducible plurality" of mediums and artforms. The heterogeneous plurality is inherent to the essence of art – especially the Muses of poetry and painting in the Western context. In this vein, its plural forms, materials, and styles work on an exposition or presentation of the multiplicity of worlds rather than a singular one, as each medium of arts is "in its fashion a synesthesia and the opening of a world" (31). Nancy's argument on the existential transcendence of intermediality aligns with Theodor Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* (1984), where "[m]ost works of art fall short of coinciding with a generic concept of art [...] Art is not a generic concept for the various types or species of art" but "the free movement of discrete moments (which is what art is all about)" (260). The nomadic and pluralist understanding of arts, senses, and techniques leads Nancy to explain why "poetry is the art that initiates the dissolution of art": that is, "the multiplicity and exteriority of its forms, genres, prosodic and tropological resources, to which poetry since Hegel would allow us to add an overabundant variety of formal variations and material contaminations" (27).¹⁸

In the topic of modernist poet-painters, their intermedial applications exemplify the "dissolution" of artistic media beyond the confines of specific genres or rigid classifications and open up possibilities for hybridity, experimentation, and movement towards new inter-aesthetic territories. The intermedial poetics of modernism discovers a dynamic entanglement of poetic form and its multimodal materiality as a site of constant transformation, where different mediums can intersect and merge to create a great "variety of formal variations and material contaminations."

¹⁷ An archeology of verbal and visual mediums from antiquity to the modernist period can be found in the "Genealogy of *Ut pictura poesis*" section of chapter 1.

¹⁸ See G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts*, vol. 2, translated by T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) 977.

Nancy's unification of medial and sensory heterogeneity is also elaborated in Christina Walter's *Optical Impersonality: Science, Images, and Literary Modernism* (2014), where she reconceptualises the link between the performative spectacle of optics and the intermedial nature of "imagetextuality" (8). By intertwining the perceptual object and the cognizant subject, sight and thought, and otherness and selfhood, Walter argues that modernist "imagetexts showcase the qualities of image and text as media and explores how images and texts mutually implicate and interpenetrate each other, all in order to refuse the sense that any kind of art is a transparent window onto objects of representation" (18).¹⁹ Instead of a binary pair, the association of word and image should be considered as an active mediation that transfigures their historically disparate medialities or modalities into a co-existing presence of intermedia.

In *The Future of the Image* (2019), Jacques Rancière reinterprets the notions of incommensurability presented by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and medial specificity proposed by Greenberg in the context of modernist aesthetics. Rancière finds from their registers of disjunctions or separations a possible communication of each "specific materiality – verbal, plastic, sonorous or whatever – revealed by specific procedures" (39-40). This oxymoron of "disjunctive conjunction" (41) protests against the traditional representative regime in the arts and introduces a new term of measurement he calls the "sentence-image" (43). This term defines modernist interartistic experiments found in the artworks of Guillaume Apollinaire or Kurt Schwitters, with their "word into the brush-stroke, the brush-stroke into the vibration of light or motion" (45). Similar to W. J. T. Mitchell's concept of "imagetext" (*Image Science* 39), Rancière's "sentence-image" does not denote a "chaotic juxtaposition [or an] indifferent melange of significations and materialities" (*Future of the Image* 43) but transcends the mere "combination of a verbal sequence and a visual form" (45). Instead, this compound undoes the "representative relationship between text and image," saying and seeing, and the cognitive and the perceptual :

The sentence-image overturns this logic. The sentence-function is still that of linking. But the sentence now links in as much as it is what gives flesh. And this flesh or substance is, paradoxically, that of the great passivity of things without any rationale. For its part, the image has become the active, disruptive power of the leap – that of the change of regime between two sensory orders. The sentence-image is the union of these two functions. It is the unit that divides the chaotic force of the great parataxis into phrasal power of continuity and imagining power of rupture. (46)

Emerging from the twentieth century, mass media and visual culture prioritised the value of image and its ability to visualise and materialise, as a liberating desire to dismantle and re-organise the

¹⁹ Like Walter, I frequently use W. J. T. Mitchell's typographical designations when referring to the complicated relations between text and image in this dissertation: besides "imagetext", "image-text" with a hyphen suggests the verbal and visual relationship and "image/text" with a slash implies the insuperable rift or clash between them (*Picture Theory* 89).

verbal narrative or storytelling of modernity.²⁰ In a strong tone of intermediality, the “sentence-image” is conceptualised as an ordering force that can tame the disorder of parataxis, namely the juxtaposition of unrelated elements. It negotiates its two distinct functions: the “phrasal power of continuity,” ensuring logical coherence, and the “imagining power of rupture,” reconstructing the gap between material presences and their absent meanings. Rancière combines the linguistic realisation of the signified with the pictorial embodiment of the signifier, creating an intermedial community where “[v]isual and textual elements are in effect conceived together, interlaced with one another” (35). In this vein, the common measurement requires that “visible forms speak and that words possess the weight of visible realities; that signs and forms mutually revive their powers of material presentation and signification” (35).

From Rancière’s perspective, the *medium* serves as a concurrent guarantee for the demonstration of and identification with the verbal/visual material and its artform of the grammatical/pigmental. Modernist practices of “arranging words, displaying colours, modelling the volume or evolution of bodies” (74) re-mediate the processes of creation, perception, and thought. Rancière defines “medium” as:

[...] not a “proper” means or material. It is a surface of conversion: a surface of equivalence between the different arts’ ways of making; a conceptual space of articulation between these ways of making and forms of visibility and intelligibility determining the way in which they can be viewed and conceived. The destruction of the representative regime does not define some finally discovered essence of art as such in itself. It defines an aesthetic regime in the arts that is a different articulation between practices, forms of visibility and modes of intelligibility. (76)

Driven by avant-garde art movements since the late nineteenth century, an aesthetic revolution with its significant sociocultural impacts undermined classical representationalism and abolished the hierarchical distinctions among artistic genres like *paragone*. Medium, for Rancière, possesses a similar agency of “surface” as Trotter’s “interface,” redrawing the conjunction between the art of poetry/word and that of painting/image instead of classifying or separating them. The interplay of verbal-visual mediality can be designed and crafted to convert the representative surface into an expressive manifestation. These two immanently interdependent modes of mediation between the created and the represented reformulate “the *like* of the *ut pictura poesis*, the *like* whereby art is visible, whereby its practice is attuned to a way of seeing and falls within a way of thinking” (78).²¹ Their heterogenous presences reconfigure the collaboration between visibility and intelligibility.

²⁰ As an artistic production of discrepancy and dissemblance, Rancière regards the image and its material presence – “the spirit made flesh” – as a “promise of flesh, capable of dispelling the simulacra of resemblance, the artifices of art, and the tyranny of the letter” (8). See Rancière, “The Future of the Image,” *Future of the Image* 1-32.

²¹ For Rancière’s discussion on the relationship between *ut pictura poesis* and the historical development of representation, see “History and Representation: Three Poetics of Modernity,” in *Figures of History* 71-81.

Furthermore, the intermedial poetics of modernism is exemplified by Rancière's analysis of Gustave Flaubert's treatment of media, where the "texture of the language or the pictorial pigment belong to a history of matter in which all matter is a potentiality of form" (Rancière, *Figures of History* 74-75).

To further explore this "potentiality," scholars in modernist studies have noticed this medium-specific reconsideration of textual materiality, form, and style as experimental subjects in the art of language. George Bornstein's *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page* (2006) reveals one of these critical interests in the non-verbal elements of the modernist text, considering them as "material textuality" that functions as "both the physical features of the text that carry semantic weight and the multiple forms in which texts are physically created and distributed" (1). He arouses the readerly attention to the "bibliographic code" (1) visibly featured by the layout, design, and structure of the page as an unfolding canvas in an intermedial fashion. Ben Hutchinson's *Modernism and Style* (2011) continues this material performance printed on the paper to its inscribed physical existence of style. As a cultural reaction to the capitalist conditions of modernity, modernism preoccupies the "surfaces of language" and the essentially performative "kinds" and "*concept*" of style (40). Quoting Flaubert's famous remarks on the pure style, Hutchinson indicates the intermedial conflux of modernist literature and art in search for their aesthetic autonomy as alternative modes of expression, where the "ambition to produce a work reduced to a kind of non-representational, intransitive style – a style that is 'about nothing' but itself" (6). Furthermore, Cara L. Lewis' *Dynamic Form: How Intermediality Made Modernism* (2020) explores the generic concept of form as a "verbal category" or an "activity" of (re-)forming (228). She postulates that modernist form can be "plastic, mortal, or protean, fusing literature with other media in order to express its dynamism in the round, across a narrative, or towards the future" (227). This formal dynamism is bolstered by enduring impulses from its under-explored intermediality which propels to emancipate visible agency.²²

Distinguishing between style and form and determining whether style refers to the substantial "form of a sentence" (Bornstein 12) or if form should be elucidated by style among "more than twenty dictionary definitions" (Leighton 2) often appears problematic. From an intermedial prism, this study chooses to treat them equally as physical substances of media and use them interchangeably throughout the close analyses. They serve as interfaces or multiple mediations between the verbal and the visual, the sayable and the seeable, and the abstract and the palpable across any medial or modal borders. *In Infrathin: An Experiment in Micropoetics* (2021),

²² On the visibility of modernist language, see Joanna Drucker, *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909-1923* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994)

Marjorie Perloff further specifies the formalist approach of close reading into a practice of “infrathin reading/writing” at the “*microlevel*”: “As an examination of the revisions bears out, every phoneme, every morpheme, word, phrase, rhythm, and syntactic contour has been chosen with an eye to creating a brilliant verbal, visual, and sound structure” (2). By putting into dialogue with Marcel Duchamp’s differential *inframince*, Perloff attempts to chart the poem’s “*micropoetics*” or “*infrathin*” through which the “slightest repetition of shift in context changes the valence and meaning of any word or word group” (2-3). She pays attention to the infrathin complex of literal language, sound structure, and visual design, advocating for an intermedial exploration of indeterminacy, special *frisson*, and subtlety of meaning as the “play of differences” (12). She calls this a “super-close reading” – or intermedial reading in my case – for all the “visual and sonic as well as the verbal elements in a text” (xii). Modernist intermediality, therefore, unpacks a materialist poetics of refashioning formal or stylistic matters – as perceptually concrete aspects of a given medium – superficial, tactile, and adaptable at its micropoetic level.

Both modernism’s creative and critical scrutiny of its aesthetic autonomy and intrinsic self-sufficiency, as it were at a mirror stage, is closely concerned with this intermedial process of identifying and transforming otherness – what looks or senses different from their own medium. Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux, in *Twentieth-Century Poetry and the Visual Arts* (2008), follows the cutting-edge research trend on ekphrasis and claims that the “‘otherness’ of the ekphrastic object and how language responds to it have been the central focus of the critical interest in ekphrasis” (11). Through this verbal representation of a visual representation, Loizeaux brings insights into the “intertwined and various nature of the ekphrastic response,” accounting the “psychological and emotional dynamics at play” (16) in the engagement with medial transformation. The exploration of otherness in modernism foregrounds an inescapable mode of intermedial exchanges or dialogues that occur between these charged discourses and expressions related to materiality, perception, and spectatorship. From a political or New Critical standpoint, Lisa Siraganian’s *Modernism’s Other Work: The Art Object’s Political Life* (2012) touches upon the paradoxical nature of modernist “art’s independence and agency,” which does not signal “radical uncertainty but instead a refashioning” (4) of its form and style based on a sense of inward autonomism. The blurring of genres and mediums prompts an ideological emancipation of poetic language and artistic form from being purely instrumental tools for representation. It aspires to re-present and re-create the complexities and specificities of the modern world, both material and immaterial. Additionally, Siraganian addresses modernism as a “conflicted, repeatedly renegotiated relation between the art object and its beholder;” she examines how reader-viewers personally confront modernist artworks, highlighting their physical and visceral experience as a co-production involving the

“detachment or incorporation” (5-6) of the received mediums. This statement underscores the active role of the audience – simultaneously as a reader and a viewer – in engaging with and interpreting the surrounding words, images, and objects.

As mentioned earlier, bringing together word and image as distinct mediums indeed necessitates a process of design or craftsmanship. This intermedial action not only involves creating artistic representations but also shaping our perceptual, conceptual, and experiential accesses to them. The linguistic and graphic mediality should be deemed as the intervening substance, through which sensory impressions, emotions, and imaginations are conveyed and transmitted. Back to *The Future of the Image*, Rancière, in the chapter titled “The Surface of Design,” discusses the idea that “by drawing lines, arranging words or distributing surfaces, one also designs divisions of communal space”:

It is the way in which, by assembling words or forms, people define not merely various forms of art, but certain configurations of what can be seen and what can be thought, certain forms of inhabiting the material world. These configurations, which are at once symbolic and material, cross the categories between arts, genres and epochs. They cut across the categories of an autonomous history of technique, art or politics. (*Future of the Image* 91)

The interconnectedness of different modes of expressions and mediums goes beyond established categorisations, surpassing the limitations of an isolated history of technologies, aesthetic movements, and political ideologies.²³ It grounds the specific material or artform used by artists to store compositional elements and to communicate as a middle state, which opens up a redistributed “communal space” existing between the material and the symbolic, the pictorial and the discursive, and what can be seen and what can be contemplated. Word-image intermediality generates experimentally new materials to redefine approaches to the specific configurations of perception and cognition. This “surface of design,” where “words, forms and things exchange roles” (106), serves as the foundation for the modernist self-exploration of medium to reassess dominant paradigms of modernity and its interaction with internal and external realms.

In an extreme fashion against the “hot” and psyche-oriented modernism, Jessica Burstein’s *Cold Modernism: Literature, Fashion, Art* (2012) presents a view of the inhuman or mechanical form as a material body and investigates that the “relation of the cold modernist body to an environment is one of fierce adjacency or even, in the mildest form, of a gripping proximity” (13). This “fierce adjacency” or “gripping proximity” between the two *per se* directs our attention to the formal physicality of the represented medium and its dynamic mediation, attentive to the transmutation

²³ From aesthetics to politics, see Rancière’s “Politics of Aesthetics,” in *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, translated by Steven Corcoran (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009) 17-60

of medial materiality within a formalist and materialist methodology. What dresses, ornaments, or surrounds the bodily embodiment is “determinate, even constitutive” (13) of the medium. Apart from Burstein’s cold modernism, Judith Brown, in *Modernism and the Radiance of Form* (2009), takes a closer look at the glamour of the surface as a radiant form that transcends the simple structure of a prescribed modality. She probes into the “realm of formal aesthetics, modern philosophies of space and time, the shifting lines of identity, and the dazzling effects of the surface” (5). Brown draws on North’s optical aesthetics of camera, which represents an emerging medium that performs as an alternate mode of representation, to propose an intermedial creation of neither verbal nor visual but a “kind of utopian space between, where the informational utility of writing meets the immediacy of sight” (North 4).²⁴ This intermedia-centred convergence between the poetical and the painterly, according to Brown, takes the “boundary-defying effect with the power to re-make the lines [and colours] of reality” (11) into a re-presentational reality. Building upon the discussions of these modernist critics regarding the refashioning of language as a hybrid medium influenced by avant-garde arts, mass media, and visual cultures, this dissertation attempts to weave their theoretical strands together and delve into the inherent, ever-evolving intermediality at the heart of aesthetic modernism. The collaborative dynamics of diverse mediums and cultures provides a useful springboard for examining the intermedial artishood of the figure of the poet-painter in the early twentieth century, who self-reflexively grapples with and seeks a dialogue with other “discourses, other genres, other kinds of utterance” (Ramazani 6).

Within this arching framework of intermedial modernism, the present study focuses on the figure of modernist poet-painters, specifically Mina Loy and E. E. Cummings. My intermedial way of considering medium as an active agency of forming modernism is “not the way we are accustomed to thinking, therefore, requires a new way of looking at technology” (Logan and McLuhan 7) – the literary and artistic techniques and new mediums in the formation of the modernist poet-painter. Both Loy and Cummings were adept in modernist poetries and artworks, engaging in a wide range of avant-garde movements such as Italian Futurism, New York Dada, Fauvism and Cubism in Paris. Their transcontinental exchanges across the Atlantic and the Pacific provide us valuable insights into the fluid, transformative agency of their dual identities. In *Between Worlds: Mina Loy’s Aesthetic Itineraries* (2022), Yasna Bozhkova considers Loy’s artworks, engaging with “a plurality of

²⁴ On the role of photography in shaping literary modernism, see Louise Hornby, *Still Modernism: Photography, Literature, Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Nancy Armstrong, *Fiction in the Age of Photography: The Legacy of British Realism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

different modernisms,” as aesthetic itineraries to create a collective “poetics of navigation between disparate avant-garde aesthetic projects” (5).²⁵ Similarly, David G. Farley, in *Modernist Travel Writing: Intellectuals Abroad* (2021) states that there is “no final vision of a terminal point of destination city” but only a “perpetual spiralling movement of Cummings’ mind[s]” (96) within various roles, artforms, and ways of seeing. Both critics confirm the importance of travelling and global communication in their literary and artistic creations. Travel, with its “trans’ methodology” (S. Li 12) and epistemology, helps them to search for their idiosyncratic creativity within a multitude of medial and cultural collectivity that can constantly move and evolve.²⁶ With these transcultural energies and inspirations, this study also explores how their border-crossing poetics of intermedial artishood navigates the disparate spaces of the page and the canvas, the verbal and the visual, realigning typeset words and phrases with spatial layout and construction: from Loy’s manifestic designs, verbal readymades, painterly abstractions, to Cummings’ gestural line-drawings, vital still lifes and landscapes. Through this series of modernist re-presentations, they defy the preordained boundaries and hierarchies between the sayable and the seeable, and offer us alternative medialities or modalities to feel, experience, and reimagine the perceptible world.

In the first case study of Mina Loy, her intermedial identity as a poet-painter emerges from a transatlantic, multicultural exchanges across different nations and cultures, traversing the fixed borders of nationality, gender, and also artistic occupation. As a cosmopolitan avant-garde in the early twentieth century, Loy skilfully blended her familial Hungarian-Jewish and British-Protestant origins to forge a new sense of selfhood and self-expression across “numerous versions of communities and the failed or successful utopias produced by them” (Scuriatti, Introduction 10). Instead of conforming to a sculptured, predetermined mould, her intermedial artistries make herself a “mongrel” or hybrid persona which reflects the complexities of sociocultural and historical violence through displacing images and words. As mentioned in an essay “International Psycho-Democracy,” she appeals to a variable collaboration or a “new system of Experimental Ideative Exchange” to reform “THE IDEA-FABRIC OF HUMAN SOCIETY”: “Most movements have a fixed concept towards which they advance, we move away from all fixed concepts in order to advance” (Loy, *LaLB* 276+78). Loy’s (inter-)artistic trajectory was marked by constant transformations, as she moved from one country and movement to another, transitioning between avant-garde art scenes such as Futurism and Dada, and navigating various mediums

²⁵ In face of the avant-gardes as a multitude of proliferating “isms,” Bozhkova defines Loy’s intermedial occupations as “painter, poet, playwright, novelist, bohemian, artist’s and photographer’s model, actress, designer of clothes, hats, and lampshades, gallery agent, assemblage artist” (4). Similarly, Farley also calls Cummings as “tourist, artist, or journalist” (61) in varying roles across the fixed vocational border.

²⁶ About this interaction among travel, translation, and transmedial aesthetics – as a subcategory of intermediality, see Shuangyi Li, Introduction 1-22.

including painting, writing, designing, and inventing. She never pins herself down into a stable category and resists against the notion of an anchored, unchanging identity. She sarcastically proclaims in her “Apology of Genius”:

Our wills are formed
by curious disciplines
beyond your laws

You may give birth to us
or marry us
the chances of your flesh
are not our destiny –

The cuirass of the soul
still shines –
And we are unaware
if you confuse
such brief
corrosion with possession

In the raw caverns of the Increate
we forge the dusk of Chaos
to that imperious jewellery of the Universe
– the Beautiful – (Loy, *LolB* 77-78)

Throughout her travels from West Europe to North America, the poet-painter engaged in extensive correspondence with a large group of modernist artists and thinkers, such as Ezra Pound, James Joyce, and Gertrude Stein in Paris, F. T. Marinetti and Giovanni Papini in Florence, Sigmund Freud in Vienna, Marcel Duchamp and Joseph Cornell in New York, among many others. To keep her gendered “cuirass of the soul,” Loy was not subordinate to their conceptual or personal “corrosion with possession” and stood up for herself to “forge the Chaos / to that imperious jewellery of the Universe” of the critically, individualistically “Beautiful.” The cosmopolitan “politics and cultures of localities and nations, also [with] a transnational and international perspective” (Scuriatti, “Transnational Modernist Encounters” 305) further her elaborations concerning feminist sexology, design aesthetics, and transcontinental movements. In this way, Loy actively rejects the “law” of affiliation in any particular context or community and seeks to transcend geographical, sexual, and generic boundaries in front of her, striving for a still-shining space for creative exploration and individual freedom.

Indeed, both Loy’s rupture with Italian Futurism and departure to New York Dada could be deemed as “slippages” towards a larger vision of her cosmopolitan, “transnational avant-gardism” (5+11) as also termed in Sarah Hayden’s *Curious Disciplines: Mina Loy and Avant-Garde Artisthood* (2018). In her travel guidebook of *Lunar Baedeker* published in 1923, the poet-painter

employs the painterly techniques of Futurist mobility and collage as well as Dadaist parody and hybridity to create an otherworldly space where she can articulate an alternative self and a different worldview through novel yet eerie forms.²⁷ This imaginary navigation for a protean artform and individuality manifests her lifelong ambition to fundamentally transform and reshape the “Word” and its formal conceptualisation, treating it as a metaphysical process of identification that bridges the gap between our sensory impression and subconscious:

The flux of life is pouring its aesthetic aspect into your eyes, your ears – and you ignore it because you are looking for your canons of beauty in some sort of frame or glass or tradition. Modernism says: Why not each one of us, scholar or bricklayer, pleurably realise all that is impressing itself upon our subconscious, the thousand odds and ends which make up your sensory every day life?

Modernism has democratised the subject matter and la belle matière of art; through cubism the newspaper has assumed an aesthetic quality, through Cezanne a plate has become more than something to put an apple upon, Brancusi has given an evangelistic import to eggs, and Gertrude Stein has given us the Word, in and for itself. (Loy, *LaLB* 298)

Her disappointment with the traditional, canonical “frame or glass” of beauty leads her to focus on the aesthetic aspect of the ever-changing flow of life that enters our senses, such as eyes and ears. As argued in Allyson C. DeMaagd’s *Dissensuious Modernism* (2022), Loy here calls for a “sensory awakening” to look to “oft-ignored sensory impressions as means of reinvigorating art and redefining notions” (1).²⁸ In her article on “Gertrude Stein,” the poet-painter draws attention to the slippery, fluid nature of lived sensorial experience and interrogates the problematic representation found in naturalist or realist depictions. This verbal-visual representationalism often relies on an essentialist ontology that would confine individuals to predefined logics based on their racial, sexual, or aesthetic terminologies. Across various mediums, senses, and cultures, Loy, as an intermedial artist of modernism, deeply probes into the plastic materiality of verbal language and the performative texture of visual artform to renegotiate the seeable and the sayable. Influenced by Paul Cézanne’s apple and Constantin Brancusi’s eggs, her “integrationist” approach combines the form or “body, the senses, and technology” (DeMaagd 25).²⁹ Through these modernist experiments, she is able to construct revolutionarily new modes of expression that could more effectively capture the inherent narrative of our perceptions, emotions, and physical-mental sensations.

²⁷ On Loy’s conversion from Futurism to Dada, see Bozhkova, “Decapitating Futurism” 55-72; Laura Scuriatti, “Bodies of Discomfort: Mina Loy, the Futurists and Feminism in Italy between the Wars,” in *Women in Europe between the Wars: Politics, Culture and Society*, edited by Angela Kershaw and Angela Kimyongür (London: Ashgate, 2007) 131-42.

²⁸ Also, see Abbie Garrington, *Haptic Modernism: Touch and the Tactile in Modernist Writing* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

²⁹ For more about the relationship between senses and sexology (sexual science) in Loy’s artworks, see DeMaagd, “‘Choked by a robot!’: Technology, Gender, and the Battle of the Senses in Mina Loy’s *Insel*” 55-91.

Experimenting with manifestic/aphoristic styles, readymade words, and abstract forms, Loy examines the elastic materials of language and their linguistic malleability with a sensitive focus on visualisation. She is one of the “Lexicophiles” (270) called by Peter Nicholls, who is addict to language, to words in their own right, and to their reinterpreted dictionary meanings.³⁰ In a Steinian manner, her formal design treats the “Word, in and for itself” as an ideal medium to construct a radical spirit of re-presenting and identifying, which can truly expose one’s physical experiences, synaesthetic feelings, and affective structures.³¹ The idiosyncratic arrangement of “Word” becomes the modernist “cryptography” (Trotter, *Literature of Connection* 128) inviting an intermedial reading of both present and absent codes within the printed textuality. As examples, Loy’s intermedial portraiture traverse a diverse spectrum of subject matters and techniques: automythological self-portraits, fictive parodies of Futurists and Dadaists, imaginary hybrids of transgenders and transspecies, distorted female bodies with fashion designs, and art poems or ekphrastic writings on specific artists and their artworks. Her *Lunar Baedeker* not only collects a verbal-visual portfolio of represented identities, but also offers methods of depicting and understanding them from “multiple literary and pictorial allusions in enigmatic constellations” (Bozhkova 9). Loy’s poetics of refashioning, synonymous with her mongrelisation or “opposed aesthetics,” applies the dialectical relationship between imagetext and its formal presentation to the body and its corporeal embodiment. By appropriating the fleshy or clothed physicality as a plastic artform and a dynamic process of formation, Loy converts the primary function of linguistic and bodily presence from mere signifiers or containers into a proactive site of production, mediation, and reception. They become formal or material agents of change, stylistically altering our identity and the sociocultural realities that accommodate it. The performative signification here transgresses fixed categories or divisions and produces a plurality of selves and narratives, enabling a “mongrel-rose” that are symbiotically British-American, male-female, human-animal, and poet-painter.

Different from Loy’s transatlantic influences, E. E. Cummings drew inspiration from both the Eastern and the Western sources across the Pacific and the Atlantic, from not only European avant-gardes but also classical East-Asian art and literature. Reading *Eimi* as a travelogue about his Russian trip, it is “conditions of visibility” that serves as the significance of Cummings’ traveling selves to make “various guises so that his vision, always, mediated, is never entirely obstructed by

³⁰ About how these dictionary words work in a network of signifiers to cooperate with formal and semantic structures of a composition, see Craig Dworkin, Introduction. “Toward an Experimental Lexicography,” in *Dictionary Poetics: Toward a Radical Lexicography* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2020) 1-32.

³¹ On Loy’s stylistic innovation as philosophically and politically freighted like Gertrude Stein’s, see Kristina Marie Darling, “Mina Loy: A Poetics of Rupture and Resistance,” in *Stylistic Innovation, Conscious Experience, and the Self in Modernist Women’s Poetry: An Imagist Turned Philosopher* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2021) 73-94.

the boundaries of a rigid role, whether this be tourist, artist [as a poet-painter], or journalist” (Farley 61). These “guises” or personae allow him to maintain a “mediated” vision, eschewing rigid boundaries of the medial and the cultural. In this context, Cummings embarked on a transcultural journey of rediscovering his (inter-)artistic role as a “Poet-Painter of China” with a Cubo-Fauvist palette.³² Through an innovative practice of what he coins as “poempicture,” the modernist poet-painter incorporates the Poundian translations of Chinese philosophy and the Continental aesthetics of Cubism and Fauvism, departing from representational realism or naturalism to a calligraphic spontaneity for visionary self-expression.³³ This study complements Milton A. Cohen’s *Poet and Painter: The Aesthetics of E. E. Cummings’ Early Work* (1987), delving into a cross-medial, cross-cultural understanding of the eccentric facets of Cummings’ *oeuvre*, influenced by diverse mediums and exotic cultures through different time periods of his career as a poet-painter. Aligned with Taoist or Zen values, the aspiring “Poet-Painter of China” seeks alternative paths from the universal to the individual, from ears to eyes, from word to image, and from the West to the East, with an ultimate end to reconcile the fragmented into a benevolent whole. Much like a Chinese artist’s skillful brushworks on paper, Cummings transforms linguistic structures and graphic patterns as halves of one into a variety of new expressions to encapsulate memory, experience, and personal growth. Rather than focusing solely on physical representation, the Fauvist style and Cubist form of his poempictures attract our attention to the highly expressive presentation of feeling (perception/emotion) and selfhood (identification/imagination) where the sensitivity of the former indicate the varieties of the latter. The Cubo-Fauvist aesthetics endows his typewriter language with a typographical prosody, or *mise-en-page*, which embraces a spatial constellation of page rhythms to challenge the linotype that “encodes the homogenising of mass communication and collective politics that postulates a falsely uniform community” (Matore 1512).³⁴ In this sense, Cummings’ modernist vision of intermediality and transculturality develops a radical experimentation with micropoetic artforms – in a “discernible, albeit elastic and volatile” (1518) composition of not only graphic signs but also their corporeal manifestations and concrete embodiments shown on the canvas. Rejecting a typed or standardised identity, he celebrates the

³² On his notion of “Poet-Painter of China,” see E. E. Cummings, “Notes,” MS Am 1892.7 (219), E. E. Cummings, Additional Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

³³ Cummings defines his intermedial work as “poempicture” from a letter writing to the editor of his first *Collected Poems*: “But what I care infinitely is that each poempicture should remain intact. Why? Possibly because, with a few exceptions, my poems are essentially pictures. And (in my naïf way) I believe that you’re one of the few people in America who can work out such a combination of typesize and papersize as will allow every picture to breathe its particular life (no ‘runover’ lines) in its own private world” (qtd. in Norman 288-89).

³⁴ When discussing the editorial process of his poetry publication, Cummings emphasises the expressive, compositional nature of typescripts in one of his letters: “This is not so easy as one might think; consider, if you dare, that whenever a typewriter ‘key’ is ‘stuck’ the ‘carriage’ moves a given amount and the ‘line’ advances recklessly or individualistically. Then consider that the linotype (being a gadget) inflicts a preestablished whole – the type ‘line’ – on every smallest part; so that words, letters, punctuation marks & (most important of all) spaces-between-these-various-elements...” (*Selected Letters* 140).

aliveness, movement, and self-transcendence (capitalised as “IS” in a Cummingsesque manner) of plural selves and their unfettered creativity.

Cummings’ line-drawings, still lifes, and landscapes establish intermedial connections that replaces the linear, monogeneric model of representation with a spatial, heterogeneric one. The verticality associated with the absolute uppercase “I” and tree-like hierarchies is replaced by the crisscrossed patterns of the lowercase “i” and leaf-like networks. The expressive use of colour, spilt letters, and fragmentary spaces in Cummings’ artworks make up multiple representations of selves. At the end of his poem “so many selves(so many fiends and gods,” he rhetorically questions “how should a fool that calls him ‘I’ presume / to comprehend not numerable whom?” (Cummings, *CP* 609). The capitalised “I” is limited in its understanding and cannot break free from the historical shackles of unidirectional, dualistic progress towards the arborescent Truth.³⁵ The “numerable” existences of his “lower-case ‘i’ persona in the process of being reborn and finding multiple possibilities of the [intermedial] self” (Webster, ““small eye poet”” 111) suggest a process of self-discovery and the inner transformation from “I” into “numerable whom.” This self-exploration is metaphorically portrayed in Cummings’ poem:

i am a little church(no great cathedral
far from the splendor and squalor of hurrying cities
– i do not worry if briefer days grow briefest,
i am not sorry when sun and rain make april

[...]

i am a little church(far from the frantic
world with its rapture and anguish)at peace with nature
– i do not worry if longer nights grow longest;
i am not sorry when silence becomes singing

winter by spring,i lift my diminutive spire to
merciful Him Whose only now is forever:
standing erect in the deathless truth of His presence
(welcoming humbly His light and proudly His darkness) (Cummings, *CP* 749)

In this symbolic poem as a self-portrait, the individualistic smallness is set in a political context, distancing oneself from the hustle and bustle of “hurrying cities” in a “frantic / world” and finding “peace with nature.” The “diminutive spire” (749) of “i” in Cummings’ visual syntax or “ungrammar” can be interpreted iconographically as representing the act of transgressing boundaries, embodying a microscopic sensitivity to smallness, and engaging in perceiving existence.

³⁵ Michael Webster makes a differentiation between Cummings’ poetic/artistic “i” and prosaic “I” by differentiating creative from social, insider from outsider, individual from public to discover a multiple sense of aesthetic sel(ves)f. See his ““small eye poet”” 106-08.

Etienne Terblanche, in *E. E. Cummings: Poetry and Ecology* (2012), refers to this “micro-ideogram” (73) as a focal point that invites radical experiments with colour, facet, and rhizomatic structure within the interpretative space between the dot and the small erection.³⁶

In this second case of poet-painter artisthood, Cummings’ intermedial prosody of words and images disrupts a homogeneous narrative and avails of the potential of multiple identities to foster a shared unity, a collective oneness. Instead of leading a monomodal “visual life [...] independent of their linguistic meanings” (Heusser, “Semantics of Structure” 164), he adopts an in-between position in his intermedial approach to defy a clear distinction between graphic and linguistic elements. Furthermore, to collect intricate, multi-layered stories of lived experience, his artistic experimentation intertwines the subjective content and the objective form and bounds spiritual and physical realities together in an ongoing repetition. Drawing upon his neology, which emphasises the inseparability of language and art, Cummings opens up a formative process of “IS” or becoming to transfigure and re-create the revolutionary voices and narratives of one’s selfhood emphatic in numerous variable actions. For example, when depicting open-air landscapes in a series of *View from Joy Farm: Mt. Chocorua*, the poet-painter chooses to work outdoors every day for multiple attempts, capturing the changeability of natural world and his capricious interaction with it. His large number of works, both verbal and visual, try to reflect his observation, personal emotion, and spontaneous response to the changing conditions of different times and spaces. Their plural, ever-shifting presences embody a collection of fragmented beings and entities, gradually converging towards a representational actuality. The self-transcendence thus becomes a rhizomatic whole or oneness, whose unity lies in its interconnectedness and multiplicity:

two realms, elsewhere innately hostile, here cordially coexisted – each (by its very distinctness) intensifying the other – nor could I possibly have imagined either a loveliness so fearlessly of the moment or so nobly beautiful a timelessness [...] Now, I participated in an actual marriage of material with immaterial things; I celebrated an immediate reconciling of spirit and flesh, forever and now, heaven and earth. Paris was for me precisely and complexly this homogeneous duality: this accepting transcendence; this living and dying more than death or life. Whereas – by the very act of becoming its improbably gigantic self. (Cummings, *i: six nonlectures* 52-53)

In his “Nonlecture Three: i & nonlecture” as part of the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures delivered from 1952 to 1953, Cummings advocates for a remarkable coexistence of two domains typically seen as inherently opposed – the immaterial and the material, “spirit” and “flesh,” and the poetical and the painterly. His active participation in this genuine union discloses his intermedial vision

³⁶ As an iconic illustration to Webster’s “small eye-i” model, Terblanche annotates “i” in the dynamic contexts of Cummings’ poetic persona: the dot stands for a “cyclical beginning of opening into earth’s cycles” or “star, seed, full stop;” the vertical shaft denotes the “human uprightness on earth” and “balance, adventure, masculinity” (“Iconicity and Naming” 181).

that these “elsewhere innately hostile” realms can mutually enrich and enhance each other due to their natural distinctiveness. Through this reconciling act, Cummings transcend the constraints of time and space, “forever and now, heaven and earth.” This dynamic sense of duality comes not only from his interartistic identity but also his transnational exchange between Paris and New York. Cummings’ immediate reconciliation or integration signifies a profound connection, wherein “the truth of our momentarily mutual aliveness created an imperishable communion” (53).

This project offers a springboard for casting further light on a comparative study between these two avant-garde poet-painters, which raises more stimulating questions about intermedial, transcultural, and experimental modernism – a multifarious and eclectic movement rather than a monolithic being. As a transitional mode, the modernist crossings in mediums and cultures are not achieved by “adding the various ‘national [or artistic] traditions’ together” (Jameson, *A Singular Modernity* 101), which then need our investigation of their profound ramifications and incommensurable relations.³⁷ Extending what Cristanne Miller calls for attention in her *Cultures of Modernism* about modernist gender and community, this project not only looks at the “national and local structures” (2) of a transcultural context but also their communication through a multitude of medial and formal particulars. Modernist poet-painters are active in experimenting on modernism both internationally and intermedially to capture the ever-shifting nature of modern experience. Apart from exploring the hermeneutic possibilities of their poetic and prose writings across different geographical places, my study intervenes to spotlight an intermedial reading that brings their art practices into careful consideration, including not only paintings or drawings in various materials (oil, gouache, charcoal or graphite, ink, crayon) and types (allegory, figure, portrait, still life, landscape or veduta, abstraction) but also designs as *objet d’art*, coloured illustrations, collages, murals, and pieces of sketches with written notes. My dissertation, in an intersectional stance of modernist studies and intermedial studies, aims to broaden our interpretative strategies on avant-garde arts and modernist poetics by exposing the visible, plastic materiality of poetic language – the “specific forms and configurations taken by the signifier” (Dworkin, *Radium of the Word* 1).

Before delving into Mina Loy’s or E. E. Cummings’ intermedial artistries of word and image, it is crucial to identify the significance of modernist poetry-painting convergence under that epochal change: how did the image dominate modern culture and reverse power relationship in

³⁷ On modernism’s transitional modes, see Jameson, “Transitional Modes,” in *A Singular Modernity* 97-138.

verbal discourse since 1900s? As such, how did we see a text/vision anew and differently? Based on its poststructuralist origins as a theoretical rationale, how does this evolutionary notion of intermediality substitute the sisterhood of *ut pictura poesis* and the Lessingian dichotomy of *Laocoon*? Then, against a transcontinental, cross-medial backdrop at that moment, we could better understand Loy's expatriate identity across the Pacific and her intertwined associations with the avant-garde art scenes in Paris, Florence, and New York as a tentative solution to the poetic form and social thought: In what way did her identity as a Futurist or Dadaist emerge from the literary and artistic networking? How do Loy's fashion, abstraction, portraiture, and ekphrastic writing interact and reinforce each other from a constructivist point of view? To what extent does her revolution of language exhibit an aesthetic inclination and reflect her feminist and other socially radical beliefs? Also, Cummings employs an unconventional form of "poempicture" that breaks down traditional linguistic formality and establishes a new order of arranging word and its surrounding spaces throughout the page: what are the modernist motivations and effects behind his use of this concrete, tangible representation? How do Cummings' poempictures blur the underlying boundaries not only between the verbal and the visual but also between referential and signified meanings, intelligibility and sensuality, and imagination and reality? In a technologically optical era, how does his novel artistry as a verbal-visual collaboration contribute to the creation of his intermedial prosody?

To answer these questions, this dissertation is organised in five chapters. Chapter 1 "Medialising Modernity: From *Ut pictura poesis* to Intermediality" reformulates the notion of intermediality as a framework for examining the artishood of poet-painter. As a general background of the so-called visual or pictorial turn newly emerging from the early twentieth century, it explores how an intermedial perspective in the modernist context can replace the perennial antagonism towards paragone or the prevailing binarism rooted in the historical notion of Horace's *ut pictura poesis*. By definition, in either its broad or narrow sense, this intermedial awareness points out an in-between "relations among different [qualified or] basic media" (Elleström, *Media Transformation* 89) as a dynamic transfer of different medial characteristics. It then asks for not just a structural or compositional change but a fundamental shift in our ways of reading and spectatorship, with significant implications for the new aesthetics, ideology, and technology. Inspired by the art-led Continental avant-gardes, modernism has become a common ground for increasingly interartistic experiments and even formally and materially reformed the society through various mediums. Intermediality thus evolved as a response to challenge the hierarchical power relationship between different artistic disciplines and promote an alternative mode to see, read, and engage with these hybrid artefacts. All questions about "medium specificity,

mixed media, intermedia” are going to reconsider the medial condition with a “dialectical turn toward the *immediate*” which is the “phenomenology of the unmediated, the transparent, and the uncoded” (Mitchell, *Image Science* 10).³⁸ Through the intermedial lens, poetry and painting (and their functional senses of hearing and seeing) are considered not as twins or rivalries but a dialogic and dialectical continuum that offers us more nuanced and holistic meanings and interpretations. Intermediality moves beyond the traditional comparative approach to embrace a poststructuralist sense of in-betweenness, mediating the binaries and interrogating the intertwined relation between form and content, body and mind, object and subject, icon and symbol, and the visible and the articulable. Modernist poet-painters, such as Loy and Cummings discussed in this study, embody a highly expressive and self-reflexive formation of their (inter-)artistic identity that defies any medial or intersectional inanimation and categorisation. Their radical experimentations resist monogenetic designations set by traditional boundaries and illustrate the iconoclastic power within the intermedial metamorphosis of political, cultural, and aesthetic modernity.

Following this threshold chapter on related histories and theories to elucidate what I address as “intermedial modernism,” there are two sections – each with two chapters – discussing “Transcultural Modernism and Intermedial Identities” and “Experimental Modernism and Intermedial Artistries” in the cases of Loy and Cummings. The first section focuses on their transcontinental engagements across different national and cultural borders (cf. their cosmopolitan avant-gardism in Italian Futurism, New York Dada, Fauvism and Cubism in Paris), and the other pair is respectively on their intermedial modernist experiments with a variety of genres and artforms (from fashion designs, portraits, abstractions, line-drawings, still lifes, to landscapes). Chapter 2 “‘Evolve the language of Future’: Loy’s Cosmopolitan Avant-Gardism” draws attention to Loy’s emergence as a multifaceted genius, navigating national, sexual, and sociocultural boundaries throughout her lifetime. Traversing between West Europe and North America owing to marital and familial accounts, she forged a hybrid, frame-breaking artisthood as an expatriate “Anglo-Mongrel”. Based on her transatlantic experience and multicultural communion, Loy’s cosmopolitan travelogue of *Lunar Baedeker* creates a revolutionarily new discourse to articulate her political position on feminism and other sociocultural appeals. As the title says, this chapter on the construction of her intermedial identity attempts to delineate how her engagement with international avant-gardes contributes to her innovative experiments with poetic word, typographical language, and the structural layout of organising microscopic aspects as a new

³⁸ On the idea of medial condition or the “post-medium condition,” Rosalind Krauss retains the word “medium” focusing on its “medium-specificity” that is “(in its non-abusively defined form) nonetheless intrinsic to any discussion of how the conventions layered into a medium might function” (7). See Krauss, *“A Voyage on the North Sea”: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000).

modality of formal design. While her intermedial artworks resonates with characteristic elements of Futurism and Dada, Loy's aesthetic evolution defies any fixation or classification in a singular sense; instead of coinciding these movements, she actively interfered in and revolutionised them in "variously critical, creative, curatorial, and indeed parodic" formats (Hayden, *Curious Disciplines* 1). In a similar spirit to achieve her feminist politics, she seamlessly blends different genres of the verbal and the visual to dissolve the problematic borderline in-between any binary pairs. The poet-painter, also as a "tailor" figure, handles multiple materials and forms in an effort to realise the in-between, hybrid, or other open artistic or social space for shared and unheard voices.³⁹ Under this light, her mongrel language and poetics of multimodal hybridising refashion the material and formal articulation of presenting one's sex, race, and class, and constitute an ambitious activism to undermine repressive forces hidden in the modern society.

Chapter 3 "A draughtsman of words?: Cummings' Prosodic Intermediality" concentrates on Cummings' modernist crafts of intermedial prosody that is cognisant of painterly aesthetics as much as the poetic one, and specifically investigates how the poet-painter has been influenced by not only Continental avant-gardism but also Chinese art and its Eastern aesthetics. Through his correspondence with Ezra Pound, Cummings accessed to his ideographic movement of Imagism and his translations of Chinese classical poetry and philosophies such as Taoism and Confucianism. The early intercultural, transnational exchange across the Pacific sparked his desire to rejuvenate the Western poetic structure and its mimetic, realistic conventions and conduct radical experiments with the East Asian aesthetics of simplicity, economy, and formal expressiveness – especially inspired by the classical "Poet-Painter of China."⁴⁰ Like Chinese artists' virtuoso brushwork on paper, he transforms his poetic words and visual patterns into a variety of new expressions to depict one's memory, experience, and being/becoming. Apart from this Pacific-Rim influence, Cummings' time in Paris further exposed himself to the European avant-garde movements, including those like Fauvism and Cubism led by Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso in the early twentieth century. Drawing from these experimentalists, he developed his own Cubo-Fauvist palette in practice of rough wild colours, abstract lines, analytic forms, and precisionist use of typewriter languages. The idiosyncrasies of the poet-painter's graphic eccentricities focus on the stylistic typography as a pivotal part of his experimentation, not only to re-design the form itself but also perform an alternative way of reading and viewing on and off the canvas. It is neither the

³⁹ At the end of "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose," Loy draws attention to the profession of a tailor, who could destruct and recompose cloths as a plastic form and processive structure. She highlights a poetics of tailoring to invent not only the word and its formal composition but also the body and its physical embodiment.

⁴⁰ In his catalogue for the one-man show at Rochester's Memorial Art Gallery, he creates a fictional interview between a speaker (himself) with an interviewer asking that: "Well, let me see...oh yes, one more question: where will you live after this war is over?" "In China; as usual," Cummings replies and elaborates on the reason: "Where a painter is a poet" (*A Miscellany* 345).

chromatic focus nor linear design that plays the essential role in Cummings' artworks, but the prosodic intermediality and its whimsical craftsmanship of poempictures. His medial or "generic uncertainty" underscores the symptomatic relation between "vision and authority, clarity and obscurity" and most importantly discusses the ways "in which modernist style can best convey the modern world" (Farley 73). Through his dramatic placement of words on the surface of texts, he seeks to destroy the conventionality of narrative linearity and then establish a new order of lineation, texture, and layout in an open constellation to better comprehend the relationship between us and our living world. Based on his intermedial prosody fusing verbal and visual mediums, Cummings dismantles the boundaries and integrates revolutionarily new energies from the historically separate realms of word and image, poet and painter, and West and East.

Returning to Loy, chapter 4 "Word made flesh?: Intermedial Portraits in Loy's Ekphrases and Art Poems" focuses on her inventive exploration of the verbal-visual language, with a spectatorial eye to reevaluate the representation of one's physical body and social identity. Her fluid and processive movement of art-making encompasses a collage of selves in various genres and materials, rejecting unified homogeneity from an essentialist way of self-representing. From the revelation of this poet-painter's intercultural perception and experience as mentioned before, the chapter could easily trace its impact upon the innovative practices of pure form, autonomous word, and the revolution of language in an extremely aesthetic manner to destabilise the meaning-making in traditional linguistic forms. The visualisation of these "typographic particulars" enables her to "encode and transmit connotations, histories, and the scars of social conflict, or what can be understood as the *ordinatio* of the printed page" (Dworkin, *Radium* 4).⁴¹ Loy' intermedial artistries could be found in her stylistic experiment with visionary artforms and techniques, e.g., readymade, abstraction, and graphic design, used in her modernist ekphrases or artist-portrait poems. She refashions the revolutionary genre of manifesto or aphorism as an act of designing rather than mere writing, such as "Feminist Manifesto" and "Aphorisms on Futurism" in 1914. Advertising as a self-portrait, they unravel a more feminist message divergent from the militaristic and misogynistic strain of Italian Futurism led by Marinetti. Moreover, by portraying her avant-garde contemporaries in art or portrait poems "Gertrude Stein" and "Joyce's Ulysses," she treats the poetic word as a verbal-visual radium that could be twisted in differently new order, akin to Duchamp's readymade arts. Following the artist's conceptual use of found objects, she foregrounds the aesthetic autonomy and self-sufficiency of poetic language to destruct and reconfigure it as an assisted readymade. Also, in her ekphrases of "Brancusi's Golden Bird" and

⁴¹ By quoting Loy's "Gertrude Stein" as his book title of *Radium of the Word: A Poetics of Materiality*, Craig Dworkin celebrates the spirit of poetic "radium" through the formal experimentation with typography, letter, punctuation, and its dynamic formality.

“‘The Starry Sky’ of Wyndham Lewis,” Loy’s adaptation of their painterly abstraction in a verbal form highlights her abstract, composite artistry in a constructivist manner that negotiates the divisions between high and mass culture, the artist and the public, and the natural and the manufactural. After elucidating these aspects, this chapter revolves around the poetics of design or refashioning in Loy’s portraits, envisioning a transformative process that replaces masculinist, elitist consistencies with a feminine, fluid exploration of contingencies. It concludes by underscoring her intermedial experimentation as an individual means to redefine modernist aesthetics and open new spaces for alternative selfhoods, consciousnesses, and worldviews.

Finally, chapter 5 “‘Little painted poem’: Modernist Experiments in Cummings’ ‘Poempicture’” specifically looks at Cummings’ inventive writing of poempicture, different from Guillaume Apollinaire’s *Calligrammes*, a more intermedial enterprise to what is ostensibly hidden in the “visual realms of poetry” (L. C. Mitchell 97).⁴² Innovating syllables or letters and marks of punctuation, his painterly form of poetics entangles closely with his artistic genres of line-drawing, still life, and landscape in terms of their common structural forms and subject matters. His line-drawings – published in *The Dial* since 1920 – display a different aesthetic focus from his oil paintings or watercolours. The format of pencil or ink sketches enables the modernist poet-painter to further examine the unconstrained brushworks and the manifold planes, while witnessing and imagining his daily life through visionary and observational imageries. It allows him to capture the fleeting moments of life with a distinctive style combining his literal and imaginal sensibilities. The act of lineation or drawing lines on the page, in turn, reflects upon the same important topics of material, performativity, bodily embodiment as in his portrait and even erotic poems, e.g., “Puella Mea” and “Buffalo Bill’s” in the first collection *Tulips & Chimneys*. In his still lifes from cigarettes to floral vases, Cummings employs many avant-garde techniques, noted for their simplicity, expressiveness, and playful forms different from the traditional representation of realism or naturalism, to effectively decompose and reconstruct everyday objects in the tangible state. He infuses the thing matter with an evocative, suggestive sense of movement and vitality, thereby inviting the reader-viewer to actively engage with the (art) object on various levels. In addition, both Cummings’ scenic writings and landscapes reveal a transcendental whole to create iconic, ecological, and multiple selves within an actual world. With his subtle yet vigorous intelligence of intermediality, these natural artworks not only convey a spontaneous contact with the physical nature in highly expressive manners, but also integrate the experiential “eye/i” with the organic being and its surroundings as it evolves and changes from time to time. The formal affordances

⁴² On the differences between Cummings and Apollinaire among other visual poets in the early twentieth century, see Michael Webster, *Reading Visual Poetry after Futurism: Marinetti, Apollinaire, Schwitters, Cummings* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995).

here subvert the hierarchal status of the signified (literary meaning) over the signifier (the visible form) and conflate the denotative and material planes of poetic language. By examining from his early abstractions to late representational works, we could gain a comprehensive understanding of the idiosyncratic acrobatics of his “vital intermediary form” (Terblanche, *Poetry and Ecology* 196) – as a symbiont of textual and pictorial artforms.

In conclusion, Mina Loy’s cosmopolitan avant-gardism and intermedial portraiture, along with E. E. Cummings’ transcultural influences and intermedial prosody, demonstrate the profound creativity achieved through this image-text convergence which is integral to modernist aesthetics and the reconfiguration of aesthetic and social spaces in that historical epoch. Intermedial modernism points to this quintessential and phenomenal intermediality, a collaborative plurality of arts and mediums in modernist poetry and other artworks. As such, this dissertation probes into their experimentation within a broader political and technological *milieu* of the time, illuminating the significance of intermediality in the modernist refashioning of style, form, and material, with its cultural and ideological indeterminacies that bridge the realms of reading and spectatorship. In contrast to traditional textual criticism, this dissertation highlights an intermedial reading or what Marjorie Perloff terms “Micropoetics” (*Infrablin* xii) that brings Loy’s and Cummings’ art practices, including not only paintings or drawings in various materials but also designs as *objet d’art*, coloured illustrations, collages, and pieces of sketches with written notes, into close consideration. It enables us to rethink the history of modernism in term of intermediality and offers a paradigm to reinterpret the other or late figures of poet-painters during the twentieth century, such as Djuna Barnes, Wyndham Lewis, Elizabeth Bishop, David Jones, Sylvia Plath, John Ashbery, and many more, which holds potential for deeper understanding and appreciation of their contributions to the intermedial exchange between poetry and visual art in the modernist landscape. As one of its interdisciplinary directions of “New Modernist Studies,” Douglas Mao characterises the new modernist studies by “continuous and generative transformation, by an admirable restlessness that has made it a model of productive interchange across scholarly boundaries” where there is an “ever-growing body of work on intermedial interfaces” (5).⁴³ *Intermedial Modernism* thus sets the stage for new crossroads of modernist studies and intermedial studies, and constantly poses compelling questions about the nature of discourse and expression, the interplay between text and vision, the transgression of artistic disciplines, and the potential of intermediality to challenge and reshape our linearist or literalist conception of language and art.

⁴³ He also points out this intermedial transformation in “concepts of what counts as literary production and of the actors, collaborators, and media involved” (738). See Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, “The New Modernist Studies,” *PMLA*, vol. 123, no. 3 (2008) 737-48.

Chapter 1

Medialising Modernity: From *Ut pictura poesis* to Intermediality

Into the ineluctable modality of the ineluctable visibility.

– James Joyce, *Ulysses* (48)

All art is a collaboration.

– J. M. Synge, Preface to *The Playboy of the Western World* (11)

Thanks to art, instead of seeing one world only, our own, we see that world multiply itself and we have at our disposal as many worlds as there are original artists, worlds more different one from the other than those which revolve in infinite space, worlds which, centuries after the extinction of the fire from which their light first emanated, whether it is called Rembrandt or Vermeer, send us still each one its special radiance.

– Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, III (932)

In “The Interart Movement”, a short foreword to *Interart Poetics: Essays on the Interrelations of the Arts and Media* (1997) from the “Interart Studies: New Perspectives” conference, Stephen Greenblatt inspired by the realignment and new departments created in natural sciences, questions the monolithic and stable departmental structures existing in the recent study of English literature (13). He proposes to re-establish this academic subject by shifting the artistic alliance and transforming the institutional configuration. In this context, the traditional textual approach to poetry criticism as a monomedial practice becomes somehow less vigorous within the fixed disciplinary and medial boundaries. It needs to be re-read and reconsidered in an interdisciplinary regime by allying the text itself with other nonverbal forms of media. To achieve this, the new collaboration of intermediality has to be preconditioned to face many obstacles: habitual modes of knowledge, the old operation of power dynamics, and the established hierarchy of literal word as the dominating medium throughout the intellectual history and among all cultural productions.

The collapse of this borderline and the shaping of a conjecture cannot be a simple task. For instance, Stanley Fish might be one of the most resolute opposites against the idea of an interart or intermedial movement – out of interdisciplinarity. As a defender for the possession of knowledge, the protocol of communities, and the historical achievements of an existing discipline, Fish radically suspects this new pedagogy of antiknowledge and the fragile identity of any interdisciplined subject.¹ He thus declares a sense of inescapable institutionalising via the hidden political nature and ideological agenda of any medium or intermedia:

¹ On his key concepts of interpretive community, intended reader, and reader-response theory, see Stanley Fish, “Interpreting the *Variarum*” and “Interpreting ‘Interpreting the *Variarum*,’” in *Is There a Text in This Class: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980) 147-80.

Partiality and parochialism are not eliminated or even diminished by the exposure of their operation, merely relocated. The blurring of existing authoritative disciplinary lines and boundaries will only create new lines and new authorities; the interdisciplinary [or intermedial] impulse finally does not liberate us from the narrow confines of academic ghettos to something more capacious; it merely redomiciles us in enclosures that do not advertise themselves as such. (“Being Interdisciplinary Is So Very Hard to Do” 18)²

He is unquestionably anti-formalist, neo-pragmatist, and obsessed with a community of intended readers – meaning “ideal” in his own view – equipped with an agreed set of special knowledge and analytical methods concentrating on the stable meaning of artwork. All of these could prevent literary scholars from being “moralists, therapists, political counsellors, and agents of global change” (*Save the World* 14) but instead homogenise their identity in a single dimension. However, apart from the nature of his argument and contrarian style, Fish’s defense of both his self-organised interpretive community and literary text as an independent, self-sufficient institution is highly likely to fail its aim. This is due to the contradictory fact that shared interpretive strategies are inconsistent with the subjectivist way of reading that he repeatedly emphasises as a generative activity. In this vein, the paradox between the stability and variety of interpretations renders the consensus of textual reading impossible to achieve.

Unlike Fish, Greenblatt actively attempts to resist any medial or “disciplinary hegemony” and to discover in the medium-oriented “interdisciplinarity an important means of generating new knowledge” (*Reader* 3).³ From the determined skepticism towards the unified description of cultures, histories, or texts, he and the New Historicists have shifted their interest from aesthetic values, such as Formalism and New Criticism, which treat the literary work as an ahistorical unity organic on its own, to a collection of practices synthesising close reading and extrinsic analysis. In a manner of frame-breaking, his notion of cultural poetics aims to erode the firm ground or working distinction found by Fredric Jameson, which “reconfirms that structural, experiential, and conceptual gap between the public and the private, between the social and the psychological, or the political and the poetic, between history or society and the ‘individual’” (Jameson, *Political Unconscious* 20). This liberation of reading text from an absolute, singular medium also echoes Vincent Leitch, who appeals to “uproot the frozen text; break down stereotypes and opinions; suspend or baffle the violence and authority of language; pacify or lighten oppressive paternal powers; disorient the Law; let [intermedial] discourse float, fragment, digress” (51) from a deconstructive stance. By definition, the lens of intermediality tends to replace limit, structure,

² See Fish, *There’s No Such Thing as Free Speech, and It’s a Good Thing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 231-42. About his idea of literary studies as a political phenomenon, see *Professional Correctness: Literary Studies and Political Change* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

³ For more about his interdisciplinary proclamation of literary studies, see Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn, editors, *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1992).

solidity, order of things with decentralisation, fluidity, discontinuity, relation, and process. As discussed in this dissertation, among its intermedial concerns are a range of differing and even heterodox interpretations of the contemplation and accumulation of new experimental artistries since the early twentieth century.

Overall, what Greenblatt, Jameson, and Leitch are trying to identify here is a common desire of collaborative and cooperative force that associates the linearist or literalist reading of literature with other arts and non-verbal mediums. It marks a transfer that views the text as intricate, dynamic pattern of confluences and divergences instead of purely single form or bare parallelism. A formula of inter-discipline or inter-media has become an indispensable necessity for textual criticism and its close reading, particularly in the twentieth-century background when modernist thoughts and articulations are determined by and permeated with the “domain of painting,” the pictorial representation and visual medium presiding over the cultural communication: the condition of painting or its visuality “stirs [exclusive] words” and “suggests [alternative] forms” (Woolf 243-46). This chapter, therefore, intends to introduce and reformulate the concept of intermediality as an overarching platform to scrutinise the figure of the poet-painter, a compelling case of intermedial studies that spotlights inherent exchanges and dialogues between the poetical and the painterly within this plural artisthood. Before moving to the case studies, we need to address some preliminary but significant questions about modernist intermediality: as a historical debate between word and image, what is the historical development of *ut pictura poesis*? And in its perennial antagonism towards *paragone*, how has its evolutionary version of intermediality in the modernist context substituted for the predominant binary system and false dichotomy since Gotthold Ephraim Lessing? How do image and its modality of imaging dominate the modern culture and reverse the power relationship with the verbal discourse? Is this visual/pictorial turn barely a structural, compositional change or rather a fundamental one in the aesthetic, ideological, and technological reconfiguration of reading and spectatorship?

Based on the “political implications” (Hayles and Pressman xiii) of this media-oriented interdisciplinarity, the intermedial framework goes beyond the transcendently *paragonal* nature of comparativity in *ut pictura poesis* to a poststructuralist sense of in-betweenness. Intermediality is not just concerned with one particular side; it mediates opposing binaries and interrogates the commingled process between the verbo-textual and the audio-visual, the symbolic/intelligible and the technical/sensorial, content and form, mind and body, time and space, subject and object, self and other, as well as poets and painters, from a democratic equidistance. Hence, through this prism of intermediality, the modernist artisthood of poet-painters (i.e., Mina Loy and E. E. Cummings in my project) clearly demonstrates a self-aware and introspective manifestation of the intermedial

nature of their artistic identities and strategies. It indicates an alternative mode of self-representation and self-identification that is fluid, perforated, and resistant to stagnation. Their experimentation also defies the conventional generic designation of forms, styles and mediums, and illustrates the intermedial potential and its iconoclastic power within the dynamic shift of social, cultural, and aesthetic modernity.

A Genealogy of *Ut pictura poesis*

Intermediality and its closely related concern about image-text relations are in fact not a product of modernity.⁴ As early as Roman antiquity, Horace in his *Ars Poetica*, taking a lead from the Greek poet Simonides of Ceos' influential formula that "painting is mute poetry and poetry a speaking picture" in *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and also inscribed in Plutarch's *Moralia*, composed his reputed idea of *ut pictura poesis*, namely "as is painting so is poetry" (Preminger and Brogan 1339; Rogers 41). Introducing this specific analogy reveals an embryo of intermediality. This Horatian simile brought forth the fundamental premise of the kinship of descriptive and iconic modes of art. Nevertheless, it does not overly care about the essential dissimilarities of different mediums but instead emphasises the structural and functional similitudes between these two artforms. *Ut pictura poesis*, in the beginning, signifies a casual comparison and a general notion of parallels rather than a competition discriminating between superiority and inferiority. Serving as representational forces, poetry and painting have been considered since Aristotle's *Poetics* to be the arts of mimesis, the ideal imitation of physical appearances and the external world, thereby uniting the poetical and the pictorial as instrumental tools of mimetic representation. According to Aristotle, in spite of their use of distinct categories of medium, poets and painters employ similar elements in their formal compositions: on function, to represent or mimic objects by rhythm and language or colour and shape; on subject matter, to imitate humans in action and their moral nature; on standard, to be judged by the vividness or resemblance of reality; on structure, to treat plot in tragedy and outline/design in picture as equally principal constituents of representation (45-73). Furthermore, based on the classical idea of imitation and pedagogical theory (Haight 161), poets and painters are no longer dismissed from the Platonic commonwealth for purveying a distorted form of the ideal Truth, sharing the same purpose of their artistic practices not only to please but also to instruct.

⁴ In August 2023, the 13th International Conference of the International Word and Image Association (IAWIS/AIERT) works on this archeological exploration of *ut pictura poesis*. It focuses on the notion of "Sedimentation" in word-image studies and aims to address the contemporary tensions and oscillations of the verbal and the visual that cross the old medial border.



Fig. 1-1 Nicolas Poussin, *The Institution of the Eucharist* (1640). Oil on canvas, 325 by 250 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Philip Sidney, apparently influenced by Horace and Aristotle, also conceived of “poesy” as an art of mimesis, “a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth – to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture; with this end, to teach and delight” (86). Over and above this, he even took advantage of the metaphorical power of *ut pictura poesis* to defend poetry against philosophy and history. By providing the “perfect picture” as a painter, the poet can yield “the powers of the mind an image of that whereof the philosopher bestoweth but a wordish description” and the historian “the particular truth of things [without] general reason of things” (90). The visible effect and pictorial naturalism of visual art equip a poetic line with painterly techniques to represent the scale, depth, and shape of human experience; they both work reciprocally as an inseparable twin. Later, John Dryden, in his preface “A Parallel of Poetry and Painting” (1695), exemplified from Sophocles’ *Oedipus* to Nicolas Poussin’s *The Institution of the Eucharist* (fig. 1-1), further elucidated on this essential parallelism between poet and painter in respect of characterisation, action, properties, chief end, decorum, and manners of fiction for representing the perfection and deficiency of figures as natural objects in both portrait and comedy or tragedy. In particular, he placed additional emphasis on the artistic invention alongside the Aristotelian theory of imitation as a significant part of their parallel medial relations: “Without *Invention* a *Painter* is but a *Copier*, and a *Poet* but a *Plagiary* of others. *Both* are allow’d sometimes to *copy* and *translate*” (Dryden xxxiv). Horatian credo, as the earliest model of intermediality, not only sets a common theme for

rhetorical and oratorical discussions, but also provides a meeting ground for an intermedial exploration of poetry-painting in a series of comparison (thesis) and contrast (antithesis).



Fig. 1-2 Titian, *Diana and Actaeon* (1556-59). Oil on canvas, 185 by 202 cm. National Gallery, London.

The aphorism of *ut pictura poesis* became a bequest and the embryo of humanistic theory of arts growing in greatest popularity during the Italian Renaissance, when poetry and painting were first referred to as “sister arts” – albeit not as a harmonious couple but as rivals (Markiewicz and Gabara 537). The rivalry for precedence between different mediums was increasingly fierce, especially with the tendency towards medial purification and artistic distinction, demonstrative of an attempt to establish ascendancy of one art over the other. At that time, Leonardo da Vinci first escalated the war known as *paragone*, a medially monotheist was against our notion of intermediality starting from centuries ago. He lifted the painting from its status as craftsmanship to an independent artform over poetry; this is the point at which the ranking or classing competition corresponding with the tradition of comparison among media is reckoned to have officially begun, and it soon became a perennial debate throughout Western intellectual and cultural history.⁵ More clearly, his defence of painting extended the classical parallel in terms of measure and function into the artistic competition struggling for a revised hierarchy. Homer’s verbal depiction of

⁵ This *paragonal* competition, later in the twentieth century, includes not only highbrow classical artforms but also lowbrow mass media and popular culture, such as television programs, advertisements, broadcasts, comics, as well as computer games, reinvigorated by a sociological analysis of Bourdieu’s distinction, a moral and political struggle of classification. See Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, translated by Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

Achilles' shield and Titian's visual description from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (fig. 1-2), both manifest the reciprocal nature of *poesis-pictura* that started to proceed "hand in hand [but rather] in a sisterly emulation of aims and means of expression" (Praz 5).⁶



Fig. 1-3 Leonardo da Vinci, *Comparison of Scalp Skin and Onion* (1489). Pen, ink and red chalk on paper, 20.3 by 15.2 cm. Royal Library, Windsor.

In his treatise on pictorial art, da Vinci proclaimed this "sisterly emulation" as a Renaissance enterprise and elevated painting to the class of liberal arts. He even placed painting as the highest standard of human knowledge, countering Aristotle's primacy of tragedy and Michelangelo's sculpture.⁷ Through his statement that the painter was the "lord of all types of people and of all things" (185), da Vinci explained how the superiority of painting meant that it surpassed all other forms of art:

The eye which is called the window of the soul is the chief means whereby the understanding can most fully and abundantly appreciate the infinite works of nature; and the ear is the second, which acquires dignity by hearing of the things the eye has seen [...] And if you, O poet, tell a story with your pen, the painter with his brush can tell it more easily, with simpler completeness, and less tedious to follow. If you call painting dumb poetry, the painter may call poetry blind painting. Consider then which is the more grievous defect, to be blind or dumb? Though the poet is as free as the painter in the

⁶ Titian himself even calls these mythological paintings inspired by a literary work as a series of *Poesie*, the pictorial equivalent of poetry, i.e., *Danaë*, *Venus and Adonis*, *Diana and Actaeon*, *Diana and Callisto*, *Persus and Andromeda*, *The Rape of Europe*, and *The Death of Actaeon*.

⁷ Also see his *Paragone: A Comparison of the Arts*, translated by Irma A. Richter (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).

invention of his fictions his creations do not give so great a satisfaction to men as paintings do; for though poetry attempts to describe forms, actions, and places in words, the painter employs the actual similitude of the forms, in order to reproduce them. (190)

Focusing on the prominent faculty of vision (fig. 1-3), he ranked the eye/seeing first, then the ear/hearing, and thus prioritised painting, dependent on visual quality, over poetry, on auditory. His anti-intermedial theory of aesthetics treated blindness as a more pathetic defect than dumbness; notwithstanding this, it rattled the foundational dictum proclaiming poetry a “speaking picture” but painting a “silent poetry,” as was the presuppositional colonisation of different various arts. Relating to new technical problems and the attempt to develop a scientific theory of aesthetics (Lee 200), to a large degree, this subversion broke up the state of muteness in painting and endowed it with a paramount sense of sight.

In the same vein, following John Locke’s empiricist notion that sight is “the most comprehensive of all our senses, conveying to our minds the ideas of light and colours, which are peculiar only to that sense; and also the far different ideas of space, figure, and motion” (83), Joseph Addison appears to have been close to rephrasing Lockian words into his own style of periodical essay, linking aesthetic tradition to modern psychological science: “Our sight is the most perfect and most delightful of all our senses” which “fills the mind with the largest variety of ideas” and “furnishes the imagination” (397). For both, the eyes, sight, and culture of connoisseurship are the most natural direct sources of human ideas, from which complex abstraction is originated from a result of an association with basic sensual perceptions (Davies 160). The early intermedial discussion gradually expanded its realm from formal categories to a more philosophical concern about how image/text could shape our ways of feeling and thinking. Based on the epistemological transformation from the Cartesian orientation towards mind, painting and other plastic arts were then considered superior to metrical or rhetoric compositions, for the former were assigned with the power of visuality and the “primary pleasures of the imagination” (Addison 398), whilst the latter, censured from Plato’s Socrates, were full of figurative words and literary tropes that could do nothing but “insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment” (Locke 372).⁸ From Thomas Hobbes to David Hume, philosophers of that period drew attention to the alleged potency of optical perception and the prioritisation of the sense of sight. They believed that poetry should produce a vivid *tableau* of images and mental vision, harmoniously integrating the experience of both readers and viewers.⁹

⁸ Socially, it is in Renaissance that painters and sculptors culminated the exodus and institutionally became part of academies of fine art, which complemented the aesthetic emancipation of visual art in general (Weisstein, “Literature and the Visual Arts” 253).

⁹ See Hobbes, *Leviathan*, edited by Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) and Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, edited by Peter Millican (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

The *paragonal* hierarchy of arts has by no means merely been a power structure of different mediums or medial classification, but rather a contest of physical senses that took place in the Renaissance and even a struggle for dominance between the perceptible and the imaginative, the natural and the artificial, body and mind, as well as space and time. In the mid-eighteenth century, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, with a polemical work entitled *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, opposed the Horatian pattern of *ut pictura poesis* resulting in the confusion of arts. Without any intermedial possibility, he argued for a system of medial dualism instead, assuming that “succession in time is the province of the poet, co-existence in space that of the artist” (100) in the manner of compartmentalisation. He intended to disassociate them as two radically independent, incompatible modes of representation that operate in each dimension with incommensurable measures and subjects: poetry obeys the temporal rule of sequentiality and arbitrariness, whereas painting sticks to the spatial law of simultaneity and likeness. To achieve so, Lessing demanded a critical reassessment of the structural border and instituted strict limits for the irreducible differences of bed and board between the traditionally defined sister arts on his “first principles”:

If it be true that painting employs wholly different signs or means of imitation from poetry, – the one using forms and colours in space, the other articulate sounds in time, – and if signs must unquestionably stand in convenient relation with the thing signified, then signs arranged side by side can represent only objects existing side by side, or whose parts so exist, while consecutive signs can express only objects which succeed each other, or whose parts succeed each other, in time. (91)

Laocoon aimed towards a deviation of the parallel line from the commonplace direction of neoclassical convention in order to redefine the relationship between verbal and visual representations by assigning generic boundaries to both. Retrospectively, Lessing might be the opposition leader to vote against the establishment of intermedial studies. Rather than call *pictura-poesis* sisterhood, he preferred to see poetry and painting as “two just and friendly neighbours, neither of whom indeed is allowed to take unseemly liberties in the heart of the other domain, but who exercise mutual forbearance on the borders, and effect a peaceful settlement for all the petty encroachments which circumstance may compel either to make in haste on the rights of the other” (110).

Lessing was not the first to build up the border in between, but unapologetically the most prominent critic to dualise pictorial and poetical arts into mutually exclusive, polemical constructs. His oppositional binarism does not manage to distinguish one from another only within the inside the inside domains of genre or sense, but develops into a broad binary system of historical patriarchy:

Painting	Poetry
Space	Time
Natural signs	Arbitrary (man-made) signs
Narrow sphere	Infinite range
Imitation	Expression
Body	Mind
External	Internal
Silent	Eloquent
Beauty	Sublimity
Eye	Ear
Feminine	Masculine (Mitchell, <i>Iconology</i> 110) ¹⁰

Like the traditional presentation of female nudity on canvas, the painting as a motionless body is presupposed to lack eloquent power and be femininely mute under the all-pervasive masculine gaze, confined within a narrow sphere in contrast with the poetic infiniteness and its domination of discourse, expression, and historicity. In this vein, Lessing and his contemporary Edmund Burke, who rendered the word sublime and the image beautiful – for the most “lively and spirited verbal description” can “raise a stronger emotion” than the best picture (55) – ranked poetry above painting as a new aesthetic cornerstone in the Enlightenment, with cognition above perception, imagination above memory, and fiction above verisimilitude. In this “anti-pictorial” strain and the sanctification of word (Park 158), poetry was regarded as disconnected with the representational potency to form sensible images but empowered to affect through a spiritual power of sympathy, imagination, and sublimity.¹¹ The intermedial relationship of poetry and painting, at that time, was not a purely formal or theoretical theme anymore but instead a political, psychological, and ideological issue, which, like that of “countries, of clans, of neighbours, of members of the same family,” was not only “subject to versions of [their] laws, taboos, and rituals” (Mitchell, *Iconology* 112) but also capable of changing and regulating the sociocultural forms of our experiential life.

Neither neoclassical *paragone*, debating the relative value of sister arts, nor Lessing’s dichotomy between time-based poetry and space-based painting would prove persuasive any longer. These monomedial viewpoints gradually lost their fascination as the borderline between each medium was dissolved by the interartistic influences and exchanges active during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Instead of a laocoonised underpinning, modern artists noticed an interrelatedness and productive interchange between different artforms or mediums in

¹⁰ Mitchell presents an additional catalog of dualistic conceptions between word and image, which is accompanied by his examination of Blake’s composite artistry, emblematically portraying the book (poetry) and the scroll (painting) as an allegory of the eternal struggle between good and evil: book serves as the mechanical/reason/judgement/law/modern, while scroll as the handcrafted/imagination/forgiveness/prophesy/ancient (*Picture Theory* 135).

¹¹ Similar to Lessing, Denis Diderot furthers this differentiation between poetry and painting in the early eighteenth century, see more in Markiewicz and Gabara 541. Also, Rémy G. Saisselin, “Ut pictura poesis: DuBos to Diderot,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 20, no. 2 (1961) 144-56.

the late romantic and pre-modernist periods. Friedrich Schiller contended against the purified existence of art within an aligned generic category, which, in his view, had even become a historical hindrance to achieving the fullest nature of one's aesthetic experience. The "perfect style in each and every art" should "remove the specific limitations of the art in question without thereby destroying its specific qualities, and through a wise use of its individual peculiarities, is able to confer upon it a more general character" (Schiller 470). In a strong sense of intermediality, one of Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* sets out his utopian blueprint of a unified system of varied artistic disciplines to replace the traditional separateness that had been predominated by mimetic theory; it aims to overcome the objective frontiers between distinct medial specificities and realises true aesthetic perfection as the ultimate mission of art – not as an instrumental skill but an autonomous expression of one's psyche and morality.

In a proto-intermedial study on Renaissance literature and art, Walter Pater blurred Lessing's neat line of demarcation between image/text by referring to "The School of Giorgione":

[A]lthough each art has thus its own specific order of impressions, and an untranslatable charm, while a just apprehension of the ultimate differences of the arts is the beginning of aesthetic criticism; yet it is noticeable that, in its special mode of handling its given material, each art may be observed to pass into the condition of some other art, by what German critics term as *Anders-streben* [or Richard Wagner's multimedia term *Gesamtkunstwerk*] – a partial alienation from its own limitations, through which the arts are able, not indeed to supply the place to each other, but reciprocally to lend each other new forces. (105)

Both Pater and Wagner, as late Romantics, underlined the concept of a total work of art – *anders-streben* or *Gesamtkunstwerk* – as a pre-modernised version of intermediality for synthesising diverse artforms into a universal, all-embracing work of art.¹² The relational lines between poetry and painting here ceased to be paralleled or diverging; they began to lend reciprocal support to each other as Voltaire puts it that "all the arts join hands" (Saisselin 147). This proximity between poetry and painting was evident throughout Pre-Raphaelitism, Aestheticism, and Decadence in their innovative acts of "translation across media" (Helsing vi), in a line that runs from Dante Rossetti to Aubrey Beardsley.¹³ However, the joining force that reunited them did not rely upon the common duty of representing outside reality but on the romanticist theory of expressiveness. In the mid-nineteenth century, John Ruskin reformulated the idea of *ut pictura poesis* by claiming that painting "is properly to be opposed to *speaking* or *writing* but not to poetry [for both] painting and

¹² See Richard Wagner, *The Art-Work of the Future and Other Works*, translated by William Ashton Ellis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

¹³ On the nineteenth-century dynamics of literature and other arts, see Jonah Siegel, *Material Inspirations: The Interests of the Art Object in the Nineteenth Century and After* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Liz Prettejohn, *Modern Painters, Old Masters: The Art of Imitation from the Pre-Raphaelites to the First World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

speaking are methods of expression” (12-13). Since the Romantic trends, the purpose of literature and art has undergone a crucial change in societal and political aspects – no longer to copy or imitate but rather to make and convey. Hence, poetry and painting of the era should not be deemed as facsimile representations of human action or natural substance; they belong to their own sphere of invention and expression, where poets and painters (and of course poet-painters in this study) are not copiers or transcribers but a group of original geniuses brimming with emotions, visionary conceptions, and spontaneous overflow of feelings. From mimesis to romantic expressionism, an updated version of *ut pictura poesis* shifts the cultural debates with new paradigms so as to reverse “the aesthetic mirror in order to make it reflect the lamp of the mind” (Abrams 130).

As seen in the allegorical drawing of the same title (fig. 1-4), the sustained and fertile conception of *ut pictura poesis* represents not so much a formalist group of thoughts or practices on verbal and visual representation, but rather a talking point – pictorially engraved on the stone tablet surrounded by a crowd of artists and their artworks – for theoretical preoccupations about word and image as basic modes of humanistic intellectual thinking. *Ut pictura poesis* positions itself at the interdisciplinary confluence not only of poetry/literature and painting/art, but also, to a large extent, of rhetoric and aesthetics, epistemology and philosophy, cognition and other related social sciences. It fosters a series of “difficult dialogues” about the “historical point of view and the inclination to protect different fields of research, the ghost of iconoclasm, the gender-oriented vision, or the imperialist (even colonial) one” (Louvel 4). As discussed above, the broad historical span of different critics and their ideas allows for a careful chronological examination on the evolution of image-text relationship, particularly attentive to its social, political, and ideological contexts. In this genealogical section, the sister arts tradition started with a discussion about relation or relatedness between different types of media being like pointing out the physical similarities in a family photograph. The division between these artforms that arose in the Renaissance witnessed the development of *paragone* as a cultural phase, where the enterprise of differentiation into categories or classes fostered the purification and distinction of artistic medium or discipline.¹⁴ The transformation from a structural parallel that stressed kinship and harmony to a *paragonal* debate on difference and exceptionality, soon featuring the extreme delimitation of temporal and spatial art, deepened the formal or empirical concern for philosophical, aesthetic fundamentals in the implications of a chain of binary oppositions. To sidestep the dualism and dichotomous thinking directed by Lessing’s exceptionalism of each medium, pre-modernist critics continued to address these issues by examining the new nexus of technology and society. They turned towards a union of arts and mediums based on their creative partnership and cross-fertilised

¹⁴ This is also a feature of the establishment of the academy of fine arts and later foundation of modern universities and disciplines.

affinity, operating a straighter engagement with the Horatian dogma. The multimedial notion of *Gesamtkunstwerk* and its function as a force of unification boosted a growing investigation into conceptualising the interface between the linguistic and the graphic. However, the historical formularies of image-text relation could not properly explain the intermedial collaboration – especially since the early twenty century, when literary modernism and avant-garde art movements dynamically interacted and converged through the radical experimentation with verbal and visual forms. It thus demonstrates the revolutionary potential for the introduction to intermediality, a theoretically and ontologically systematic extension of *ut pictura poesis*, in greater depth.



Fig. 1-4 Charles-François Hutin, *Ut Pictura Poesis* (1745-46). Cream laid paper, 53.2 by 38 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland.

Intermediality and the Philosophy of In-Between(ness)

As archaeologically investigated, intermediality refers to a dynamic experience of exploring the interrelation between *pictura* and *poesis*, and it should be regarded as a fair place of meeting and dialoguing for specific artforms without hierarchies or divisions, where one might travel across from one defining category smoothly to another. It differs itself from the interdisciplinarity of reading a text in a literalist way, which turns out to be the “new imperialism” of language in disguise by “colonising, reducing, and ultimately burying the natives of the [non-verbal] realm” (Gilman 5) with its discourse, textualisation, and linguistic determinism. An intermedial reading of poetry or

literary genres is by no means an act of colonising or populating other mediums – not violently sending new settlers from non-literary lands back to its verbal continent and establishing a superior power over them. To overcome this historical hegemonism when crossing boundaries or existing frames, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak puts forward her idea of “transgressive readings” (56) in *Death of a Discipline*, which builds upon the weight of alterity, the communication with the other, in an opening-up process, for the reason that:

To be human is to be intended toward the other. We provide for ourselves transcendental figurations of what we think is the origin of this animating gift: mother, nation, god, nature. These are names of alterity [...] And thus to think of [alterity] is already to transgress, for, in spite of our forays into what we metaphorise, differently, as outer and inner space, what is above and beyond our reach is not continuous with us as it is not, indeed, specifically discontinuous. We must persistently educate ourselves into this peculiar mindset. (73)

The “peculiar mindset” of transgression helps to restore the disconnected as a redemption of continuity. Intermediality, as one of the transgressive readings of interdisciplinarity, shifts its focus from expanding to bridging, from the polar to the multilateral, from the centralisation of the monopoly to a relational link on each side. Encouraging a more subtle and sensitive approach to new compositions and identities, this intermedial reading pays more conscious attention to the in-between relationship, the movement across regions, and the processes of circulation and hybridisation. The capture of the transcendental relation is the axis of its principle, particularly helpful for discovering the complex interplay of the verbal and the visual within the modernist artishood of poet-painters in the following chapters.

Based on the *ut pictura poesis* doctrine, the medial relation is perceived as different and unhappily divided by traditional approaches to the sisterhood of word and image, e.g., the study of their translatability, correspondence, thematology, adaptation, influence from one side to the other (Weisstein, *Comparative Literature* vii).¹⁵ This brings the comparative ritual as its focus to examine the binary pair as competitors and rivals, or as borrower and lender fixed in their own realms. Spivak cautions us against these stereotypes: such a view is “antihybridist, culturally conservative, ‘ontopologist’ [Derrida’s term]” and “parochial” (*Death* 9; “Translation as Culture” 21).¹⁶ In contrast, the vast field of intermedial studies replaces old ideas with a more wide-ranging interchange of boundaries between different disciplines and mediums. Emphasising the notions of inclusion and border-crossing, intermediality not only means a newborn artistic phenomenon,

¹⁵ On ekphrasis, see Stephen Cheeke, *Writing for Art: The Aesthetics of Ekphrasis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); David Kennedy and Richard Meek, editors, *Ekphrastic Encounters: New Interdisciplinary Essays on Literature and the Visual Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018). On adaptation, see Jørgen Bruhn et al., editors, *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

¹⁶ For “ontopologist,” see Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, translated by Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994) 82.

but also an innovative methodology and radical philosophy of (re)thinking. For instance, as when discussing the intermedial genre of ekphrasis in the works of poet-painters, we shall no longer see from the definable scope of transliteration or transcription between verbal and verbal representations, but instead, from a more complex and dialectical perspective: Mina Loy's ekphrastic rewriting "Brancusi's Golden Bird" of Constantin Brancusi's abstraction in a concrete sculptural form, and E. E. Cummings' self-visualisation between his poem "the surely" and his oil painting *Noise Number 13*. The poetics of intermediality encourages us to explore how the multifariousness of poet-painter artishood could extend beyond one specific form or style in encompassing, self-reflexive, and subversive manners.

As a vital means of removing the long-standing barriers of heterogeneous media and asking for a revaluation of their productive exchange, intermediality has been defined in a plethora of different ways: a "bridge between medial differences" (Elleström, *Media Borders* 12); "medial border-crossings and hybridisation" with a highlighted awareness of materiality and mediation of artistic productions (Rajewsky 44); "links" and "cross-breeds" between various forms of art (Herzogenrath 2); a desire to fuse or a "conceptual fusion" of scenario and audiovisuality (Higgins 30); a "relationship between (*inter*) texts or medialities" with a huge range of cultural practices (Bruhn 14); a "complex and highly dynamic set" of relations among different media (Emden and Rippl 10); "transgression of boundaries between media" whose objects shall be "semiotic complexes or entities" (Wolf, "Intermediality" 252); "artistic interrelatedness," interrelations or the interconnectedness within each art happening in the contemporary medial age (Eilittä vii; Clüver 20; Hallet 605); the acquisition of "a plurality of identities" through continual translation from one medium to another (Punzi 10). Though in varying terminologies and registers, they unanimously stress the concepts of association – "bridge," "links," "relationship," "interrelatedness" – of hybrid – "fusion," "hybridisation," "plurality," "dynamic" – of destruction – "border-crossings," "transgression," "cross-breeds," "transformativ[ity]." All signify an intrinsically revolutionary change for literary and artistic reception and interpretation. As such, the subjects of intermediality are less concerned with new types or phenomena than with alternative modes of seeing, spaces for possibilities, diversification of genres, and eventually a new perspective that escapes the confines of limited dimensionality. Hence, this intermedial concept appears more open-minded and variable, substituting the narrowed vision historically and ideologically trapped in its own borders with dynamic energy and critical potential for problem-solving.

Aside from intermediality, a broad spectrum of terminologies is also used to describe the frequent contacts between literature, art, and other non-verbal aspects; for example, interart poetics, textual/visual studies, sister arts paradigm, inter-aesthetic research, multimodality, and so

forth.¹⁷ Although it might be difficult to tell which phrase and definition is solely legitimate, the common nature of their naming and the conceptualisation of intermediality refers to an emphasis on the process, the linkage, and the very position sitting in between, characterised by a simultaneously collaborating and frame-breaking force. It benefits from these two contradictory yet interactive factors. The intermedial approach synthesises aesthetic-oriented studies with media-historical ones (Johansson and Petersson 2) to bridge those traditionally disconnected and opposing areas. As a “travelling concept” (Bal 22) that could travel among different disciplines, mediums, and cultures, intermediality seeks to combine formal, semiotic, iconographical analysis with historical, social, ideological interpretation in order to fuse literary and artistic experiences with the specificity of their practices across time, place, and sociocultural environments.¹⁸ Specifically speaking, it is responsible for three major roles: collaboration involving interrelation between two distinct mediums or artforms; frame-breaking in a cross-disciplinary, cross-media field; and epistemologically, in addition to these two roles, creation of a new way of reading/viewing to sidestep binary oppositions, open up bright prospects, and foster the expansion of perspectives within a richly multidimensional tapestry.

Firstly, instead of being in a relationship of “mutual plagiarism” (Müller 298), it captures one medium by means of locating it with another to analyse and interpret image/text through the dynamics of an intermedial process. In contrast to multimodality, transmediality, or plurimediality which underline mixedness, juxtaposition, and monomedial purity accumulated in a linear or cyclic arrangement, intermediality is strongly underpinned by the generic heterogeneity of media and mediation between them – an always-mediating relation between “subject and object, technical and symbolic, sensual and intelligible” (Herzogenrath 4). On the premise that “all media are mixed media” (Mitchell, “Visual Media” 260) in terms of sensory and symbolic elements, the approach of intermediality here ontologically considers every medium, a romantic lyric or a portraiture, not existing in isolation but in a Kantian sense, transcendently in relation to other mediums before the existence of its pure pattern. Similar to the perplexed notion of things-in-themselves that delineate a subjectively universal foundation of forms or categories named by pure reason pre-existing in human mental process, the idea of medium is viewed by intermediality as “relations-in-

¹⁷ On a more elaborate and clearer differentiation of these terms: interart studies and intermediality studies, see Bruhn, “Heteromediality” in Elleström, *Media Borders* 225-26; interart studies, studies of intermediality or intermedial studies, see Clüver 20-22, and his new article “From the ‘Mutual Illumination of the Arts’ to ‘Studies of Intermediality,’” *International Journal of Semiotics and Visual Rhetoric*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2019) 63-74; intermediality and mixed media (multimediality), see Schröter 19-20; intermediality, intertextuality, and interartuality, see Müller, “Intermediality Revisited: Some Reflections about Basic Principles of the *Axe de pertinence*” in Elleström, *Media Borders* 244-45; intermediality, inter-aesthetic research and interart studies, see Bruhn 13-14; intermediality, multimodality, and visual cultural studies, see Rippl, Introduction 16-21; intermediality, semiotics, and multimodality, see Hallet 605-07; textual visibility, readerly visualisation, and visual modes of writing, see Guido Isekenmeier, “Literary Visibility: Visibility – Visualisation – Description” in Rippl 328-32.

¹⁸ On the idea of “travelling concept” between language, science, and culture, see Bal, “Concept” 22-55.

between,” having been mixed from the outset.¹⁹ Media are thus deemed as “relational constellations” and “situational incidences” (Rippl, Introduction 17) rather than fixed or purified. On that account, it gives us the opportunity to range across the triangulated divide of society/technology/aesthetics, and in a formalist manner of defamiliarisation, allows for a mutually close reading and a plurality of meaning-making from the intermediate standpoint between varied means of communication.

The second motivation of intermediality, based on the essential impurity and hybridity of various artistic formations, is to dissolve and transgress the borders between the established disciplines and move beyond the underlying institutional restrictions. Its intermedial, interdisciplinary strategy contests the clearly separated monomediality or disciplinarity that should be the result of “purposeful[ly] and institutionally caused blockades, incisions, and mechanisms of exclusion” (Schröter 30). Despite the generic function of framings as scripts or schemata of certain expectations (Wolf, “Framings of Narrative” 127), frames or clear-cut borderlines in current disciplines and mediums act more like stereotypes, a constructed system of hierarchy that needs to be dissolved and abolished. Intermediality, following Marshall McLuhan’s dictum that all media appear as “extensions of man” (3) within a much wider mixed cultural life, works to solve the problem of word and image. The problem does not solely refer to “a matter of definitions of essences and separation of practices, but of how people communicate: with one another, with the past, with others” (Bal 169). The function of frame-breaking is to find the alternative frame – Werner Wolf’s dynamic “framing” (Introduction 10), or the metaleptic violation of the cognitive storage system where the conventional order of narrative becomes empowered. As an indispensable part of interdisciplinary enterprise, the study of intermediality provides a “democratic, dynamic and co-operative alternative to the old-fashioned, inward-looking and cliquish nature” (Moran 3) of subjects and artforms alike, thereby prompting us to reconsider concepts such as knowledge, authority, truth, and intersubjectivity of the dual identity of poet-painter. Not only does it deny the infrastructural departmentalisation of disciplinarity, but also cuts down the difference between self and other, subject and object, and formal analysis and historical discussion. We shall turn to transform the comparative approach, which views things as disparately attached in their pure forms, into the intermedial one, which deeply concerns the medial specificity and the productive relationship between them. From this intermedial lens, re-sourced and revived, we see borders as links.

¹⁹ See Kant’s transcendental idealism and aesthetics in his “Transcendental Aesthetic,” *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated and edited by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 153-92.

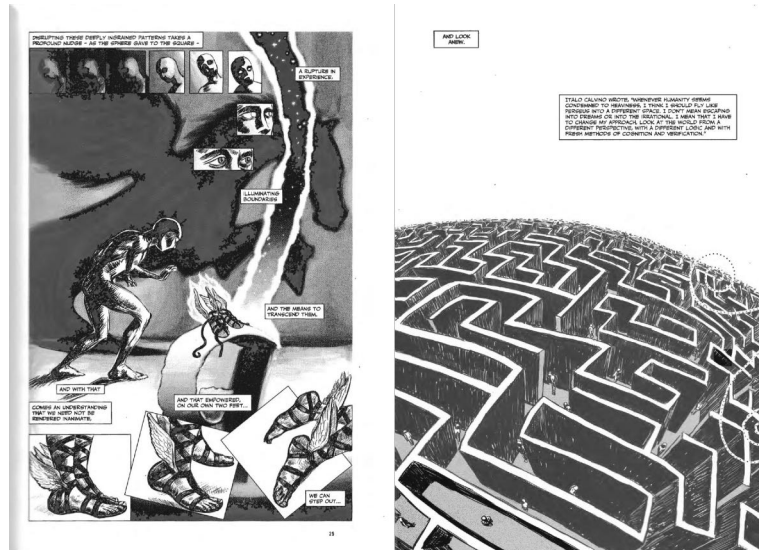


Fig. 1-5 Nick Sousanis, *Unflattening* (2015). Comics. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015, pp. 25-26.

In addition to the power of interconnecting and destabilising, intermediality encodes a perceptual and semiotic shift from an inflexible, enclosed mindset to what Spivak praises as transgressive reading: an interwoven, all-inclusive network wherein lies the potential for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding on the *poesis-pictura* interplay. It offers an open form and improvisatory discourse to look at the poet-painter artisthood out of the stereotypical formula. The epistemological expansion now requires a renewal and regeneration of the vantage point, a constantly negotiating viewpoint, and a stereoscopic vision composed of distinctive sources in an “unflattening” kingdom (fig. 1-5).²⁰ It is interesting to note this utopia of the “unflattening,” which means a “simultaneous engagement of multiple vantage points from which to engender new ways of seeing” (Sousanis 32). This “unflattening” perspective does not issue step-by-step instructions but serves “as an attitude – a means of orientation – a multidimensional compass, to help us find our way beyond the confines of ‘how it is,’ and seek out new ways of being in directions not only northwards and upwards, but outwards, inwards, and in dimensions not yet within our imagination” (46). Therefore, the last but principal role of intermediality can be defined as the poetics of unflattening that associates reading with seeing as an intermedial, multisensory process: the verbal is not just a linearly discrete arrangement of words, and the visual does not function merely as a static plane; as shown in the experimental artistries of modernist poet-painters later in this dissertation, word and image overlap, interpenetrate, and generate an open-up ecosystem. Intermediality is not concerned with the traditional duality of time and space but instead with the

²⁰ Nick Sousanis’ *Unflattening* in 2015, his doctoral dissertation in Education at Columbia University, is the first comics-styled dissertation inextricably linking academic discourse with graphic presentation to explore how the way people structure knowledge has constructed our ways of thinking. Acting against the flatness of linear viewpoint, his “unflattening” incorporates word and image as new forms of expression to generate a multiplicity of meaning from different vantage points.

double orientation and interactive cycle of the sequential and the simultaneous. They are different but inextricable mediums, modes of expression, and tools of thought, relaying an in-between mediation across the medial and disciplinary structure that stubbornly seeks for a solid “pattern of *one-dimensional thought*” (Marcuse 14).

As a theoretical rationale, the initial development of intermediality has been seen as a methodological expansion of intertextuality in late 1960s and the traditional interart studies from antiquity. Giving birth to intermediality, intertextuality at the outset was coined by Julia Kristeva to read a text as constructed from a mosaic of relations in a synthesis of Saussurean semiology and Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogism. The inclusiveness of the signifying process has been marked by a necessary “indebtedness to both” modalities (Kristeva 24), in order to interpret the poetic language both symbolically/literally and semiotically/pictorially. Precisely because this new paradigm conceives of the mutual “indebtedness” to inter-modalities/medialities as a precondition, the segregation of literature and other forms of art has come to an end, and the scholarship has even moved on beyond conventional interart (high art) in collaboration with mass media and popular culture (low art). We should be alert to the monomedial imperialism and hegemonic impulses of language or non-verbal artforms, echoing Lessing’s aesthetic politics of the contest for domination over different mediums and subjects, aiming to colonise and reduce the nativeness of the other. Instead of marginalising writing/printing or picture/visuality, or placing a single emphasis on one side, intermediality treats them not as two disjoint axes but as a constantly ongoing bilateral negotiation, from an exceptional point of view that stands in between.

As defined, intermediality *per se* concentrates not on substances but on the process or activities that take place in between, not only collaborative and productive, but also transgressive and deconstructive. The core of intermediality is the philosophical concept of in-between(ness,) or in its other names such as “betwixt-and-between” (Greenblatt, “Interart Movement” 15) and “between the between” (Herzogenrath 2). Etymologically, “inter-” as a prefix is derived from the word “intermediate,” whose Latin origin *intermedius* means being situated in the middle or between two things. As forementioned, “inter-” is an action that bridges and connects two separate domains. It does not restrict the object to categorised or specialised disciplines in its conventional code, but rather defies the monopolistic structure and explores indeterminacies when crossing over the borders. Transposition, combination, reference, and remediation are typical and preferable ways to describe the intermedial practices of two or more modes of configuration. They respectively but comparably elicit a transformative, evolutionary, referential, refashioning process from the substratum of sourced medium to the targeted as a new constitution (Rajewsky 52-53). Back to its semantic signification, the prefix of “inter-” exhibits an uncanny sense in its own

meaning: “inter-” differentiates, or more specifically, acknowledges the difference and pre-existing borderline in-between different parts; however, it also joins and offers a means of exchange and connection. With no established or reinforced frame, it overcomes the difference by “negating the negation” (Bennington 104) in a self-reflexively dialectical manner. This reshaping of an in-between identity and the blurring between verbal and visual signs will find more of its theoretical alignment in the realm of poststructuralism, where theorists give primacy to the signifier over the signified and “the dynamic productivity of language, the instability of meaning, and a break with conventional representational schemes of meaning” (Best and Kellner 21).

Roland Barthes never employed the term intermediality in public, but his evidently intermedial title of *Image-Music-Text* does reveal a strong sense of expanding the scope of intertextuality from the literary arena to the imaginal and musical, deciphering literary works and paintings along with photographs, musical compositions, posters, advertisements, television programmes, comics, and films, and so on. Under consideration within a general study of culture, they can all be seen as an off-centred “intertext” circulating in between or a capitalised “Text” without closure (Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* 36; *The Responsibility of Forms* 153).²¹ This media-oriented interdisciplinarity, for Barthes, happens when “the solidarity of the old disciplines breaks down – perhaps even violently, via the jolts of fashion – in the interests of a new object and a new language neither of which has a place in the field of the sciences that were brought peacefully together, this unease in classification being precisely the point from which it is possible to diagnose a certain mutation” (*Image* 155). He points out that these disciplines or mediums cannot be isolated in their phenomenal existence; they can only be connected in a multiple, dialectical way without any determination of one class. His deliberate neutrality towards different branches of knowledge is beneficial for grasping his new informational totality of word and image, which was either historically separated (reaching the climax with Lessing’s binarism) or (from the standpoint of structuralism) tended to homogenise the visible into a totalitarian semiotic system of language.²² Through discussing the case of a photograph and its photographic message in the twentieth century, Barthes works out a significant reversal between denotation/representation and connotation/figuration: images no longer illustrate the text, and instead, words come to realise the picture. “Formerly, there was reduction from text to image; today, there is amplification from the one to the other” (Barthes, *Image* 26).

²¹ For more about Barthes’ theories of text, intertext, and the capitalised “Text,” see chapters in his *Image-Music-Text*, “The Death of the Author” 142-48 and “From Work to Text” 155-64; “Intertext” in *The Pleasure of the Text* 35-36; “Masson’s Semiography” in *The Responsibility of Forms* 153-56.

²² On the struggle between the linguistic and the pictorial for a unified system of semiology as a science of signs, see Barthes’ ethical and ideological concern in the essay “Is Painting a Language?” collected in *The Responsibility of Forms* 149-52.



Fig. 1-6 André Masson, *In Pursuit of Hatchings and Germinations* (1967). Oil and sand on canvas, 100 by 149.9 cm. Mobilier National, Paris.

Exemplified in André Masson's mid-1950s composite artistry (fig. 1-6) of his Surrealist painting and Chinese ideogram, especially with regard to the philosophy of Zen Buddhism, Barthes makes a sample of how to do an intermedial analysis. He speaks highly of the hybrid form he terms "semiography," intertextually circulating between both Texts of word and image. This circulation of varied artistic mediums, indeed, constitutes the distinctive characteristic of the twentieth-century aesthetic modernism:

[I]t proof that it is the *circulation* of the "arts" (or elsewhere: of the sciences) which produced movement: "painting" here opens the way to "literature," for it seems to have postulated a new object ahead of itself, the Text, which decisively invalidates the separation of the "arts." (Barthes, *Responsibility* 153)

Under this circumstance, Masson's calligraphical forms of art encourage us to realise the intermedial relatedness and cross-fertilisation of writing and drawing:

Masson's work during this period demonstrates that the identity of written and painted features is not contingent, marginal, baroque (obvious only in calligraphy – a practice, moreover, virtually unknown to our civilisation), but somehow persisted in, obsessive, including both the origin and the perpetual present of any *drawn line*: there is a unique practice, extensive to any functionalisation, which is that of an undifferentiated "graphism." (154)

The visual and the verbal represent two distinct instruments of culture, technology, aesthetics, enabling us to understand our history and social infrastructures as fundamental to human existence. Their reciprocal relationship explores a utopian union of "imagetext" as undermining forces against the existing departmentalisation and the hegemony of logocentrism. It is via the communication between these two epistemological modes, disparate but co-operative, that a multiplicity of reading-viewing is achieved and an inclusively cultural space – instead of the narrow

ownership on one's own – which is open, unlimited, without hierarchy or partition, comes into being. From Barthes' Text and textuality to media and mediation, Masson's typical "true intertextuality" (*Responsibility* 153) would be better renamed as intermediality in an media-driven epoch.



Fig. 1-7 Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas* (1656). Oil on canvas, 318 by 276 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

The intermedial relation of language to picture, as Michel Foucault states in *The Order of Things*, is "an infinite relation" (10) with its latent illumination of the clash between discursivity and visibility. "It is not that words are imperfect, or that, when confronted by the visible, they prove insuperably inadequate. Neither can be reduced to the other's terms: it is in vain that we say what we see; what we see never resides in what we say" (10). Contesting the reducibility of the pictorial to the textual, Foucault recognises the heterogeneous nature of seeing and saying as key points of difference. On a basis of these different productive spaces between the visible (seeable) and the discursive (sayable), the in-between distance or process of differentiation and interconnection transcends the old power dynamics of discourse and vision and searches for a new formulation of representation. This medial distance could be "read, appreciated, deciphered" (*Manet and the Object of Painting* 42) in the redoubling of graphic and discursive spaces. Accordingly, the generation of meaning and interpretative contingency derives from the heterotopian "space where one speaks to the space where one looks; in other words, to fold one over the other as though they were equivalents" (*Order* 10). Implying an intermedial viewpoint, the folding or intertwining of medial

spaces allows for a productive exchange in-between visual representation and verbal expression, vision and speech, and the seeable and the sayable. Analogous to Diego Velázquez’s *Las Meninas* (fig. 1-7) and Edouard Manet’s *Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (fig. 1-8), infinite relations or dynamics of conscientious change illustrate the new *episteme* for viewing the complex relationships among the artist (Manet, Velázquez and his artist-figure in painting), the subject-model (the waitress and King Philip IV’s family), the spectator (us), and the work of art (the mirrored image and the meta-panel therein).²³ Foucault’s archaeological study on the rift between text and image, content and form, and the invisible and the represented, escapes from narrow separatism or false universalism and asks for new emancipatory possibilities of the scopic regime of modernity. Instead of a fixed gaze on one side, the flexible, ever-changing point of view constitutes an alternative to the established position and foundation of resemblance for realistic or empirical representations. Its reciprocal visibility from every side embraces a “whole complex network of uncertainties, exchanges, and feints” (*Order* 5), where there appears to be an intersection between the plastic and the linguistic. The intermedial *episteme* thus replaces the image/text subordination in the tradition of Western art with the relational infinity in a “midst of this dispersion” (18) – spreading out the frame of canvas and crossing the law of genre.



Fig. 1-8 Edouard Manet, *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882). Oil on canvas, 96 by 130 cm. Courtauld Gallery, London.

The idea of dispersion echoes with Jacques Derrida’s *différance*, which subverts the *paragonal* hierarchy between poetry (the written) and painting (the graphic) through his disbelief in the

²³ On Foucault’s elaborate analysis of these two unorthodox, innovational paintings, see “The Place of the Viewer” in *Manet and the Object of Painting* 73-79 and “Las Meninas” in *Order of Things* 3-18.

predominant phonologism and logocentric stance prioritising the trace of the signifier, the visible sign over the verbal discourse, in a deconstructive effect of dissemination. As demonstrated in Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, the temporospatial concept of *différance* designates the ontotheological production of both "differing/deferring" during the development of space/time (23); its lexical attention shifts from the certain identity of the Saussurean signified, the authentic presence of speech praised in Plato's *Phaedrus*, to the materiality of the signifier or visible trace of writing.²⁴ In an intermedial fashion, the production of meaning and signification through this trace constitutes a refusal to accept any imposed structural constraints and, similarly to Foucault's power/knowledge relation, foregrounds an open and never-ending process of infinite play of signifiers. Moreover, in his deconstructive reading of *Phaedrus*, Derrida resorts to the ambivalence and transmutation of *pharmakon* from a drug to a remedy, a poison to a cure, with an essence that lies in "having no stable essence, no 'proper' characteristics, it is not, in any sense (metaphysical, physical, chemical, alchemical) of the word, a *substance* [but] rather the prior medium in which differentiation in general is produced" (*Dissemination* 125-26). The complicity of its ambivalent virtues as a movement makes crossed connection in-between the historically oppositional concepts that prescribe and supply the separated regions. Derrida's *pharmakon* is comparable to the notion of intermediality because it also:

[...] constitutes the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes one side cross over into the other (soul/body, good/evil, inside/outside, memory/forgetfulness, speech/writing, [and time/space, poetry/painting, textual/visual in our case]). It is on the basis of this play or movement that the opposites or differences are stopped by Plato. The *pharmakon* is the movement, the locus, and the play: (the production of) difference. It is the difference of difference. It holds in reserve, in its undecided shadow and vigil, the opposites and the differends that the process of discrimination will come to carve out. Contradictions and pairs of opposites are lifted from the bottom of the diacritical, differing, deferring, reserve. (127)

Decentralising the phonocentric model of language and its binary oppositions, *pharmakon* or *différance* as a pure form of trace presents a productive play of any sensible plenitude, allowing the articulation of different modes of sign or medium – phonic, visual, or symbolic – "between two orders of expression" (*Grammatology* 62-63) and deconstructing the metaphysical/conceptual oppositions behind:

[I]t covers the motif of the law in general, of generation in the natural and symbolic senses, of birth in the natural and symbolic senses, of the generation difference, sexual difference between the feminine and masculine genre/gender, of the hymen [of inter-] between the two, of a relationless relation

²⁴ See more in Plato, *Phaedrus*, translated by Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 68-75; and a deconstructive reading by Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* 61-172.

between the two, of an identity and difference between the feminine and masculine. (*Acts of Literature* 243)

Without the dichotomy of nature and culture, all other binaries in the pre-existing phallogocentric system would fall apart and then reach to a negotiation of ontological intermediality. What Derrida emphasises in his reading of deconstruction is indebted to the intermedial philosophy of in-betweenness, an incommensurable and disseminating relationship between the two polarised options. It focuses on the movement, locus, playfulness, process of differences, and mixed mediation of the traditional polarity. In this vein, the absence of authority and primacy of the Platonic spoken subject is effectively able to liberate the presence of multiple meaning in a supplementary chain of infinite *différance*, reserve, and *pharmakon*.

Influencing and influenced by not only media theories and artistic practices but also continental philosophy, postcolonialist culture, feminism, and queer studies, the study of intermediality, in alliance with a poststructuralist tendency, addresses itself to questioning and reformulating the pivotal claims of the twentieth century, e.g., hybridity, relation, alterity, interval, multiplicity, difference, displacement, and the temporospatial. Barthes' inter-Text, Foucault's *episteme*, and Derrida's *différance* all conceptualise a dynamic of relations and a productive process of in-betweenness. The epistemological and political character, by investigating specific mediums and their mediation, brings fresh blood to the project of intermediality and helps to offer new ways of "contesting the diremptions of modernity – that is, the institution of the autonomous domains of arts, politics and science" and "by rejecting the totalising mediation as well as the lures of immediacy and particularism [...] to provide an alternative both to the unification promised in different ways by dialectical systems (the legacy of Hegelianism and orthodox Marxism) or the grand narratives of modernity (of which the Habermasian theory of communicative action is only one instance)" (Oosterling and Ziarek 1). To summarise in short, the theory of intermediality provides an alternative to universalism, radicalism, grand narrative, isolation, and fixed identity by enabling us to stand from the position of in-between, transcend a limited point of view, cross the boundaries of stereotyped sections, decentre long-established authorities, link disconnected fragmentation, search for revolutionary potential, and, at its ultimate end, reinforce a dynamic, fluid, and highly interactive identity.

Modernist Dialogic Collaboration

In his foreword to "The Interart Movement", Stephen Greenblatt reiterates his belief in interdisciplinary thought and the new interart poetics spanning across various mediums. According

to him, these “collaborative enterprises,” particularly the convergence of different artistic forms and disciplines in the twentieth century, have registered an “innovative conversation” towards the creation of a new system or identity, embodying “the temporary, the hybrid, the betwixt-and-between that is exactly right for this fluid moment” (15). The notion of “fluid moment,” also referred to as the “interart movement” in its heading, aligns closely with Werner Wolf’s “visual turn” – with manifold references to visual art (“Intermediality” 256) – and W. J. T. Mitchell’s “pictorial turn” which is:

[...] not a return to naïve mimesis, copy or correspondence theories of representation, or a renewed metaphysics of pictorial “presence”: it is rather a postlinguistic, postsemiotic rediscovery of the picture as a complex interplay between visibility, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies, and figurality. It is the realisation that *spectatorship* (the look, the gaze, the glance, the practices of observation, surveillance, and visual pleasure) may be as deep a problem as various forms of *reading* (decipherment, decoding, interpretation, etc.) and that visual experience or “visual literacy” might not be fully explicable on the model of textuality. (*Picture Theory* 16)

As a result of this “renewed metaphysics of pictorial ‘presence,’” our modernist culture has undergone a significant transformation, largely characterised by an alternative image-text framework of picture and discourse, visibility and textuality, and spectatorship and reading. Owing much to “the visual and other arts” (16) as stated in Richard Lehan’s *Literary Modernism and Beyond: The Extended Vision and the Realms of the Text* (2012), modernist literature and visual art appeal to a paradigm and a fresh worldview through which people observe, contemplate, and experience the artworks and their represented reality. This shift is fundamentally transgressive, in Erwin Panofsky’s terms, as it moves from analysing “iconography” (the study of icons) to interpreting “iconology” (the study of symbols), transitioning from the natural to the symbolic, from rhetoric and stylistic observations to deeper visible and material resources of *physio-socio milieu* in an intermedial way (40).

The visual and pictorial turn signifies an age of plural mediums, where its culture is encapsulated and represented through the power of images and the act of looking. These concepts, i.e., the fluid moment, interart movement, and the modernist turn of visibility/pictoriality, are designed to describe the dynamic interaction between word and image, the materiality of language and the texture of picture, and the static and the movable. The early twentieth century is immersed in an incessant deluge or “an unending rainfall of images” (Calvino 57) and literary modernism itself is “paradoxically, a visual culture” (Beasley 4) in an intermedial sense. Genres become blurred, different discourses or expressions intertwine, various mediums combine and interact in experimentally complex fashions. This visual/pictorial turn thus represents a diffusion and reconfiguration of objects, modes of perception, and diverse forms of representation, persisting

and coexisting within the context of intermedial modernisation. It manifests the symptoms of that era, as described by Jonathan Crary in *Techniques of the Observer* (1992), where visual technologies have shaped the techniques of observation, merging “abstract visual and linguistic elements [that] are consumed, circulated, and exchanged globally” (2). Through the experiential eye, everything appears to be controlled by the perceived and influenced by revolutionary concepts of space and visualisation.

The lesson we can derive from this visual turn is a modernist reorientation that shifts the paradigmatic hierarchy from the oral tradition and its linguistic determinism to a model centred around the material and the visible. Image and the graphic signifier of language becomes another form of the “exchange value of things, operating primarily at the perceptual and cognitive level” (Mitchell, *Image Science* 31) of sociocultural and artistic phenomena. From a marginalised position to the theoretical centre, the intermedial approach of visual culture challenges the domination of discourse or logocentrism, which traditionally viewed language as the sole means of expressing the external physicality within Western ideology. As a provocative reaction, it raises a broad range of new questions regarding the interplay of word and image, the problematic of verbal and visual representation, the tension between pictorial literariness and literary pictorialism, the systematic contrast and comparison between reading and spectatorship, and sociocultural and philosophical speculations that arise from these inquiries. The pictorial turn, as articulated by Mitchell, is not meant to provide a definitive “answer to anything. It is merely a way of stating the question” (*Picture Theory* 24). For instance, under intermedial considerations, how does the iconic sign (picture) function differently from the verbal one (language)? How does this new turn, in its mixed artforms, connects optical and acoustic messages to transform previously oral and literal tradition as a part of modernist visual culture? In their intermedial experiments like Mina Loy’s ekphrasis or E. E. Cummings’ concrete poetry, what painterly techniques are employed to expand the confined realm of textuality into one of perceptual and tangible mediation beyond its syntactic and denotative content? Particularly at that historical moment, the cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism of the global context, amplified by image production, have alerted to us the presence of latent questions that have persisted for an extended period.

The early twentieth century witnessed a confluence of different mediums and artforms, leading to an intermedial condition as the substrate of modernism. As one of its formalist aesthetics, modernist intermediality emerged as a prominent feature at this turn of picturality or visibility, characterised by dynamic interactions between literary and artistic spheres. In *The Art of Twentieth-Century American Poetry* (2006), Charles Altieri claims that modernist artists began to find new sources from an unfamiliar territory and “as artificer managed to match the resources of

language to these opportunities for new experiences [and] new tastes” (6). The cultural iconoclasm of their dissenting practices targeted at conformist aesthetics, industrialisation, and complacent bourgeoisie. Jesse Matz’s work on the first modernist intermedial exchange, *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics* (2003), highlights the early manifestations of this sociocultural transformation in their radically new “forms of thought and the content of the world” (11). Beginning with Imagism and following the trajectory of Naturalism, modernism in the early 1900s cannot be reduced to a mere act of pictorialising or visualising of everything. Instead, it deeply engages in a painterly treatment of poetic objects, deploying the spatial, technological, structural, material, synchronic, and architectural modalities or medialities to read a poem, understand a canvas, and perceive the surrounding world.²⁵ Avant-garde movements such as Decadence, Symbolism, Abstract Expressionism, Vorticism in literature, as well as Post-Impressionism, Futurism, Dada, Fauvism, Cubism, and Surrealism in visual art, all originated within a specific discipline but soon transformed and even collaborated with one another. Examples include Gertrude Stein’s *Three Lives* (1909) in response to Paul Cézanne’s *Madame Cézanne in a Red Armchair*, William Carlos Williams’ poem “The Great Figure” inspiring Charles Demuth’s painting *I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold* (fig. 1-9), Ezra Pound’s Canto pages reminiscent of Marcel Duchamp’s readymade, Wallace Stevens’ “The Man with the Blue Guitar” influenced by Pablo Picasso’s *The Old Guitarist* (fig. 1-10), and W. H. Auden’s ekphrastic reference to Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique.²⁶ Understanding poetic modernism without a “rudimentary knowledge of modern art” (MacLeod 194) is nearly impossible, as modernist poets often pattern their literary experiments after the manners and styles of artistic movements. As a further step in the artishood of poet-painter, the synthesis of their verbal and visual modes of expressions into a whole through innovative forms and artistries signifies a collaborative poetics of intermediality, which makes expansive rather than “reductive claims of influence or of mutual support” (MacGowan 269).²⁷ This medial divergence from orthodox dogmas within one field can be likened to a flock of “singing birds” (Auden 178) celebrating the visionary evocation of dynamic aesthetics of intermedial modernism.

²⁵ See Joseph Frank, “Spatial Form in Modern Literature,” in *The Idea of Spatial Form* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991) 31-66; Mitchell, “Spatial Form in Literature: Toward a General Theory,” *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 6, no. 3 (1980) 539-67.

²⁶ On the symbiotic relationship between their verbal and visual representations in modernist literature and art, particularly between poetry and painting, see Elizabeth Bergmann Louiseaux, Wendy Steiner, *Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance: The Literary Portraiture of Gertrude Stein* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978); Reed Way Dasenbrock, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis: Towards the Condition of Painting* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); Bram Dijkstra, *The Hieroglyphics of a New Speech: Cubism, Stieglitz and the Early Poetry of William Carlos Williams* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969); Glen MacLeod, *Wallace Stevens and Modern Art: From the Armory Show to Abstract Expressionism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993); John G. Blair, *The Poetic Art of W. H. Auden* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965).

²⁷ On their fruitful parallels, see MacGowan, “Twentieth-Century American Poetry and Other Arts” 269-75.



Fig. 1-9 Charles Demuth, *I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold* (1928). Oil on paperboard, 90.2 by 76.2 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Fig. 1-10 Pablo Picasso, *The Old Guitarist* (1903-1904). Oil on panel, 122.9 by 82.6 cm. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.

Loy and Cummings, high profile artists active in the Anglo-American avant-garde movements and the expatriate scene in postwar Europe, serve as my case studies for exploring the artisthood of poet-painter within the context of intermedial, transcultural modernism. They possess a keen awareness of the tension and potential cross-fertilisation between the textual and the non-textual, as well as the local and the non-local.²⁸ Both had a deep familiarity with the visual culture surrounding them: Loy studied art in a Parisian college and later developed an interest in fashion design, while Cummings, a self-taught painter, gained early recognition through a series of art exhibitions in New York.²⁹ Besides, they were broadly involved with international avant-gardes, e.g., Loy associated with Italian Futurism and New York Dada, and Cummings with Fauvism and Cubism mainly around Paris, overlapping from time to time. Taking these “new plate tectonics of culture [as] temporary refuge” (T. Miller, *Late Modernism* 6), they could generate radical and experimental artforms that disrupt and reconfigure an intermedial narrative of their artisthood. Loy’s first published work, “Aphorism on Futurism,” appeared in Alfred Stieglitz’s *Camera Work* in 1914. In this typographically Futuristic piece, she vehemently proclaims the “language of the Future” (*L&LB* 152) and designs it for profound social changes, expressing her political arguments through an inflammatory and assertive tone:

BUT the Future is only dark from outside.
Leap into it – and it EXPLODES with *Light*.

FORGET that you live in houses, that you may live in yourself – (149)

Similar to the dynamic sensation of movement depicted in Umberto Boccioni’s *Dynamism of a Cyclist* (fig. 1-11), Loy’s experimental use of irregular capitalisation in words like “EXPLODES” and “FORGET,” italicised terms like “*Leap*” and “*Light*,” and boldface typography challenges traditional textual materials limited in a homogenic, monomedial sense. Her creative incorporation of visible elements on the page, akin to Boccioni’s force lines, curves, and vibrant colours, seeks to invigorate the linear way of reading and experiencing modern artworks and the surrounding world. Furthermore, Cummings amplifies this provocative unconventionality through his randomly arranged spaces, fragmented alphabets, and distorted syntax. Drawing inspiration from Cubist paintings like Jean Metzinger’s *La Femme au Cheval* (fig. 1-12), with its manifold surfaces, the poet employs poetic diction and structure to present multiple perspectives of the subject simultaneously. In his poem “i will be” (notably using unusual lowercase for the first-

²⁸ On this multidirectional process of cultural exchanges, see Sarah Wilson, *Melting-Pot Modernism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

²⁹ About their artistic journeys, see Carolyn Burke, *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy*; Susan Cheever, *E. E. Cummings: A Life*.

person singular pronoun), published in *e* [AND] in 1925, Cummings showcases his intermedial strategies that defy a conventional textual or linear form and its lineation of organising word and non-word:

from Hideous trees or
 Maybe Mandolins l oo k-
 pigeons fly ingand

 whee(:are,SpRiN,k,LiNg an in-stant with sunLight
 then)|-
 ing all go BlacK wh-eel-ing

 oh
 ver
 mYveRyLitTle

 street (CP 34)

By means of intentional spacing, scattered arrangement of letters, and inclusion of punctuation marks as visible symbols, Cummings creates an unconventional poetic landscape for our reading and viewing at the same time. His intermedial acrobatics embraces a sense of simultaneity between the static (“Hideous trees or / Maybe Mandolins”) and the movable (“pigeons”). His linguistic signs with a parenthetical movement act like a flock of pigeons in motion, flying (“fly ing”) and wheeling (“wh-eel-ing”), resemble black waterdrops sparking (“SpRiN,k,LiNg”) under the sudden sunlight on a Manhattan Street.

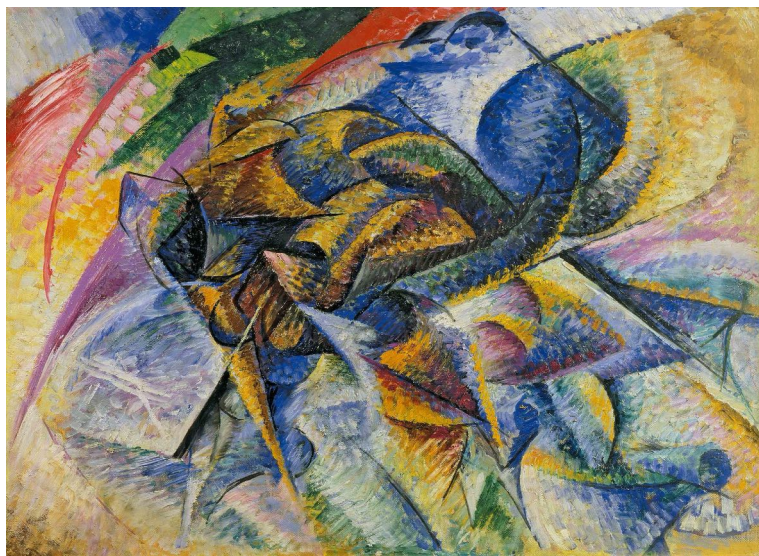


Fig. 1-11 Umberto Boccioni, *Dynamism of a Cyclist* (1913). Oil on canvas, 70 by 95 cm. Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice.



Fig. 1-12 Jean Metzinger, *La Femme au Cheval* (1911-12). Oil on canvas, 162 by 130.5 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.

Modernist intermediality towards a visual presentation of verbal works vary from technical or aesthetic concerns, social or political controls, especially to the avant-garde agendas of evolution, subversion, and reconstruction. Aesthetic modernity emerges within the “new avant-garde modernist movements and bohemian subcultures” which “rebelled against the alienating aspects of industrialisation and rationalisation, while seeking to transform culture and to find creative self-realisation in art” (Best and Kellner 2). The twentieth century was marked by both a crisis of the *fin-de-siècle* and an apocalypse of human civilisation, alongside groundbreaking advancements in sciences, e.g., relativity theory in physics and vitalism in biology, and powerful ideas and terminologies from psychology, anthropology, and other disciplines that aimed to comprehend the profound changes of the interdisciplinarily modernised era. While bemoaning the decline of the world, modernism fosters a sense of renewed energy and optimism born out of the remnants of the previous century. It brought about a set of methodologies and worldviews to shift our perception and cognition away from the “scopic regime of Cartesian perspectivism” (Sanchez 29) and its long-dominated binary of body and mind – the visible and the discursive.³⁰ Tyrus Miller pays attention to modernism’s “integral, interdisciplinary, and intermedial ‘compositions’” as a sublation of formal re-creation and destruction of generic or medial homogeneity, to “dynamically

³⁰ On the notional development of vision and its “scopic regime” from the past to the present, see Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of Berkeley Press, 1993).

embody the contradictory and conflictual relations between those people, materials, and contexts shaping their genesis” (*Singular Examples* 3) as its artistic politics. To achieve this, the ideology of intermedial modernism should create:

[...] something of a vanishing point for the perspective lines projected by works in several different artistic fields, as well as by the political and critical discourses current in the late 1920s and 1930s and by diverse popular tendencies of the day. Careful reading of these works, together with the reconstruction of their context, shows the tacit dialogue they conducted with the other arts. It reveals how they sought to bind the restless, disturbing collective energies of [different mediums and artforms]; and it exposes to critical view the stigmata where mass politics and urban life left their forceful signatures. (T. Miller, *Late Modernism* 6)

Intermedial modernism precisely highlights this ideal of “tactic dialogue” and “collective energies” of various arts and mediums, and resorts to the identification with perceivability and the palpable apparitionality as a new aesthetic exigency. The modernist understanding of image-text relation moves beyond the debate on one’s supremacy over the other and recognises it as a dynamically intermedial exchange in-between artists both from literary and artistic spheres. We shall then explore how this modernist intermediality, akin to a “relay race” (132) within the fields of cultural production in Pierre Bourdieu’s metaphor, challenges long-lasting *paragone* and its dualistic ideologies such as Cartesian mind/body dichotomy, Kantian time/space division, and Lessing’s categorisation of literature as a time-based genre and art as a static one.³¹ Modernist formal experiments with the interaction of word and its tactile embodiments on the printed page are also distinguished from “earlier efforts by the concurrent rise in discourses surrounding bodily measurement, classification, and normatisation” (Sanchez 26). The collaboration between poetry and painting, the sayable and the seeable, and composite verbal-visual artefacts they create are intrinsic to the rejuvenating experience of intermedial modernism. Its collaborative spirit embraces the visuality of text and the verballity of image based on avant-garde experimentalism, offering new visions of modernity and alternative perspectives on beauty, representation, and ideology.

The twentieth-century tendency towards the intermedial condition constitutes an interaction or re-unification given that the era of specialising and classification lost its huge influence it held before. In a Hegelian spirit of dialectics, modernist intermediality could be understood as a synthesis unifying classical parallelism and its oppositional binarism, the positive concept of comparison as thesis and its negation of contrast as antithesis. The essence of intermediality, again, does not lie in a simple combination of the pre-existing formulations but

³¹ As Matei Calinescu states that genuine modernism is “not *historically* but only *aesthetically* forward” (84), its anti-traditionalism and worship of novelty relinquish the faith in history or in chronologically-ordered time, and turn to spatial extension and intensification an autonomous form. See Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987).

works as a more flexible and dialectical process in-between historically paralleled or separated domains. Its sublation of division and boundaries, as a utopian proposition, concretises the Marxist ideal in order to overcome the distribution of labour force and its specialisation into rigid statuses in a classless society.³² In this light, intermedial reconstructions critique the convention of treating an artwork derogatively, as a pure single good in the circulation of global capitalism, and spur it to break free from the authority of alienation and homogenisation caused by the rituals of a bourgeois society. The subversive relationship of image-text is the negotiation or reconciliation of the other, the opposite self, between “alternative channels of sensory awareness and expression, between alternative modes of symbolisation [and] from the iconoclast’s suspicion of his own weakness before the temptation of idolatry” (Gilman 23). Contrary to the “incompetence or miscommunication between writer and artist” (23), it is one who penetrates not only its whole being but also the heart of another dominion, transforming from the subjective self to the objective other and realising oneself through the accommodation and re-inhabitation of other. Intermediality, on a dialectical and dialogic basis, does not assume an actual juxtaposition of literary pictorialism or pictorial literariness, charging its partner with unspeakable or invisible deficiencies of dissonance; it instead brings mediating and communicating into specific attention, which encode the collaboration between modernist poet and painter within a few lines of page or on a strip of canvas with reciprocities, tensions, and iconoclastic powers of intermedial aesthetics.

René Wellek’s essay “Literature and the Other Arts” (1956) anticipates the nature and scholarly significance of intermediality by emphasising the analysis of actual objects and their structural relationships in an intermedial way. He argues for a complex “scheme of dialectical relationships which work both ways, from one at to another and vice versa, and many be completely transformed within the art which they have entered” (Wellek 134). By contrast with inspiration, description, source, and effect:

It is not a simple affair of a “time spirit” determining and permeating each and every art. We must conceive of the sum total of man’s cultural activities as of a whole system of self-evolving series, each having its own set of norms which are not necessarily identical with those of the neighbouring series [...] Thus poetry today needs a new poetics, a technique of analysis which cannot be arrived at by a simple transfer or adaptation of terms from the fine arts [but] will take the form of an intricate pattern of coincidences and divergences rather than parallel lines. (134-35)

As discussed by Wellek, the “dialectical relationships” – like the aforementioned philosophy of in-between(ness) – not only suggest the historical conflicts between word and image, either

³² For more on the political implications of intermediality, peculiarly from the perspective of Marxism, see Jen Schröter, “The Politics of Intermediality,” *Film and Media Studies*, vol. 2 (2010) 107-24; Higgins, “Intermedia” 21-31; Dieter Borchmeyer, *Richard Wagner: Theory and Theatre*, translated by Stewart Spencer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) – mainly discussing Wagner’s politically programmatic essay on aesthetics titled “Art and Revolution.”

compatible or differentiated, fusional or separative, but also point to a close affinity superimposed on parallels and analogies. It intends to explore intermedial elements of an artistic unity, which could bring about synthetic fibres of meaning interpenetrative to every strand of their life as a cohabitating couple. Ulrich Weisstein further expands on the categories of image-text cohabitation as a result of this “intermedial lineage” (“Literature and the Visual Arts” 259): literary descriptions or interpretations of an artwork, e.g., iconic poetry or ekphrasis; the literal constitution of objects or motifs; the reproduction of senses (synaesthesia), styles, and techniques; the thematisation of artists as fictional figures; intellectual history (*Geistesgeschichte*) or periodisation of interart; symbiotic genres, e.g., comics or graphic novel; book illustrations, among others.³³ In the context of this research project, the intermedial artishood of poet-painters (like Loy and Cummings) who engage in both writing and drawing simultaneously has often been overlooked in critical discussions of the interconnectedness of verbal-visual formations. The dual identity and its modernist experimentations will serve as a key focus in this study, shedding light on their (inter-)artistic processes and the interplay between word and image in their artworks.

The poet and painter, or as Roman Jakobson calls “poet-painters” represented by William Blake, Henri Rousseau, and Paul Klee, self-consciously and self-reflexively recognise the symbiosis between language and vision with a “remarkable analogy between the role of grammar in poetry and a painter’s composition based on a latent or patent geometrical order or on a revulsion against geometrical arrangements” (“Poetry of Grammar” 84).³⁴ Based on poetry’s extramural exchange with nonpoetry, this intermedial dynamism and multiform intricacy of the grammatical and the plastic underscore a tension between verbal art and pictorial narrative. According to Jakobson, the “dialectic of [inter-]artistic markedness” allows poet-painters to deploy a harmonious disposition of concurrent devices and schemes, drawing depth and monumentality from each other’s field, with no opposing binaries but only “correlations of dynamic and static, of bright and deep, of intensive and extensive, of grammatical and geometrical concepts, and, finally, of rule and overruling” (“On the Verbal Art” 22). Their professional co-existence foregrounds the potential for an interlocution between the poetical and the painterly, enabling them to address stylistic, technological, and creative impulses. This intermedial dialogue is not about imitative models or emotive expressions, but rather comes out as a conversation that transcends authorial debates or judgements. It should be deemed as a double capture between two realms, without assimilating or

³³ Also see Hans Lund, “The Picture in the Poem – a Theoretical Discussion” in *Text as Picture: Studies in the Literary Transformation of Pictures*, translated by Kacke Götrick (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992) 5-62; Mary Gaither, “Literature and the Arts” in *Comparative Literature: Method and Perspective*, edited by Newton P. Stallknecht and Horst Frenz (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961) 153-70.

³⁴ On the poet-painter artishood of William Blake and his composite artistry, see Bowen Wang, “Word-Image Intertwining: William Blake’s Illuminated Poetry and the Aesthetics of Compositeness,” *Journal of Literature and Art Studies*, vol. 11, no. 6 (2021) 375-87.

creating binary machines. The dialogue or dialectics of intermediality operates as a dual becoming, a non-parallel evolution, a productive bloc, and an assembly of enunciation with multipliable possibilities. In *Modernist Patterns in Literature and the Visual Arts* (2000), Murray Roston explains that such doubling or “split consciousness of the self,” is an important aspect of “modernist pluralism, the individual no longer able to appraise life from a single authoritative standpoint [but] into a second figure, into an alternative vantage point” (36).³⁵ To find this “alternative vantage point,” modernist collaboration is indicative of a common ground for interart, cross-genre experimentations, tracing paths that encompass not only one’s own domain but also that of the other.³⁶ It involves beneficial contracts with previously unrelated communities and an ontological shift from the present to the absent, from the verisimilitude of figuration to an intensification of abstraction, and from expertise in the given frame to a transdisciplinary – even de-disciplinary – diversion.

It is the philosophy of in-betweenness inherent in intermediality that activates this dialogic collaboration. The poet-painter artisthood is construed as a process or mediation, representing a conversation between the verbal and visual modes of expression, or more precisely, between their poetical and painterly selves. Jahan Ramazani, in *Poetry and Its Others: News, Prayer, Song, and the Dialogue of Genres* (2014), defines the “dialogic poetics” as a complex interaction between poetry and other discourses or representations that are constituted both “intragenerically and intergenerically” (Ramazani 8-9). It reconsiders the poetic art as an unfolding of “dynamic give-and-take with other genres, its butting up against and assimilation of various codified uses of language, its reversals and co-optations of multiple discursive forms” (9). Approaching poetry as a heterogenous and ever-changing dynamic from an intermedial perspective, therefore, frees us from a conventional literalist interpretation, through which the message contained within the poem is deciphered as a homogenised entity. Instead, “Modernism’s Collaborative Poetics” here draws attention to the communicative dynamics and collaborative scene of modernism at play, by reading and seeing with both “an eye and ear to their interactions with other genres and media” (Runchman and Walker 2). The idea of dialogue and exchange as dynamic sites of complex signification originates from Bakhtinian dialogism. Discontented with the representational homogeneity of the realistic novel, Mikhail Bakhtin advocates for a plurality of independent connected voices, known as “polyphony” (18). This concept involves the “interaction of several consciousnesses [and a variety of media], none of which entirely becomes an object for the other”

³⁵ For more about the idea of double and doubling, see Michael Levenson, *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality: Character and Novelistic Form from Conrad to Woolf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Karl Miller, *Doubles: Studies in Literary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

³⁶ On the collaboration of authorship, see Jack Stillinger, *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of the Solitary Genius* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); M. Thomas Inge, “Collaboration and Concepts of Authorship,” *PMLA*, vol. 116, no. 3 (1989) 623-30.

(18). With intermedial voices, it constructs a multileveled world and disrupts the ordinary narrative with its monotonous tone. From the monologic/homophonic to the polyphonic, Bakhtin's dialogicality in a carnivalistic effect develops a dialogic, dialectical relation in-between different characters, forms, styles, genres, and mediums. The communicative agency, as fundamental to intermedial modernism, is inscribed by the collaborative poetics of modernist dialogue – both outward and internal – leading to a conceptual and technical transformation characterised by collectiveness, inclusion, and plurality.³⁷

Based on this framework, the dialogue or conversation occurring between the poet and the painter (or between the poetical and painterly psyches of poet-painters) is considered an important and fruitful source for reflecting on and enhancing the medial-oriented appreciation of various artforms – through a focused exploration of another medium and its specific modalities. As Marjorie Perloff states in *Unoriginal Genius: Poetry by Other Means in the New Century* (2010), the reader-viewer is encouraged to engage in the “dialogue [not only intertextually] with earlier texts [but also intermedially with] texts in other media” (11).³⁸ In a dialogue, we have the opportunity to hear voices from different sides, which, through the notion of intermediality and its in-between position, adds an overtone of mutual respect, reciprocal coexistence, and ethical seriousness. In *Confabulations* (2016) about language and art, John Berger, himself as a poet-painter, refers to his creative proceeding of drawings and reflective notes as a “confabulation” (7) where mediums are exchanged, formal hierarchies are rejected, and a collective voice of shared experience is provoked across different artforms (fig. 1-13). Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet provide a more abstruse explanation of this conceptual confabulation in their *Dialogues II* (2007), which is “the encounter, the becoming, the theft and the nuptials, this ‘between-two’ of solitudes” (9). For Deleuze and Parnet, the intermedial dialogue does not simply change terms or norms; it opens for a mingling and exchange that occurs in multidirectional ways, both from the inside and the outside. From this perspective, the poet, the painter, and the poet-painter no longer stand for individual authorial figures in the traditional sense, as proclaimed by the Barthesian declaration of the “dead” author, but rather a collective “production studio” or a collaborative “gang” – concurrently from both literary and nonliterary territories:

But what is good in a gang, in principle, is that each goes about his own business while encountering others, each brings in his loot and a becoming is sketched out – a bloc starts moving – which no longer belongs to anyone, but is ‘between’ everyone, like a little boat which children let slip and lose, and is

³⁷ On modernist communities as sites of collaboration, see Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

³⁸ In terms of medium, Marjorie Perloff keeps a differentiation of artistic mediums here from mass media. The former is within the discourse of art while the latter is out of mass culture in opposition to high modernist aesthetics. See Perloff, Preface, in *Radical Artifice: Writing Poetry in the Age of the Media* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) xi-xiv.

stolen by other [...] using it as a means of encounter, making a line or bloc shoot between two people, producing all the phenomena of a double capture, showing what the conjunction AND is, neither a union, nor a juxtaposition, but the birth of a stammering, the outline of a broken line which always sets off at right angles, a sort of active and creative line of flight? AND...AND...AND... (Deleuze and Parnet 9-10)

The intermedial encounter of the two, working as the prerequisite for dialogue, means to collect stories of experiencing, of picking up nuptials, and of generating a multitude of micro-politics. Drawing upon concepts such as Sigmund Freud’s “free association” and Jean-François Lyotard’s rule that one should “not judge, suspend judgement, give the same attention to everything that happens as it happens” (*Inhuman* 30), Deleuze’s theory of rhizome focuses on the rhizomatic interconnectedness of conversation. Instead of adhering to hierarchical power structures represented by a tree-like formation, the symbol of rhizome envisions conversation as a “broken line which shoots between two, proliferation, tentacles” to discover and innovate as opposed to regulating, judging, or systematising (Deleuze and Parnet 8+18).³⁹

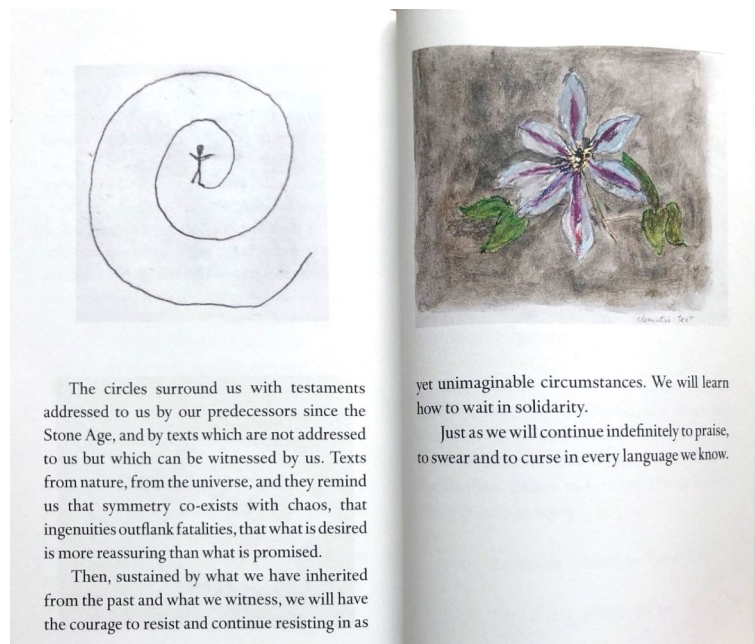


Fig. 1-13 John Berger. *Confabulations* (2016). Illustration. London: Penguin, 2016, pp. 142-43.

Miller’s or Perloff’s dialogues, Berger’s confabulations, and Deleuze and Parnet’s conversations delineate the significance and functioning of a collaborative, dialogic poetics taking place in-between literary and artistic creations. The modernist exchange of ideas and measures among interlocutors in this intermedial discussion between verbal and visual representation,

³⁹ On Deleuze’s rhizomatic philosophy, see his collaboration with Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

primarily between literature and other arts, extends beyond a mere technique or the transfer of effects between different mediums. It rather takes on diverse modes of dialoguing or communicating, which can be summed up in four main patterns. At the first level, we find *referential dialogue* (of *formal intermediality*), characterised by a one-sided and commentarial exchange from literary to artistic criticism, or vice versa. This pattern emphasises the formal autonomy and independence of each medium within its own field. However, it also acknowledges the potential for mutual support and learning from a non-professional area, as well as the utilisation of media and their material properties to explore new modes of creating. While modernist artists often work on introspective commentaries or reviews, their contemplations on other artforms seek to discover intermedial intimacies and compulsive energies of modernism, transgressing the generic or medial boundaries and the conventional rules that have governed rhetorical and figurative expressions for long. We can find this critical dialogue in Loy's essays on "Brancusi and the Ocean," "Gertrude Stein," and "William Carlos Williams," also in Cummings' "Gaston Lachaise," "T. S. Eliot," and "Jean Cocteau."⁴⁰

The second type is what I call *associative dialogue* (of *transformative intermediality*), which performs as an interpersonal collaboration between poets and painters. In this format, they are able to establish intermedial connections, both individually and collectively, bridging the separated artistic spheres through a series of transmutations. Modernists tend to organise or patronise salons, galleries, cafés, art colonies and little magazines, serving as an intermedial, transcultural platform for fostering friendships and expanding artistic network. For instance, Loy in Constantin Brancusi's studio or Walter Conrad Arensberg's salons, and Cummings' editorial group from *The Harvard Monthly* and *The Harvard Advocate* to *The Dial* and other modernist little magazines. These social spaces function like associations or societies of multiple forms of art ranging from literature, painting, sculpture, to music. By using ekphrasis, illustration, or other approaches of intermedial adaptation, modernist poets and painters aspire to borrow new creative forces from unfamiliar territories. They aim to revolutionise their native landscapes by reforming the obsolete structures of their own media and inventing a refreshed language of intermediality. This process includes descriptions and depictions of one medium in another, not as imitative copies or bare translations, but as acts of homage and stylistic re-creations, to put what they have learnt into experimental practices.

Thirdly, when the confabulation expands beyond person-to-person interactions and evolves into a collective endeavour consisting of multiple voices, it shall be referred to as

⁴⁰ Some of these commentaries were published in modernist little magazines during their lifetime and some were posthumously published in Mina Loy, *Stories and Essays of Mina Loy*; E. E. Cummings, *A Miscellany*.

programmatic dialogue (of *synthetic intermediality*). “All the paraphernalia of modernism, in fact, seems largely pictorial” (McClatchy xi), and one of its paraphernalia is definitely the interartistic cause and movement of a whirlpool, where poets, novelists, painters, sculptors, photographers, and musical composers participate in extensive cross-aesthetic conversations, working towards a share (inter-)artistic vision. These modernist artists, representing various artforms that were historically confined to their respective mediums, come together with the collective goal for distinctive modes of expression and a correlated aesthetics that can be applied intermedially. In opposition to sibling rivalries, they cooperate with each other to fuse and synthesise different mediums, developing groups, schools, or joint programmes with shared objectives and schemata. Collaboration goes beyond not only to artists within their own communities but also includes foreign, heterogenous allies. Examples of such interlocution include Loy with Italian Futurism led by F. T. Marinetti and New York Dada by Marcel Duchamp, as well as Cummings with Henri Matisse’s Fauvism and Pablo Picasso’s Cubism mainly during his Parian period.⁴¹

The last but foremost one is *meta-dialogue* (of *ontological intermediality*) within the figure of poet-painter. It phenomenologically points to a self-reflexive dialogue between the poet-self and the painter-other. The synthesis of poet-painter artisthood operates at the nexus of modernism and its intermedial tendency. In the same spirit as Plato’s Socratic *maieutics* or Oscar Wilde’s dialogic preface, whether in an argumentative or dramatic form, this intermedial confabulation sheds light on the plurality and multifariousness of creative selves or identities within the individual artist, both physically and psychologically communicating with one another.⁴² It becomes a catalyst for stimulating the interlocutors’ unconscious, critical thinking, and patent or latent creativity. Similar to Socrates as an asker-answerer and Wilde as a critic-artist, modernist poet-painters, through the intermedial combination of their artistic self and other, seek to unravel the presence of the indescribable within an avant-garde artform.⁴³ They attempt to complement the absence of alterity and uncover the hidden otherness, thereby capturing the transformative and doubly productive nature of their (inter-)artistic expressions. In doing so, they become less blind, less silent, and less isolated. The artisthood of poet-painter is constructed by a middle space between the two, consciously referencing the innate others and embracing the natural differences of alterity that exists in between. Their intermedial identities and practices can thus expand their aesthetic borders

⁴¹ For more about their active engagements with avant-garde art movements between Europe and North America, see Sarah Hayden, *Curious Disciplines: Mina Loy and Avant-Garde Artisthood*; Milton A. Cohen, *Poet and Painter: The Aesthetics of E. E. Cummings’s Early Work*.

⁴² On their dialogic forms of writing, see Plato, *Theaetetus*, translated by John McDowell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Oscar Wilde, *The Critic as Artist* (New York: David Zwirner Books, 2019).

⁴³ On aesthetic and metaphysical implications of the dialogic form, see Charles H. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Patricia Flanagan Behrendt, “Eroticism and the Dialogic Form” in *Oscar Wilde: Eros and Aesthetics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991) 93-118.

through the “deterritorialisation” (Deleuze and Parnet 37) of selfhood and establish a dialogue with otherness. This allows them to avoid being labelled or pinioned within a static framework, and to escape the limitation and flatness of a white wall and black hole system:

We are always pinned against the wall of dominant significations, we are always sunk in the hole of our subjectivity, the black hole of our Ego which is more dear to us than anything. A wall on which are inscribed all the objective determinations which fix us, put us in a grille, identify us and make us recognised, a hole where we deposit – together with our consciousness – our feelings, our passions, our little secrets which are all too well known, our desire to make them know. (45)

When confined within a single mode, narrow vision, or flattened horizon driven by territorial instincts, breaking down the boundaries imposed by domineering subjective significations and escaping egoistical behaviours seems exceedingly challenging. As Deleuze and Parnet assert: “Something must always remind us of something else, make us think of something else” (44), thus the writer is always deeply influenced by and “imbued to the core with a non-writer-becoming” (46), something they could speak with, write with, and create with. The highlight of alterity, otherness, or a non-poetic unconscious within the identification of poet-painters empowers their modernist experimentations to effortlessly transition between creation and destruction at a distance in between. This space through the middle, is not a stagnant or fixed distance of mere juxtaposition or a chaotic blend of contamination, but, in a Lacanian model, represents a transmutable flow within the creative process of becomings: it enables the poet-painter’s flight from the Symbolic centre and its patriarchal laws, found a new order of image-text in the realm of the Imaginary, and reconnect with the Real where the poetic self and the painterly other are originally in a state of symbiosis – unseparated as an organic whole. In this way, the intermedial dialogue between poets, painters, and poet-painters replaces dualism and parallel thinking with interdisciplinary complementarity, forming an “assemblage” (69) or alliance that asks for crossing, interpenetration, and co-functioning. The subsequent chapters will delve into this bilateral, intrinsic, and meta-levelled communication, focusing on two representative figures of poet-painter in the context of intermedial modernism: Mina Loy and E. E. Cummings.

Part I
Transcultural Modernism and Intermedial Identities

Chapter 2

“Evolve the language of Future”: Loy’s Cosmopolitan Avant-Gardism

Each energy calls for its complementary energy to achieve self-contained stability based on the play of energies. Out of abstract elements a formal cosmos is ultimately created independent of their groupings as concrete objects or abstract things such as numbers or letters, which we discover to be so closely similar to the Creation that a breath is sufficient to turn an expression of religious feelings, or religion, into reality.

– Paul Klee, “Creative Confession, 1920” (11)

Well, you know, I don’t see any firm line between all the things, music, art, poetry. I don’t see it as a hierarchy, with poetry on top, and the folk song way at the bottom. I think they are all expressions of things, there’s no one way.

– Ciaran Carson, “Inventing Carson: An Interview” (97)

A notable characteristic of Mina Loy’s poet-painter artisthood can be seen from her unwavering enthusiasm for creating verbally free-versed and visually sketched portraits.¹ She is captivated by the form of portraiture more or less as an artistic idiosyncrasy to capture her own impression, representation, and protean identification of those portrayed or depicted subjects. Even before her written works gained prominence, Loy’s decadent gouaches *L’Amour dorloté par les belles dames* (fig. 2-1) and *La Maison en Papier* in 1906, showcase a group of six women or “androgynous” (Prescott 78) silhouettes nude and clothed in intimate and supportive gestures. These early artworks display at a prior stage to her writings a thematic reevaluation of gender, bodily sexuality, and a transformative cosmology of womanhood that transcends the male gaze and patriarchal surveillance of artists and spectators in the aesthetic and physical world. In one of her most significant series of poems, “Love Songs” or “Songs to Joannes” from 1915 to 1917, Loy portrays figures like Stephen Haweis from her first marriage, as well as F. T. Marinetti and Giovanni Papini involved in later love affairs based on her real-life experiences. With a sardonic tone, she delves into a critical exploration of new femininity and sexual relationships between men and women. Then, in the subsequent decade between 1919 and 1930, Loy’s intermedial portraits shift their focus to paying homage and drawing attention to the modernist experimentalism of her artistic contemporaries: she creates pen-ink sketches from *Constantin Brancusi*, *Carl Van Vechten*, *Jules Pascin*, *James Joyce*, to *Marianne Moore*, and linguistically innovative verses of “Poe,” “‘The Starry Sky’ of Wyndham Lewis,” “Gertrude Stein,” “Joyce’s ‘Ulysses,’” “Nancy Cunard,” and a note on “William Carlos Williams.” By making dialogue and fostering close friendships within the avant-garde of her time, the poet-painter could keep exploring novel forms and expressions of portraying one’s

¹ On modernist portrait poetry, see Anna Viola Sborgi, “Between Literature and the Visual Arts: Portraits of the Self in William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, and Fernando Pessoa,” in *Stories and Portraits of the Self*, edited by Helena Carvalhão Buescu and João Ferreira Duarte (New York: Rodopi, 2007) 267-79.

sexual and (inter-)artistic identity as an unfixed alternative to the stereotypical and restrictive ideals that preceded her for long.



Fig. 2-1 Mina Loy, *L'Amour dorloté par les belles dames* (1906). Drawing and gouache. *Mina Loy: Apology of Genius*, by Caws, London: Reaktion Books, 2022, p. 136.

Bearing this humanistic concern in mind, Loy's later portrait poems, after her transatlantic move to New York in 1936, directly articulate a strong sense of sympathy towards minor groups, with a particular focus on the impoverished residents of the Bowery – people living in an area of marginalisation and economic destitution.² Through her less obscure or recondite and journalistic depictions, we become witnesses of her sharp glimpse into the social antagonism between the American ruling bourgeois class and the poor, homeless urban outsiders. Her works feature a wide range of individuals like the “Idiot Child on a Fire-Escape,” a “Hot Cross Bum,” and “An Aged Woman,” which can be read alongside her Bowery collages, e.g., *Bums Praying*, *No Parking*, and *Househunting* (fig. 2-2) as an intermedial parallel. Echoing the shared subject matter, these artworks incorporate their raw materials sourced from everyday life, such as wastes and discarded objects on the street. Read and observed throughout Loy's verbal and visual portraiture at the same time, the poet-painter does not simply describe or depict a portfolio of personal profiles from different sexual, artistic, ethnic backgrounds. Instead, she embarks on an intermedial venture to reshape our observation and imagination associated with these identities and the way of their identification. Loy accomplishes this by refashioning her language, perception, and reading-spectatorship, demonstrative of the underlying politics inherent in the act of formal representation.

² For more about Loy's social and economic concerns, see Linda A. Kinnahan, “Economics and Gender in Mina Loy, Lola Ridge, and Marianne Moore,” *The Oxford Handbook of Modern and Contemporary American Poetry*, edited by Cary Nelson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)143-72.



Fig. 2-2 Mina Loy, *Househunting* (1950). Assemblage. Carolyn Burke Collection.

In her intermedial artworks, the nature of portrait and its act of portraying goes beyond the mere recording of a photographic likeness or similitude. Moreover, Loy develops a distinctive poetic vision that foregrounds the eye and its act of seeing as an implicit subject matter, imagery, and perspective.³ In one of her poems titled “Mass-Production on 14th Street,” the poet describes the “eye” as “a commodious bee” that:

gathers the infinite facets
of the unique unlikeness
of faces;
the diamond flesh of adolescence
sloping toward perception:

flower over flower,
corollas of complexion
craning from hanging-gardens
of the garment-worker. (Loy, *LoLB* 111)

The human eye is compared to a “commodious bee” that collects the immeasurable elements of unique and unlike faces, sensitively capturing the nuances of varying “adolescence” as a formative journey. Through this transformative mechanism of vision, Loy’s artistic expression wields the power of active “perception,” an optical competence to witness and reinterpret sociocultural phenomena that are often unrepresented or misunderstood. With an intermedial awareness, her modernist vision acknowledges the “location of perceptual power in bodies” (Thurston 414) and

³ On visual consciousness, optical experiments, and poetics of impersonality, see also Walter, Introduction. *Eye Don’t See: Embodied Vision, Ontology, and Modernist Impersonality* 1-32; Altieri, “The Doctrine of Impersonality and Modernism’s War on Rhetoric: Eliot, Loy, and Moore,” in *The Art of Twentieth-Century American Poetry* 52-96.

reinforces its “synthesising and restorative” (Goody, *Modernist Articulations* 5) power to synthesise shifting points of view and subvert established societal norms. More significantly, it could question and undermine the conventional ideologies in association with capitalist propriety, religious fundamentalism, sexist exploitation, and the blindness of unsensed experience – embedded in previously outdated artforms and languages. Loy’s experimental poetics is characterised by an “extravagantly mannered style” (C. Miller, “Finding ‘Only Words’” 590), employing “genitive phrases” or “erotic diction” (Thurston 414), and “synaesthesia” (C. Burke, “Limits of Imagism” 44) to make abstract ideas visible and revive the physical properties of literal imageries. Aside from the imagistic treatment of objects, she bridges a complex relationship between the eye as the perceptual subject and the “I” as the cognitive. This dynamic intertwines one’s perception and self-consciousness, enabling Loy to materialise radical viewpoints and angles of vision through the formal visualisation of space, lineation, punctuation, and typographical form printed on the page. Her linguistic and material eccentricities and defamiliarities disrupt old-fashioned rhetorical or syntactic modes, and thereby challenge the longstanding male-dominated narrative in areas of mankind and womankind, love and sex, birth and ageing, fashion and poverty, and war and death. These themes and motifs resonate throughout Loy’s literary and artistic *oeuvre*, continually echoing and unsettling the pre-existing standards and expectations.

Loy’s *Lunar Baedeker* was originally designed for her modernist navigation of the world as a poet-painter in the early twentieth-century context of cosmopolitan avant-gardism. Loy can be deemed as a genius not only in cultural or linguistic terms but also generic and medial, whose multiple identities build up a personal style and idiosyncratic artistry to irritate any oppressive forces in modern society (which will be the focus of Chapter 4). At this point, the chapter will focus on the development of her poet-painter artistry against the backdrop of transcultural, intermedial modernism. How did Loy’s expatriate, transatlantic experience and communication play a significant role in shaping her hybrid artistry, one that is free of fixed ancestral, sexual, and medial borders? As a “mongrel-girl / of Noman’s land” (*Last Lunar Baedeker* 143) travelling from London to Munich, Paris, Florence, and finally New York, she engaged with various avant-garde art scenes and absorbed influences from multiple artistic sources: so, can we assign her a pinned position within a specific movement of Futurism or Dada? If not, how shall we understand her evolution or conversion – from the rupture with Italian Futurists to New York Dadaists – as a fluid, processive transfer to a larger blueprint of transnational avant-gardes? In the opening line of *Mina Loy: Apology of Genius*, Mary Ann Caws claims that Loy “was in one person a multi-flavourful assortment, a highly colourful modernist being” (7).⁴ Based on a mongrel poetics of

⁴ It is the latest bio-critical work on Loy published in 2022.

language, form, and style, her interartistic identity is empowered by her creative ability to navigate multiple materials, genres, and mediums. She has not been bound by a single mode of expressions but instead encompassed a diverse range of techniques and approaches, both in her verbal and visual productions. In declaring an ambitious stance of aesthetic activism to reform the modern world, Loy prevents any unified homogeneity from labelling the self into categories; rather, she allows for a collage of plural selves as an inclusive and infinite manner of self-representation. Therefore, the nature of her poet-painter artisthood is not an essence, but a mutual play. It helps Loy to transform her poetic experimentation with an intensively visionary concern into a new shape of multifaceted and ever-evolving sense of selfhood. Under this light, she continuously pushed the limits of acceptability and conformity, problematising the hegemonic norms that dictated the realms of sex, race, or social class. As illustrated in *Lunar Baedeker*, Loy seeks to create a new space where her unique articulation could be heard and shared without the dominance of a singular, authoritative silence from the past.

The Expatriate, Transatlantic *Lunar Baedeker*

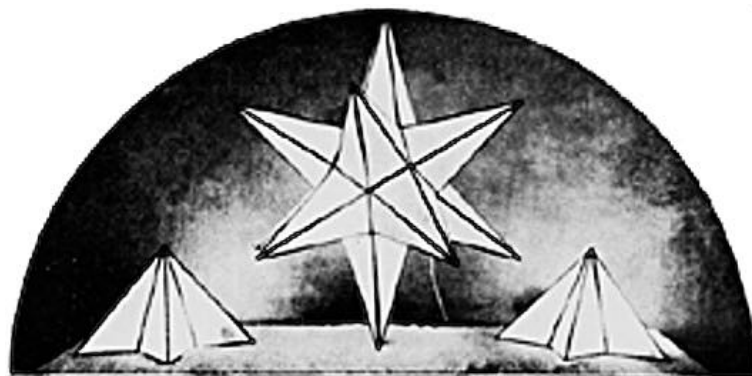


Fig. 2-3 Mina Loy, *Les Etoiles* (1927). Ceiling light and wall sconces. *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy*, by Burke, Picador, 2021.

When Mina Loy returned to Paris from Berlin in 1923, Robert McAlmon’s Contact Editions brought out *Lunar Baedeker* (misspelt as *Lunar Baedecker*) as her first publication of poetry – the same year it published William Carlos Williams’ *Spring & All* and Ernest Hemingway’s first book *Three Stories & Ten Poems*.⁵ Titled in typical Loy-style, she juxtaposes unusual and oblique words “lunar” and “Baedeker” in an anomalous combination to purposefully connect two unfamiliar territories, thus inviting multiple interpretations and avoiding habitual readings in pre-existing

⁵ About Loy’s publication in different little magazines over the early twentieth century, i.e., *Camera Work*, *The Trend*, *Others*, *The Blind Man*, *Little Review*, *The Dial*, *Rogue*, and so forth., see Crangle, “Mina Loy” 275-76; Suzanne W. Churchill, “Mina Loy: The Poetics of Dislodging,” in *The Little Magazine Others and the Renovation of Modern American Poetry* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2006) 179-222.

conventions. In the opening verse “Lunar Baedeker,” Loy personifies the moon as “Nocturnal cyclops,” “Crystal concubine,” and “the fossil virgin of the skies / waxes and wanes – – – –” (*LoLB* 82). These figurative descriptions evoke a sense of mystery and enchantment which connotes the surreal, otherworldly nature of the moonscape. Michael Thurston points out three kinds of fantastic landscapes usually associated with the moon and sky through constellations, namely, “femininity, creativity, madness” (411). This poetic symbolism questions the societal norms by offering an alternative sphere open to those identities of “woman, artist, lunatic” (411) that have been culturally devalued before. By focusing on marginalised representations, Loy undermines the male-dominated power structures and calls for a re-evaluation of the worth of marginality in real life. She draws our attention to a feminine imaginative space within their devalued identities, capable of guiding individuals towards an enigmatic spiritual rediscovery of the landscape we inhabit.

The lunar attribute pertains to the moon. Loy’s belief in the re-orienting and generative power of the *Luna* or the moon in an immortal “museum of the moon” (*LoLB* 82) – femininely, artistically, psychologically – signifies a desire for a new direction of travel, away from the disorientation, chaos, and fragmentation of contemporary society, where:

A silver Lucifer
serves
cocaine in cornucopia

To some somnambulists
of adolescent thighs
draped
in satirical draperies (81)

Both images of “silver Lucifer” and “cornucopia” allude to the mythological allure and temptation associated with illicit drug use (“cocaine”) that seduces and disorients the young (“adolescent thighs”) as blind-minded sleepwalkers (“sommambulists”). Through her unconventional language and obscure imagery in depicting this chaotic and decaying world, her “Lunar Baedeker” adds another layer of meaning to the original, as referring to a popular series of travel guidebooks. *Lunar Baedeker* as a whole is designed to guide and renavigate people to live in a place, where society does not lose its guiding principles and residents need not struggle for motivations or purposes. By combining “lunar” and “Baedeker,” the poet creates an imaginary juxtaposition between the celestial and the earthly, which incites readers to explore alien or unfamiliar arenas both in the physical reality and within themselves.

Roger L. Conover, the editor of the most recent edition *The Lost Lunar Baedeker* published in 1996, calls it “[t]wentieth-century poetry’s lost guidebook” (xiii), from which one can find the metamorphosis of a new modernity.⁶ This feminine Baedeker is devised by a female artist who herself has spent the entire life navigating the unknown, unconquered terrains in both geographical and conceptual senses. Her fascination with the moon, stars, and globes (fig. 2-3) indicates not only a historically feminised vision but also an expedition of the celestial, a semantically composite vocabulary relating to the sky and the heavens at the same time. Not only in her textual but also pictorial representations, the heavenly themes and motifs hold a symbolic and creative significance for this modernist poet-painter. In two of the 1932 monochromes, Loy’s *Moons I* (fig. 2-4) and *Moons II*, the waned moon is painted into a pair of faces from a lateral view, doubling or mirroring each other in a dialogic gesture. This image of duality also appears in her work *Dawn (L’Aube)* created in the same year, where the personified faces vividly resemble a twined set of angelic profiles singing a hymn. The celestial, for Loy, full of unknown possibilities, denotes the upper space or middle state where a communal origin for any mythological, religious, or astronomical imagination of all human civilisations could exist, regardless of their ethnic or national distinctions. Its star chart serves as the main source of imagery. Also reflected from her lampshade design *Globe Céleste* (fig. 2-5) in 1927, ancient figures and fantastic beasts as signs of constellations and the zodiac appear together on the surface of a satellite-like lampshade. It becomes a symbol of the moonscape, a hallucinatory light source in the dark firmament with “luminous opacity” (Lein 618).⁷



⁶ Loy’s *Lunar Baedeker* could be read as a transcultural travelogue towards an international avant-garde community across different places, cultures, and media. For more about this cosmopolitan guidebook, see Yasna Bozhkova, “Cross-Cultural Baedeker: Mina Loy’s Cosmopolitan Modernism,” *E-rea*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2019).

⁷ On Loy’s intense enthusiasm and modernist aesthetics about lampshade art and its electric lighting as the environment of modernity, see Lein 618-24; Armstrong, “Electrifying the Body” 13-41.

Fig. 2-4 Mina Loy, *Moon I* (1932). Mixed media on board, 66.7 by 89.5 cm.
Private collection.



Fig. 2-5 Mina Loy, *Globe Céleste* (1927). Lampshade design. *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy*, by Burke, Picador, 2021.

The lampshade is a concretised representation of the “Stellelectric signs” (*LoLB* 81), a neologism composed of the “stellar” (natural illumination) and the “electric” (physical illumination), which respectively represents two illuminant means in natural and physical realities. Through this design of lampshade, Loy probes into the complexities of existence navigating between the organic and the artificial, the authentic and the constructed, and other pre-established dichotomies in-between these opposed domains:

Peris in livery
prepare
Lethe
for posthumous parvenues

Delirious Avenues
lit
with the chandelier souls
of infusoria
from Pharoah’s tombstones

lead
to mercurial doomsdays
Odious oasis

in furrowed phosphorous

the eye-white sky-light
white-light district
of lunar lust (81)

By referring to the supernatural being of “Peris in livery” at the beginning, the poet-painter presents a picture of surreal and evocative images, immersing us in an artistic world imbued with mysteries, transformations, and desires. Between the myth of the River of Forgetfulness (“Lethe”) in one’s posthumous life and the urbanity of “white-light district” referring to the red-light district in real-life urban settings, also between “Onyx-eyed Odalisques” from the Ottoman past and “ornithologists” (82) from the modern western science, it discloses Loy’s conscious juxtapositions of the imaginary and the realistic, the East and the West, and the mysterious and the scientific. The “mercurial doomsdays” and “Odious oasis / in furrowed phosphorous” continues to evoke an eerie landscape, completely distinctive from our ordinary reality. Besides, she incorporates a transcultural mixture of Biblical and mythological allusions from various nations and cultures such as Persian, Greek and Roman, Egyptian fairies and folktales, creating a stylistic tapestry of diverse stories and historical references.⁸ Her rich and suggestive imageries within the poem and shown on the lampshade, overall, invite the reader-viewer into a fragmented yet multi-layered world.

With the ethereal presence of microscopic organisms (“chandelier souls / of infusoria”) floating or illuminating the scene, the extending “Delirious Avenues” stand for a web of twisted paths or distorted realities across different spheres. Loy is apt to appropriate existing vocabularies and concepts into new meanings in order to fully explore her gendered space. The colour of white (seen from the “white-light district”), often related to purity and sexual emptiness, carries symbolic significance of lunar lust and female desire. It implies a possible reference to Alexandre Dumas *fil’s* *La Dame aux Camélias* (*Camille* in English), in which Marguerite wears a red camellia during menstruation and a white one when she is “available.” Loy’s creation of the fictional “white-light district” represents an indirect critique of the ruthless, exploitative nature of the red-light district in the social reality, drawing attention to the unfulfilled desires and experience of deprivation by women. The white and its superficial emptiness here – before working as a symbol of feminist solidarity and sisterhood in the contemporary context – serves as a gendered presence, highlighting the absence of female sex and desire. Her lunar world, with its emphasis on sexual freedom, functions as a middle place or intermediate realm whose liberating energy of “boundary-blurring” (Crangle, “Mina Loy” 287) does not concentrate but dilutes the clear demarcation or definition of

⁸ For more about how the twentieth-century intersection of religious and scientific discourses address the topics on new technology and sexual identity, see Lara Vetter, “[T]he electric incitement of Eros?: Electromagnetism, Sexuality, and Modernism,” in *Modernist Writings and Religio-Scientific Discourse: H.D., Loy, and Toomer* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 31-66.

the known and the uncertain. Loy intends to provide the audience as life-travellers a *vade mecum* – a guidebook or handbook – derived from her own artistic and physical travel experiences across various places, cultures, and avant-garde movements. With her semi-documentary semi-fictional travelogue, this modernist poet-painter maps out a new path towards the free land with unorthodox directions that never appeared before, ultimately encouraging a multifarious exploration of one’s self-forms and self-identities.⁹

As a voluntary “exile,” Loy can be deemed as a “cartographer of the imagination” (C. Burke, *BM* vi) and any other regions excluded from the former nautical chart. Through a number of transatlantic exchanges and voyages of many kinds, she ventured between Continental and American avant-gardes. She is a pioneering explorer of uncharted areas, who probes into what Adrienne Rich calls the “new psychic geography” (qtd. in C. Burke, “Becoming Mina Loy” 137) of women’s poetry, stressing the unexplored realms of female stories and life experiences. Loy’s travels, whether literal or metaphorical, embody a continuous conversation and transgression that serves as the defining characteristic of her artworks (Crangle, “Mina Loy” 276). This physical and spiritual mobility plays a significant role in her personal life and her philosophy of self-discovery across different genders, mediums, and nationalities. She defies traditional norms of self-representation and appeals to an intermedial approach to experiment with various forms, styles, and materials for re-presenting a multiple essence. Rather than following a linear or direct trajectory, her voyages can be likened to navigating with a celestial map, which metaphorically is related to her assemblage of arts and identities in a lifelong quest for “soul’s progress” (Burke, *BM* vii). Unlike other expatriate figures such as Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, or T. S. Eliot, Loy seems to be the most prototypical of the “deracinated cosmopolite” (Perloff, “English” 194) – an individual disconnected from any fixed collective identity. Her transits through modernist landscapes, crossing the Atlantic, then allow her to bridge the dual domains of literature and art, as well as highbrow and popular mass culture. To achieve so, she synthesises her diverse creations, including drawings, manifestos, collages, lampshade designs, inventions, and both poetic and prosaic writings, into a coherent portfolio. Based on this comprehensive body of work, the poet-painter could better express her individuality and voice her gendered artistry in an adaptable yet cohesive way.¹⁰

Loy’s intermedial journey began as a formally educated art student and she attended art college to receive professional training at a young age, distinguishing herself from artists like E. E.

⁹ More on this meta-terrestrial travelogue, see Jessica Burstein, “Mina Loy: ‘Lunar Baedeker,’” *Poetry Foundation* (November 2009) <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69437/mina-loy-lunar-baedeker>.

¹⁰ Also, see Matthew Hart, “Denationalising Mina Loy,” in *Nations of Nothing but Poetry: Modernism, Transnationalism, and Synthetic Vernacular Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 177-90.

Cummings who was a self-taught painter throughout his career. She enrolled in the conservative St. John's Wood Art School in London at fifteen and later the Society of Female Artists' School in Munich. Her artistic education continued as she joined Augustus John's art studio in London and soon moved to Paris, where she studied at the Académie Colarossi in 1904, further refining her painterly crafts.¹¹ During this specific period, she immersed herself in the intellectually fertile contexts of various art scenes, from the British Pre-Raphaelite, German *Jugendstil*, French Post-Impressionism, to American Bohemia. Thanks to these transcontinental experiences and exchanges, Loy had the chance to familiarise herself with influential avant-garde artists, e.g., Pablo Picasso and Henri Rousseau in Paris, Carlo Carrà and Ardengo Soffici in Florence, Alfred Kreyborg, Richard Oelze, and Joseph Cornell in New York. Her watercolours, designs, and art installations were exhibited in renowned museums and galleries such as the Salon d'Automne in Paris, the Carfax Gallery in London, and the Bodley Gallery in New York. She was even elected as a member of the Salon d'Automne and her bold experiments with unusual materials of junk earned her the Copley Award for Outstanding Achievement in Art in 1959. In addition, she owned a lampshade shop organised by Peggy Guggenheim in France for five years and later became art advisor for her son-in-law's Julien Levy Gallery in the United States.¹² Interestingly, Loy once claimed, "I was never a poet" (*LoLB* xii), indicating her initial identification as a painter and fine artist rather than a modernist poet. She was wary of any motionless position or fragile, single identity, and embraced the openness and inclusivity of self-expression. From above, Loy's interartistic pursuits transcend medial and physical borderlines and make her a "multilingual, multitalented" (C. Miller, "Mina Loy" 380) artisthood. Her multimodal artforms, as exemplified in *Lunar Baedeker* and other worldwide displays, align with the cosmopolitan avant-gardism of the post-WWI era. As such, the versatility of this poet-painter as a polyglot genius extends beyond not only sexual or national realms but also generic and medial. It profits from the transatlantic dialogue she engaged in, arousing her to challenge those socially repressive systems through a distinctive style of verbal-visual language.

Her mother, Julia Bryan, could be seen as one of these conventional obstructions that Loy struggled against since her early childhood. The familial influence took a significant role in her upbringing and subsequent rebellions against the generally sociocultural limitations. In a middle-class London family, it was actually Loy's father, Sigmund Löwy, who supported her interests in creative activities during her schooldays, while her mother exhorted to stifle them and promoted

¹¹ A list of "Mina Loy Chronology" about her artistic education background can be found in Potter and Hobson 12-16 and a "Time-Table" in Conover, *LoLB* lxiii-lxxix. See also C. Burke, Part I and Part II, in *BM* 13-104.

¹² On more interpretative discussions of Loy's lamp shop, see Burstein, "Loy, Inc." 151-98. On Loy's job as an agent in the Julien Levy Gallery, see Carolyn Burke, "Loy-alism: Julien Levy's Kinship with Mina Loy," in Schaffner and Jacobs 60-79.

the values of moral education, domestic work, marriage, and the problematic ideals of sexuality. From the outset, there was a conflict between her personal desires for creative freedom and the maternal insistence on traditional codes of behaviour. To escape from these constraints, Loy chose to leave England and study in other countries at the turn of the century, which drove her to identify with another non-English culture as an alter ego and quest for a new home for emancipation and artistic creativity. This decision was motivated by a desire to break away from the restrictions and complacency of Britishness and seek for her own individuality. To document this life experience, her longest and most ambitious poem, “Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose,” was serialised in instalments in *The Little Review* and McAlmon’s *Contact Collection of Contemporary Writers* from 1923 to 1925. It could be read as a formal and stylistic blend of autobiography (or auto-mythology) and fictional mythologies, recording Loy’s artistic development and the evolution of her gendered selfhood from an infant to mature adulthood.¹³

In “Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose,” Loy satirises her maternal influence as “bloodless duties” (Loy, *LaLB* 121) referring to her mother’s emphasis on Victorian moral standards. Loy also symbolically portrays the “paradox-Imperial” (121) Britain as her motherland through the poetic image of an English Rose, and employs this symbol to criticise the paradoxical nature of historical imperialism and the limitations it imposed to the other – as how she was treated as a poor daughter:

Rose of arrested impulses
 self-pruned
 of the primordial attributes
 a tepid heart inhibiting
 with tactful terrorism
 the Blossom Populous
 to mystic incest with its ancestry
 establishing
 by the divine right of self-assertation
 the post-conceptual
 virginity of Nature

wiping
 its pink paralysis
 across the dawn of reason
 A World-Blush
 glowing from
 a never-setting-sun
 Conservative Rose
 storage
 of British Empire-made pot-pourri

¹³ On the notion of “auto-mythology,” see Alex Goody, “Autobiography/Auto-mythology: Mina Loy’s *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*,” in *Representing Lives: Women and Auto/biography*, edited by Alison Donnell and Pauline Polkey (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) 270-79.

of dry dead men making a sweetened smell
among a shrivelled collectivity (121-22)

The figure of Ada/English Rose (the mother) is portrayed as an epitome of nineteenth-century Britishness, establishing the “never-setting-sun” of “British Empire” and its imperialistic nationalism. Ada is further characterised by the Protestant-conservative principles and asserts herself through the “right of self-assertation” with “tactful terrorism” and “its ancestry,” which represses the inherent womanhood and promotes a patriarchal order. Loy’s satirical portrayal of the English Rose as an emblem of cultural-religious conservatism highlights the limitations and repressive nature of its dogmatic values. The “Rose” is depicted as a self-restricted being that has “arrested impulses” and “self-pruned,” implying that it has suppressed natural instincts and organic desires. Lack of passion or vitality, the “tepid heart” of the flower inhibits its potential for growth and flourishing, with the paralysed, restrictive influence (“pink paralysis / across the dawn of reason”) on progressive thought and openness to new ideas. Glowing as a “World-Blush,” the “Conservative Rose” represents a conservative worldview that was deeply ingrained and resistant to sociocultural transformations. Loy shows no sympathy with this Rose-figure of mother-character and broadly revolts against the legacies of the Empire and collective mentality that adheres to these antiquated codes of middle-class Victorianism.

She then turns to her paternal supporter Exodus, who came from an exotic Jewish-Hungarian ancestral background, as:

(The) unperceived
conqueror of a new world
 Exodus lifts his head
over the alien crowds
under the alien clouds
proudly as memory
evokes the panic-stricken
discoverer of his own heart coming
barefoot to the Synagogue
erected by his grandfather (117)

Loy shifts the focus to a different figure, described as the “unperceived conqueror” of a new world experiencing a physical departure and mental displacement from the familiar and venturing into unknown territory (“over the alien crowds / under the alien clouds”). By contrast, the portrait of Exodus (the father) is more like a real heroic figure, who experiences the alienation from the English late-Victorian as a historical and geographical outsider. His re-habitation empowers himself with a conquering competence to disrupt and reconstruct certain individual and social existences. In this scene, the exotic conqueror – lifting his head, standing “proudly” on his personal

journal, evoking the memories and emotions of the “panic-stricken discoverer of his own heart” – suggests a sense of self-reflection and introspection. Coming “barefoot” to the “Synagogue” grounded in tradition (“erected by his grandfather”), Exodus can connect the self-discovery of new countries with ancestral heritages and the importance of their cultural and religious roots, which enables him to navigate unfamiliar places and reshape societal norms and stereotypes that have stood for long. Though suffering from anti-Semitism, Exodus’s Jewish inheritance impacts his daughter as a cultural adaptation and artistic appropriation. In the starting “Exodus” section, Loy introduces this paternal character as the “highest paid” tailor in the City with “his coaly eye / challenging the unrevealed universe” and “the soul / of the new Motherland” (115). His occupation as a tailor, described as “an occupation all too feminine” (175), challenges traditional gender roles and expectations projected over them. The gendered agency of tailoring, which is typically linked with femininity, is to resist and change the masculinist representation of one’s body and identity. Also, Loy juxtaposes the maternal association of Ada and the patriarchal nature embedded in her role with the paternal association of Exodus with woman’s fashion and femininity. This unusual juxtaposition creates an oxymoron in a broad sense, by which Loy means to question the fixed gender identities and their limitations and then trespass upon these stereotypical expressions and identifications.

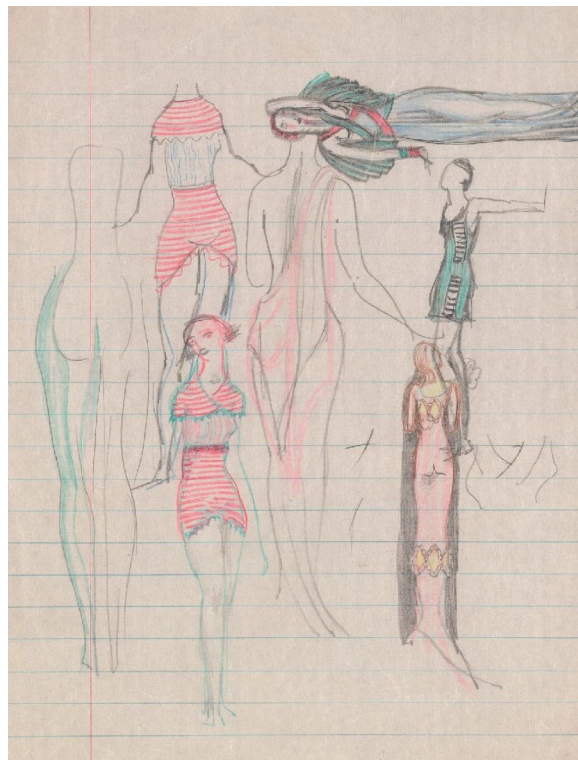


Fig. 2-6 Mina Loy, *Designs* (1941). Colour illustrations. Mina Loy Papers, YCAL MSS 6, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

The figure of the tailor attracts our attention to Loy's intermedial engagement in fashion and its poetics of refashioning. Shown in one of layouts (fig. 2-6) portraying modernist designs of women's dresses, she is interested in fashion and tailoring throughout her life, which she considers an adaptable medium to test and cross sexual and aesthetic boundaries. In this sense, the profession of tailor indicates a hybridised tendency that stitches the historically seamy divide between men and women, male and female, and masculinity and femininity: "Out of the hands of God / the aboriginal / muscle-pattern / with its ominously / cruciform completion" (172). By engaging with fashion design and tailoring, Loy believes in this ideal figure of artistry to remake physical appearance, identity, and the sociocultural fabric, through its artistic action of trimming and sewing traditional values.¹⁴ From this viewpoint, creating new forms and innovative styles can alter and reconfigure one's "aboriginal / muscle pattern" as the original framework of body and even reshape its individual ("cruciform completion") and social presence ("the image and likeness of Deity") in a creative manner (172). In the closing section of the poem, "The Social Status of Exodus," the Hungarian-Jewish tailor refashions the "cruciform," "uniform," or "protoform" of individuality – both the physical and conceptual aspects of existence:

and through varying civilisations
 experimented in deformations
 of contour
 while fashion
 and fanaticism disputed
 with passion
 the incompatibility
 with his dignity
 of exposing man
 to the contemplation (172)

With the aesthetic power to weave and redefine one's lineament and identity, the tailor experiments "in deformations" to distort the absolute, fixed "contour" of individuals and their sociocultural forms. In its innately political sense, the form imposes order on bodies, objects, and its social world by means of a formalistic "*arrangement of elements – an ordering, patterning or shaping*" (Levine 3). For Loy, the design of poetic line and its accoutrements is converged with the act of outlining, seaming, and embroidering bodily textiles to present an alternative identification. The role of tailoring is not merely concerned with clothing alterations as a stylistic cut of garments, but involves the mongrelisation of "varying civilisations" by blending and hybridising different national and ethnical resources as a stitching of various fabrics and clothes. From seams to

¹⁴ On the poetry and poetics of textile, weave, and fabric media, see Jessica Hemmings, ed., *The Textile Reader* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023); Anni Albers, *On Weaving* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017); Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Fray: Art and Textile Politics* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2017).

seamlessness, it appeals to a departure from established rules of representationality and a willingness to open unexpected possibilities of identifying and re-presenting. Loy conceives of the tailor as an idealist occupation that extends beyond the confines of cultural expectations and seeks to expose human to new “contemplation,” perspectives, and artforms.

Compared to Exodus as a tailor, Loy critiques the disguise of the “unprintable word” that “Spiritual drapers / Popes and fakirs and shakers” want to patch up and conceal with their fundamentalist doctrines (173).¹⁵ For her, “fashion” and “fanaticism” are two opposing forces, one associated with the aesthetic expression and the other driven by intense beliefs or ideologies. The major difference lies in their clash over the compatibility of “exposing man” or humanity to “the contemplation,” problematic about the acceptance of alter forms and ideas. As Loy praises:

And there arose another
greater than Jehovah
The Tailor
the stitches of whose seams
he is unworthy
to loose (174)

“Greater than Jehovah,” he is “Out of the hands of Exodus / the Oxonian / seeming / a sunbeam that has chanced to stray/ in to a cut-away” (174).¹⁶ The capitalised “Tailor” surpasses even the omnificent concept of Christianity and should be celebrated for a more transformative ability and revolutionarily creative agency. The tailor-artist becomes a new “concept of the man-made God” who “Under the shears / of the prestidigitator cutter / (who achieves / the unachievable Act of the Apostles)” (174). In other words, equipped with a sharp, clean pair of shears, the “prestidigitator cutter” fulfils the impossible mission as an apostle; he employs a variety of materials and technical skills to craft the self out of fragments or bits and pieces, rather than adhering to a stable, coherent form of singularity. The material and stylistic versatility or hybridity seeks for other expressions of self. This pursuit is in response to an identity crisis or what Loy calls “the cruciform scourge / of conscience” (174). By deforming the stable clothes and identities and embracing a hybrid or altered existence, individuals can thus explore and reconstruct themselves in face of internal and external pressures.

Susan Howe interlaces the poetic texture with the textile fabric through the etymological root of “text” coming from the “Medieval Latin *textus* ‘style or texture of a work’, literally ‘thing

¹⁵ Also, see Matthew Hofer, “Mina Loy: Irritation and the ‘Unprintable Word’” in *Omnipotent Modernists: Poetry, Politics, and the Public Sphere* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2022) 48-83.

¹⁶ On Loy’s blasphemous tendency, see Suzanne Hobson, “Mina Loy’s ‘Conversion’ and the Profane Religion of her Poetry,” in Potter and Hobson 248-65; Steve Pinkerton, “Blasphemy and the New Woman: Mina Loy’s Profane Communion,” in *Blasphemous Modernism: The 20th-Century Word Made Flesh* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017) 51-78.

woven” as *textere* to “weave, to join, fit together, construct” (19). Cutting, sewing, designing the body of poetry and the costume as its formal structure, Loy herself as another modernist tailor, grasps the in-between space between the literary language as the signifier and its denotation as the signified. It interconnects the surface-level meaning of words and their deeper, associative meanings they signify. The poet-painter transforms the linguistic materials in order to reveal the complexities of hidden connotations through the incorporation of imagery, wordplay, and uncanny syntax. There is no “protoform” or any fixed selves but only a dynamic means of experiencing and remaking oneself moment by moment:

And man with his amorphous nature
who defied
the protoform of Who made him
but has not denied
Him obeyed
the tailor who remade him
and denies him (Loy, *LALB* 175)

Loy breaks down the notion of a “protoform of Who made him,” or the predetermined representation of selfhood, instead drawing our attention to the continuous process of invention and self-creation. Both the poet and the tailor avail of various artistic forms to invent protean (“amorphous”) figures and their formative lives and experiences, which cannot be confined to a single “protoform” of identifiable personalities. The remaking and reinvention of corporeal and spiritual selves underlie a processive structure of one’s identity formation in either ethnical, cultural, or sexual sense. In this way, Loy’s intermedial tailoring of artform and language becomes a proactive site of reformation, capable of altering words, bodies, and means of identifying them in varied materials and techniques. In the context of radical experiments and formal border-crossings, the cloth-tailoring serves as a trope of moulding and shaping the physical deportment through fashion. Aside from its aesthetic significance, her approach to tailoring and refashioning word and image does not merely refresh the visible presentation of body and identity. From an antiessentialist standpoint, it annihilates the voyeuristic male gaze and rejects “essentialist aesthetics and masculinist formulations of genius and creativity” (Goody, “Ladies” 279) in a self-reflexive way. This plastic process of designing and re-creating that unravels the fleshy materiality of language, in effect, is a “restitching of culture” (E. A. Frost 61) and its dressed identity to construct an alternative ideology instead of the sexist, racist, or fundamentalist one.

Loy’s tailoring language and artform is characterised by a performative nature that incorporates abstract nouns, unconventional spacing, hyphens, variable lines and stanza lengths, and a random rhyme scheme. She actively experiments with plastic materials of language and the

visual construction of her text, by selecting and arranging words, lines, and stanzas to create a dramatic whole as her modernist craftsmanship. In *Crafting Feminism from Literary Modernism to the Multimedia Present*, Amy E. Elkins conducts a medium-specific analyses of textile arts and speaks highly of the “woven thing, the texture and mess of its layers, its ability to bring together multiples” (1).¹⁷ Treating tailoring as a feminist craft, Loy’s designed poetry pays tailored attention to the physical details of her text and demonstrates a meticulous approach to shaping the poetic language and its spatial structure as an intersectional, intermedial entity. It spotlights an art of the *infrathin* – an art in which formal “*difference* is more important than similarity” at a micropoetic level (Perloff, *Infrathin* 6). As a mongrel means, her linguistic fusion combines scientific, religious, mythic, coining and archaic vocabularies into a stylistic integration, whose result is a rich and layered tapestry of languages that draws from diverse sources and influences.¹⁸ Her own biographical hybridity, stemming from her mixed English-Christian and the Hungarian-Jewish heritage, plays a crucial role in her artistic expressions. This poetics of “mongrelisation” or “crossbreeding” (Perloff, “English” 196) of cultural backgrounds contributes to Loy’s idiosyncratic perspectives and modes of articulation.¹⁹ The mongrel lineage and the creative mainspring show not only a crossbred parentage and interartistic networking, but also a multilingual, hybrid evolution under the influence of multiethnicities and their accents (C. Miller, “Finding” 594). Based on this epistemologically intricate mixture of languages, styles, subgenres, and registers, the poet-painter destabilises the traditional representation of realism and challenges its dominant stance, which often presents a one-directional and flattened view of reality.

Loy’s autobiographical persona or ego, Ova in this poem (and self-portrayed in fig. 2-7 as an altogether debonair lady), a half-English, half-Jewish woman, is acutely aware of the vital experience of vision in a cognitively active association with language:

The child
 whose wordless
 thoughts
 grow like visionary plants

finds
 nothing objective new
 and only words

¹⁷ For more about how modernist female artists as intersectional makers stitch the form and context through different generic threads about a feminist modernity, see Elkins, Introduction: The Weaver’s Handshake 1-25.

¹⁸ On Loy’s thematic and linguistic fusion as a key part of her mongrel poetics, see Sandeep Parmar, “Racial and Religious Hybridity in ‘Goy Israels’ and ‘Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose,’” in *Reading Mina Loy’s Autobiographies: Myth of the Modern Woman* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014) 109-27; Susan Gilmore, “Imna, Ova, Mongrel, Spy: Anagram and Imposture in the Work of Mina Loy,” in Shreiber and Tuma 271-318; Elizabeth A. Frost, “Mina Loy’s ‘Mongrel’ Poetics,” in Shreiber and Tuma 149-77.

¹⁹ On English Protestant motherhood, see Alex Goody, “Empire, Motherhood, and the Poetics of the Self in Mina Loy’s Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose,” *Life Writing*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2009) 61-76. On Jewish pagan fatherhood, see Rachel Potter, “Obscene Modernism and the Wondering Jew: Mina Loy’s ‘Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose,’” in Potter and Hobson 47-70.

mysterious

Sometimes a new word comes to her
she looks before her
and watches for its materialisation (*LalB* 139)

The self-image of Ova here seems to possess a unique perception and understanding of the world. Lack of realistic objectivity, she finds “only words / mysterious” as the life mystery inherent in words and their formation of thought and consciousness. These words hold great significance for the child as her constructive means of exploring and making sense of the reality. She points out the “materialisation” of “a new word” that connects “wordless / thoughts” and “visionary plants,” whose attentive observation suggests a deeply innate engagement with language and its potential for self-revelation. By exploring in a process of “watching” and actively witnessing, Ova seeks to revitalise and infuse the worn-out spectatorial gaze with revolutionary energies. This flexible experience of reading and materialising language allows for the rehabilitation of the hierarchical authority that previously controlled the act of seeing.



Fig. 2-7 Mina Loy, *Self-Portrait* (1905). Graphite on brown paper, mounted on cardboard, 31.3 by 24 cm. Joella Bayer Collection.

Likewise, Ova’s keen observation is guided by an “optic-ray” upon the eyes, which makes “instantly / these fragmentary / simultaneity / of ideas” (141) embody the word. In contrast to

her perspective, the figure of Esau in Ridover Square represents a biblically orthodox viewpoint in opposition to this rule of knowing and:

absorbs the erudite ideas
that Beauty IS nowhere
except posthumously to itself
in the antique

And trains
the common manifestations
of creation
to flatten
before his
eyes
to one vast monopattern (143)

Esau “absorbs the erudite ideas” and subscribes to a flattening epistemology rooted in patriarchal traditions, and reduces the “common manifestations / of creation” to a single, absolute “one vast monopattern” before his eyes. Ova, on the other hand, treats her mongrel identity and experience as a means of escape that offers alternative origins of creativity and self-representation. The flight gives birth to what Loy/Ova refers to as “Opposed Aesthetics” (142), which disagrees with Esau’s “monopattern” and offers the possibilities of a pluralistic and diverse creative approach to the seen world. The poet-painter’s experiments with various modes of language and the technology of vision lead to a strong link between the physiological process of reading-seeing and its psychic embodiment of feelings and perceptible resources. Such “boundary-crossing hybridity” (Lewis, *Dynamic Form* 95) or free association achieves the “materialisation” of verbal-visual materials, thereby enabling each side to encounter with its other or duality by bringing seemingly opposing parts together. It negates the negation and reveals the broken line as a productive force. Given the idea of intermediality, the mongrel or opposed aesthetics here demonstrates a tension between opposed objects or ideologies: mind and body, maternal and paternal influences, Anglophone heritage and pluralistic mongrel, and the poetic language and the painterly quintessence of visualisation. In short, these in-between dialogues bridging the gap of rivalrous pairs creates a powerful interplay within Loy’s intermedial artworks, which is navigated between the tangible aspects of language and its underlying symbolic associations with the real.

Many critics as early as Pound have proposed an Americanisation of Loy and her literary and artistic products within a distinctly national frame, but it is difficult to assign her a determined persona.²⁰ While she had a prominent presence in the interartistic *coterie* of New York City and

²⁰ Pound praised Loy for her poetry with the “arid clarity, not without its own beauty, of *le tempérament de l’Américain*” (56-57) in 1918. See his “Others,” *The Little Review*, vol. 4, no. 11 (1918) 56-58.

widely engaged with American cultures through publications like *Camera Work*, *Others*, as well as *The Dial*, her national identity cannot be easily defined.²¹ In spite of these long-lasting debates on her nationality, her expatriate and transatlantic biographies find it inadequate to set up the borderline to assimilate her nationhood or artisthood into one particular state.²² Even though creating in a primarily American style and subject matter as a result of her involvement in its modern culture, Loy's admiration for and engagement with it, however, are rooted in a composite, living language that differs from the British English of its Anglican canons. At this point, she articulates the urgent need for a new English language or medium of speaking English:

English – English enriched and variegated with the grammatical structure and voice-inflection of many races, in novel alloy with the fundamental time-is-money idiom of the United States, discovered by the newspaper cartoonists.

This composite language is a very living language, it grows as you speak. For the true American appears to be ashamed to say anything in the way it has been said before. Every moment he ingeniously coins new words for old ideas, to keep good humour warm. (*LolLB* 158-59)

As said in her essay “Modern Poetry,” her ideal “English” should be “enriched and variegated with the grammatical structure and voice-inflection of many races.” Loy's vision of language and poetry is not centred on the idea of an American English, but rather a poetic amalgamation of different dictions and syntactic structures. In the epitome of a “melting-pot” (159), she envisions a mongrelisation of English, drawing nutrients from multinational histories and cultures of multiple ethnicities, from Latin, African, Asian, European, to the idealised sample of American. This language is in a constant state of growth and evolution, as the true American “ingeniously coins new words for old ideas, to keep good humour warm” and maintain a sense of freshness. Her poetry, such as “Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose,” affirms this notion of anti-traditionalism and multiculturalism by putting forward a counterargument: “New Life / when it inserts itself into continuity / is disciplined / by the family / reflection / of national construction / to a proportionate posture / in the civilised scheme // deriving definite contours / from tradition” (Loy, *LolLB* 153). In exploring the “New Life” as a continuum of historical legacies, she astutely keeps the balance between tradition and innovation, where the innovative elements should adapt and derive “definite contours” from it so that they can change and reconfigure it with fresh but profound expressions.

²¹ On Loy's American identity, see Kouidis, *Mina Loy* 135-37; Lara Vetter, “Theories of Spiritual Evolution, Christian Science, and the ‘Cosmopolitan Jew’: Mina Loy and American Identity,” *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 31, no. 1 (2007) 47-63.

²² On Loy's transnational identity, see Cristanne Miller, “Tongues ‘Loosened in the Melting Pot’: The Poets of *Others* and the Lower East Side,” *Modernism/modernity*, vol. 14, no. 3 (2007) 455-76; Rachel Blau DuPlessis, “Wondering Jews’: Melting-Pots and Mongrel Thoughts,” in *Genders, Races, and Religious Cultures in Modern American Poetry, 1908-1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 135-74.

Grounded on mongrel languages and styles, Loy's interartistic practices and her diverse range of artworks reflect a stance of aesthetic activism and confront any unified homogeneity in self-categorisation. Rather than fitting into definite classes, she asks for an assemblage of identities that are all-encompassing, processive, and infinite. Her modernist artisthood as a poet-painter transcends prescribed boundaries and disciplines, encompassing various forms and genres. It rejects the idea of a single authorial figure and instead positions her as an "interlocutor" (Hayden, *Curious Disciplines* 3) within the transcontinental art world. The reconceptualization of artisthood involves a series of dynamic exchanges and communications among different groups of artists, avant-garde movements, and their aesthetic philosophies, which has been foregrounded in the Introduction of this dissertation. Again, taking Loy's novel, *Insel*, as an example, it can be seen as a psychoanalytic reading of a schizophrenic narrative in a prose-fictional form. The novel unfolds as a dialogue between Loy's poet-self (Mrs. Jones) and the painter-character, Insel, as alter ego.²³ Its structure could be reduced in a minimalist manner to the interplay between these "two auto/biographical narratives, whose completion depends on the existence of the other" (Scuriatti, *Mina Loy's Critical Modernism* 176). *Insel*, to a certain extent, becomes an autobiography of others, metafictionally suggesting the dual identity of Loy as a poet-painter and the dialogic, collaborative nature of artistic selves. Her split imaginary egos engage in conversations, stroll together, and share stories and impressions in Paris cafés. These activities do not just show us the proximity and close interaction of Bohemian culture in the 1930s, but more importantly, they represent a dialogic process of intermedial configurations compatibly commuting between her poetic and painterly identities. Hence, the self-consciously conversational nature of poet-painter artisthood is not fixed or essential but rather dialectical. It allows her to transform her poetic experimentations, with an intensively visual concern, into new forms of protean and multifarious selfhoods. Through this transformation, Loy as modernist poet-painter creates a new space guided by her *Lunar Baedeker* for multiple voices and experiences to be expressed and shared.

Loy's Feminist Anglo-Mongrel Futurism

In Yasna Bozhkova's *Between Worlds: Mina Loy's Aesthetic Itineraries* (2022), Mina Loy is regarded as the "perfect embodiment of intercultural nomadism of modernist artist" and her collective trajectories are marked by "geographical and aesthetic multiplicity and discontinuity" (3-4).

²³ For more on the dialogic and experimental features of *Insel*, see Scuriatti, "Insel: The Artists' Dialogic Selves and Modernist Art as Collaboration," in *Critical Modernism* 176-91; T. Miller, "More or Less Silent: Mina Loy's Novel *Insel*," in *Late Modernism* 207-22; Andrew Gaedtke, "From Transmissions of Madness to Machines of Writing: Mina Loy's *Insel* as Clinical Fantasy," *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 32, no. 1 (2008) 144-62.

Throughout her artistic career, she is a nomadic figure with diverse cultural exchanges and conversations. Her *Lunar Baedeker* works as a travelogue of peregrinating through various times and spaces, and moreover serves as an itinerary of intermedial modernism “creating a poetics of navigation between disparate avant-garde aesthetic projects” (5). From studying in Munich and Paris to working and living in Florence, Mexico, and eventually New York, Loy’s expatriate identity and transatlantic communication between Europe and North America exposed her to a wide range of distinctive literary and artistic circles. She encountered Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in Rome, Ezra Pound and Marcel Duchamp in Paris, Gertrude Stein in Italy, among many others. The artisthood of poet-painter allows her to innovate the poetic language and its visual form in her modernist experimentation, seamlessly merging these two “curious disciplines” (Hayden, *Curious Disciplines* 11). Her aesthetic focus on vision, verbal design, and the energy of making or tailoring destabilise the literary conventions, particularly the linear and syntactic model, to alter the cultural identities of race, gender, and sexuality through a “materialist approach” (E. A. Frost 33). Drawing new energies and materials from cosmopolitan avant-gardism, Loy’s poetic sensibility gradually recognised the limitations of the relatively static presentation of Imagism; she found it unable to “take cognizance of the need for a more conceptual language to convey the poet’s reflection upon the emotional states conveyed through the images” (C. Burke, “Limits” 39). Instead, she started to search for a more conceptual language that could capture the movement, versatility, rebellious change in both our physical and psychological realities. Moving beyond the implicitness and motionlessness of picturing associated with Impressionism or Post-Symbolism, Loy always strives for something more kinaesthetic and visually dynamic.

The campaign of Italian Futurism, headed by F. T. Marinetti in the 1910s, made a profound impact on Loy, awakening her to a heretically new sense of responsibility as a writer and painter across all artistic mediums. The Italian Futurists, at that moment, believed in a destruction of ties with standards and forms of the historic past in an iconoclastic gesture, and advocated for the invention of a high-powered, machine-driven mode of expression. Their ultimate goal was to depict the speed, technology, and wartime aggressive energy to celebrate the burgeoning industrialised urban society of the time. Their sanctification of war and its violent power could offer alternative tactics and radical experiments to conduct “deterritorialisations of poetic language and effect” (Goody, *Modernist Articulations* 24). To deterritorialise traditional language, Futurist aesthetics might be seen as a departure from the stillness of imagistic representation, replacing it with an energetic dynamism that seeks to re-present the modern world in a radical and novel way. The heightened sense of combining velocity with Bergsonian intuition emphasises the cognitive

process of human being over the mere perception of real objects.²⁴ It pays attention to dynamism and its celebration of high speed, which presuppose the transformative power of the mind and its ability to perceive and interact with the rapidly changing world. In Marinetti's landmark declaration, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism" published in 1909, he lays out the foundational principles for the Futurist writing. These dogmas underline the rejection of the past, the exaltation of modernity, and the embrace of war and violence. They call for modern artists to reflect on technology, velocity, and revolutionary energy of the contemporary society:

1. We intend to sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and fearlessness.
2. Courage, audacity, and revolt will be essential elements of our poetry.
3. Up to now literature has exalted a pensive immobility, ecstasy, and sleep. We intend to exalt aggressive action, a feverish insomnia, the racer's stride, the mortal leap, the punch and the slap.
(21)

Marinetti, as a revolutionist, employs an inflammatory tone to call upon his followers to glorify the literary mobility and action towards a spatial narrative, something was previously regarded as the exclusive domain of pictorial and sculptural arts. He claims that traditional temporal/spatial notions were no longer relevant by stating that "Time and Space died yesterday" (21). Modern artists, according to Marinetti, were living in a decisive moment where they could free themselves from the constraints of one-dimensional seeing/thinking and turns to the omnipresent, perpetually infinite velocity as an "aggressive action" and a new form of religion. In this paradigm, it attempts to transgress the boundaries of what was considered acceptable in representational arts, and explore new means to articulate and communicate ideas in both artistic and social spheres. The barriers between different impenetrable attributes of time-based poetry and space-oriented visual art, as well as those between high and low cultures, were shattered completely.²⁵ Futurism harnesses the power of absolute mobilisation at its highest speed as a vital and overwhelming force, which is able to break with strictures rooted in the historical past and bring about revolutionary formal changes in intermedial modes of expressions.

In the year of 1914, Loy partook in Futurism after befriending and engaging in affairs with Marinetti and Giovanni Papini in Florence. She exhibited artworks at the First Free Futurist International Exhibition in Rome, including several portraits of Marinetti and a painting titled *Dynamism of the Subconscious*, which is unfortunately lost today. During this period, she composed two manifestos: "Aphorisms on Futurism" and "Feminist Manifesto" – two aggressive

²⁴ On Henri Bergson's idea of consciousness or flux of being in language, see his *Creative Evolution*, translated by Arthur Mitchell (New York: Modern Library, 1944).

²⁵ On Futurist de-framing of arts see Marinetti, "The Variety Theatre," in *F. T. Marinetti: Critical Writings*, edited by Günter Berghaus, translated by Doug Thompson (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2006) 185-92.

proclamations of Futurist ideology and her critical exploration of the sexual selfhood. Marinetti's Futurist ideas provides Loy with a curious reorientation that enriches and alters the relationship among consciousness, artistic language, and sociocultural phenomena, helping her to reconsider the artistic tension among what is thought (consciousness), made (creation), and experienced (activity). Besides, the "formal ruptures" advocated by Futurism desire to dismantle those existing societal norms such as the current economic and political structures, and to transcend the purist boundaries between nations, races, and genders. Futurist artists struggle to go beyond the limits of pure aesthetic frame and engage with the wider socio-political landscape by overcoming the gap "between the reality ['world'] out there and the art construct ['text'] that re-presents it" (Perloff, *Futurist Moment* xvii-xviii).²⁶ Loy was drawn to this essence of dynamic Futurity, which points out that human intuition, as a psychological movement, could synthesise "the manifold experiences of sense and memory in a coherent 'simultaneity'" (Taylor 283) occurring across multiple mediums, cultures, and historical borders.

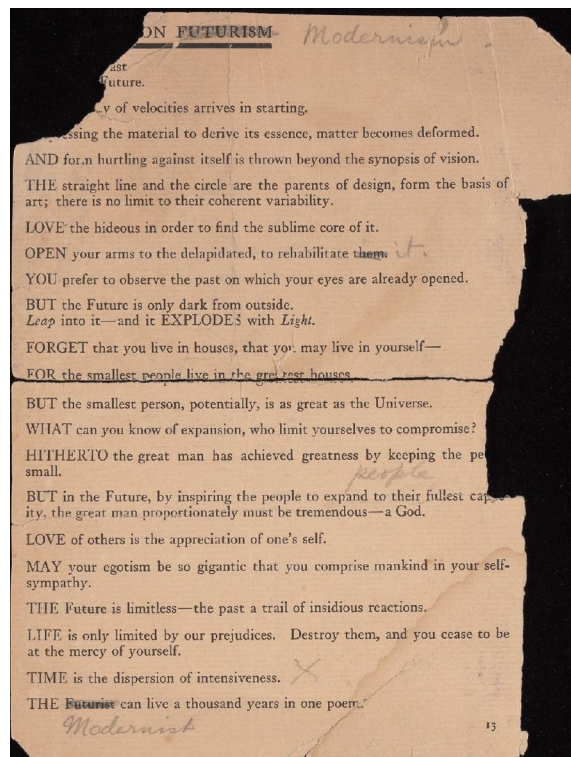


Fig. 2-8 Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Zang Tumb Tumb* (1914). Cover design, 20.4 by 13.5 cm. Milan: Edizioni Futuriste di "Poesia."

To record this unification of sensual and psychic developments, both Marinetti and Loy notice the signification of words as self-sufficient units and their typographical cooperation with space and punctuation, which carry reformative meaning on their own. Marinetti, later in a more elaborate programme titled "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature" in 1912, further expands on this concept by transforming free verse into a new form called *parole in libertà*, namely words-in-freedom. By doing so, he aimed to destroy conventional grammar, linear narrative, and

²⁶ In her *Futurist Moment*, Marjorie Perloff elaborately discusses a variety of Futurist techniques, for example, collage (invention), manifesto (violence and precision), and artist book (text and image).

punctuation marks, which had long been the inherently inner and exterior structures of poetic composition. “Syntax was a kind of abstract cipher that poets used to inform the crowd about the colour, musicality, plasticity, and architecture of the universe,” and he views it as “a kind of interpreter or monotonous cicerone” (Marinetti, *Selected Writings* 89). Rearranging syntax in a Futurist manner could disconnect the act of reading and viewing from a linear, predetermined process and instead open it up to nonlinear, multidirectional interpretations throughout the page. As an intermedial example, Marinetti’s first concrete poetry collection, published in 1912, is called *Zang Tumb Tuuum*. It consists of sound or free-word poems that biographically draw from his real-life experience during the Balkan War in the same year. The cover of the collection (see fig. 2-8) unfolds in an intermedial manner, whose spatial design of layout and lineation disturbs the typographical stability and bookish harmony of fonts and lines.²⁷ It creates atmospheric conditions reminiscent of the battlefield, evoking the mechanical imagery of gunshots, bombardments, and explosions. In fusing verbal and visual elements together, Marinetti draws on a mathematical or geometric scheme of picturesque language to convey these chaotic and dynamic scenes during the war.²⁸



²⁷ For a critical analysis of Futurist artist’s book, see Mirella Bentivoglio, “Innovative Artist’s Books of Italian Futurism,” in *International Futurism in Arts and Literature* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000) 473-86.

²⁸ On Marinetti’s typographical revolution, see his “Geometric and Mechanical Splendour and the Numerical Sensibility (1914),” in *Futurist Manifestos* 154-59.

Fig. 2-9 Mina Loy, "Aphorisms on Futurism" (1941). Page with notes. Mina Loy Papers, YCAL MSS 6, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Seen in relation to Loy's works of art, we can discern typical Futurist elements: a deep impatience with the past, a violent rejection of tradition, and a strong glorification of energy and mechanics. She consistently highlights these mechanical aspects through her radically experimental play with typography.²⁹ One of her first literary publications is "Aphorisms on Futurism," which appeared in Alfred Stieglitz's edited *Camera Work* in 1914 as her first envisagement about a new poetics of modernism (fig. 2-9) through a directory of modernist epigrams.³⁰ As a Futurist neophyte, she adopts a stylistic choice of capitalising the initial words at the start of each sentence, giving it the shape of a didactic list of religious precepts or political outlines. The poet welcomes Futurism as "an invitation to creativity and to a positive, affirmative view of life's connection with art" (Re 801), from her affirmative perspective on the interplay between life/politics and art/aesthetics. Loy's "Aphorisms on Futurism" can be read as a clairvoyant prophecy and manifesto that operates as an activist tool, "propaganda and branding mechanisms" (Hayden, *Curious Disciplines* 9) for a utopian prospect and a creative reconstruction of the universe. In this piece, she, again, applies her technique of mongrelisation to blending different phrases and registers, incorporating scientific vocabularies alongside figuratively prosaic expressions. This lexical fusion underscores the importance of a restless form and material re-formation, which takes a proactive role in challenging the given synopsis and utmost of the vision:

DIE in the Past.

Live in the Future.

THE velocity of velocities arrives in starting.

IN pressing the material to derive its essence, matter becomes deformed.

AND form hurtling against itself is thrown beyond the synopsis of vision.

THE straight line and the circle are the parents of design, form the basis of art; there is no limit to their coherent variability. (Loy, *LoLB* 149)

In this manifesto of Futurism as an aspect of modernism, there is a strong emphasis on the concept of birth or rebirth, as evident from the opening proverb "Live in the Future." Loy, as a Futurist during that period, embraces futurity as a revised version of modernity and employs anomalous

²⁹ As useful summaries of Loy's Futurism, see Peter Howarth, "Mina Loy and Futurism," in *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernist Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 147-53; Hayden, "Loy and Futurist Artishood," in *Curious Disciplines* 15-58.

³⁰ As can be seen from Loy's pencil-noted draft of "Aphorism on Futurism," she omits the word "Futurism" and replaces it with "Modernism" – reinforcing her idea of Futurism as an integral part of aesthetic modernism.

form and generic language to achieve this utopian vision. Specifically speaking, she insists on “pressing the material” to its pure, abstract essence and deforming the existing matter into new shapes. This formal transformation is linked to the perspectival power of sight or “vision,” offering alternative modes of reading, seeing, and interpreting the reformed text. For Loy, it becomes imperative as shown in the manifesto to evolve a new language: “THUS shall evolve the language of the Future. // THROUGH derision of Humanity as it appears – // TO arrive at respect for man as he shall be –” (152). Her Futurist “language of the Future” entails a radical reimagining of artform or medium to articulate and present that aligns with the future she envisions.

As such, Loy’s engagement with Italian Futurism enables her to reactivate poetic language and its dilapidated structure. By introducing Futurist epistemology with regard to speed, electricity, and active individuality, she intends to translate and remould the dynamics of modern experience and personal sentience in both collective and individual senses. In a time when consciousness is in crisis, Loy’s alteration of discourse possesses the potential to “create a new consciousness and liberate the reader from the fetters of outworn ideas [...] thus changing identity itself” (E. A. Frost 33-34). Her adaptation of Futurist principles aligns with the revolutionary spirit of Marxism, as noted by Antonio Gramsci: Futurists are Marxist revolutionaries even before Socialists who “*have grasped sharply and clearly that our age, the age of big industry, of the large proletarian city and of intense and tumultuous life, was in need of new forms of art, philosophy, behaviour and language*” (51).³¹ They have recognised the sociocultural demand for new formats of language, art, and other intellectual disciplines in the age of industrialisation and urbanisation. Loy, as one of Futurists, takes up the same duty to respond to these epochal needs and push for the creation of artistic expressions that can reflect the complexities and vitality of modern existence. At a sublime core, the vital form and its mechanics of forming are central to the represented thing as a cultural or political force. The transfiguring power of experimental artform can be a guiding lightsource, illuminating its evocative potentials to embody various ideologies and shape one’s subjectivity, like a flicker of light piercing from an unpredictable future:

OPEN your arms to the dilapidated, to rehabilitate them.

YOU prefer to observe the past on which your eyes are already opened.

BUT the Future is only dark from outside.
Leap into it – and it EXPLODES with *Light*.

FORGET that you live in houses, that you may live in yourself –

FOR the smallest people live in the greatest houses.

³¹ For more about Gramsci’s discussion about Marinetti and Italian Futurism, see his “Marinetti the Revolutionary” 49-51.

BUT the smallest person, potentially, is as great as the Universe. (Loy, *L0LB* 149)

For those who tend to dwell in the comfort of familiar memories and reluctant to venture into the unknown, Loy encourages them to “*Leap* into” the “Future” which holds immense potential for personal growth and enlightened transformation. Though it may seem uncertain or intimidating but “only dark from outside,” taking a leap of faith – in Futurism – can help themselves to discover unexpected brightness and infinite possibilities as “great as the Universe.”

Appealing for the “language of the Future”, Loy’s declaration of a linguistic (r)evolution is apparent in the design of her modernist manifesto. The poet-painter utilises irregular capitalisation at the beginning of each motto, combining the dynamic composition with her visual sensibilities. The visible and conceptual aspects of language intertwine to convey a sense of change and renovation. She wields a rhetorical weapon to declare the urgency for the rehabilitation of vision and mind in an assertive and aggressive tone. For example, phrases like “LET the Universe flow into your consciousness” and “Unscrew your capability of absorption and grasp the elements of Life – *Whole*” (151) demonstrate her aphoristic stress on this need for a drastic shift in human perception and consciousness to capture the essence of modernising experience. To achieve this, Loy employs typographical emphasis and manifestic authoritativeness to give her text the formal qualities of religious doctrines or political leaflets.³² Instead of following the old structure and “the wisdom of all forefathers,” she experiments with the material facet of syntax to forge a new “language of the Future” that is appropriate for celebrating the distinctive forms and configurations of the urban society:

THE mind is a magician bound by assimilations; let him loose and the smallest idea conceived in freedom will suffice to negate the wisdom of all forefathers.

LOOKING on the past you arrive at “Yes,” but before you can act upon it you have already arrived at “No.”

The Futurist must leap from affirmative to affirmative, ignoring intermittent negations – must spring from stepping-stone to stone of creative explorations; without slipping back into the turbid stream of accepted facts. (150)

This generic design reflects her Futurist belief in the plastic attribute of language to break free from traditional constraints (“to negate the wisdom of all forefathers”) and open to the ever-changing nature of a new era (“the smallest idea conceived in freedom”). As Loy understands it,

³² The special genre of manifesto has been defined as a key means for modernists and avant-gardists to give exhortations of their ways of thinking. See Janet Lyon, “Modernists and Gatekeeping Manifestoes: Pound, Loy, and Modern Sanctions” 124-67.

Futurism is not just a rejection of thematic redundancy from previous centuries by saying “No” to the past; it is also an “affirmative” stance that strives for something truly new through “creative explorations” without hesitation or “intermittent negations.” Her stylistic “fashioning” (Goody, “Ladies of Fashion” 267) or “overwriting” (E. A. Frost 32), characterised by an overuse of rhetorical devices to create dramatic effects, could be read/seen simultaneously as aesthetic activism campaigning for an enormous liberation of discourse and consciousness. These deliberately capitalised and italicised words function as a visible bomb thrown into the poetic battlefield based on the disruptive, revivifying energy of Futurism: “LET the Universe flow into your consciousness, there is no limit to its capacity, nothing that it shall not re-create” (Loy, *LoLB* 151). The Futurist worldview encourages one to “re-create” the “Universe” in the unlimited, creative impulses of “consciousness.” Through this inventive approach to refashioning poetic language and its political implications, Loy actively participates in the cultural and artistic revolutions of her time, calling for a heightened awareness of contemporary societal shifts that can shape and reorder our real-life experiences.

Loy’s Futurist presentation, “mov[ing] beyond *vers libre* to *parole in libert *” (Hampson and Montgomery 68) – from “free verse” (original in French) to “words-in-freedom” (in Italian) – equips her to devastate the conventionality of poetic style and diction and explore more hermeneutic possibilities in her design. According to her aphorisms, “THE Futurist can live a thousand years in one poem. // HE can compress every aesthetic principle in one line” (Loy, *LoLB* 150). This formal aesthetics is reflected in her intermedial experimentation with capitals, italics, bold type, and even different font sizes. By concretising these visual elements, the poet-painter makes her text a work of art, a painting with codes, eliminating the boundaries between form and content, art and life, object and environment, in order to capture the co-existent perceptual and cognitive experience of the reader-viewer aesthetically compressed in “one line.” In another declaration of Marinetti titled “Destruction of Syntax – Imagination without Strings – Words-in-Freedom” in 1913, he invents the “*synthetic and essential lyricism, wireless imagination, and words-in-freedom*” (95) as the guiding principles for his technical manifesto of Futurist literature. It involves replacing traditional lineation with what he calls typographical design or telegraphic lyricism as new literary inspirations. In similar fashion to this Futurist typography, Loy’s materialist revolution of language treats all printed letters, marks, and even spaces as material objects on the typeset page. She gives a physical shape to the indeterminacy and striving spirit of artistic imagination through her virtuoso manipulation of these textual components.³³

³³ Marjorie Perloff finds that “the aesthetic of early modernism has provided the seeds of the material poetic” (3). The material of various media excites literature; instead of acting as an interart exchange at the thematic or ekphrastic level, the nature of intermedial

In addition to her “formal and typographic experiments, the elimination of punctuation, and the conscious destruction of syntax” (Hampson and Montgomery 67) as discussed above, Loy also incorporates the Futurist collage structure into her poetic form. Collage art, as a “visual or spatial concept” (Perloff, *Futurist Moment* 72), diminishes the linearity of images or words to express an intensified sensation of speed and movement.³⁴ It focuses on a presentation of simultaneity and dynamism. In contrast to three-dimensional paintings that depict the realistic matter, artists like Marcel Duchamp and Giacomo Balla concentrate on the simultaneous arrangement of fragmented facets as a multidimensional whole out of perspective. For instance, Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* captures the sense of movement by illustrating the visible traces of a naked figure going downstairs; Balla’s *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash* similarly presents the juxtaposed motions of a dog through the depiction of its stepping feet and wagging tail. In both Futurist paintings, the artistic simultaneity presents a concurrent space – for the chronophotographic representations of the nude and the pet, where there appears a formal coexistence of past, present, and future of the depicted objects through the continuum of our perception and mind. In a conceptual manner of collaging times on the same plane of canvas, this act of sketching multiple temporalities in a single moment reinforces the Futurist aesthetics of fully apprehending the vibrant, dynamic, ever-shifting nature of modernity.

Although Loy never presented a piece of drawing that was characterised in a Futurist manner, her “Italian Pictures,” originally published in *The Trend* in the same year as her “Aphorisms,” can be interpreted as a series of fragmented Futurist vignettes about local inhabitants and their urban life. In these “Pictures,” the poet-painter attempts to capture the essential dynamism of a bustling street intermedially in the poetic form to make “one of the first English poems to employ simultaneity and juxtaposition as formal principles” (C. Burke, qtd. in Thurston 414). The title of “Italian Pictures” suggests a painterly leitmotif throughout the group-poems. The trilogy is designed to vividly record the lively atmosphere of the urban city and the sensory, emotional, and psychological experiences that accompany it. Its picturesque depiction of the street juxtaposes the bodily and mental responses gathered there from various times and places. The opening stage of the first poem, “July in Vallombrosa,” presents a seemingly motionless scene on the poet-painter’s sketchpad with an “Old lady sitting still / Pine trees standing quite still” (Loy, *LoLB* 9). However, the poetic narrative quickly shifts to break the initial silence and physical stillness of the picture, by drawing a short bit of interior monologues, external conversations like

modernism asks for a revolution of language best suited to engaging with a technologically and aesthetically dynamic form and structure. See her *21st-Century Modernism: The “New” Poetics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002).

³⁴ On the collage poetry, see Marjorie Perloff, “Collage and Poetry,” in *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, edited by Michael Kelly, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 384-87. Specifically on Loy’s, see Suzanne Zelazo, “‘Altered Observation of Modern Eyes’: Mina Loy’s Collages, and Multisensual Aesthetics,” *The Senses and Society*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2009) 47-73.

the chitchats outside the hotel, and the old woman's memories recalling her "daughter / Who has been spent/ In chasing moments from one room to another" (10). What stands out here is the depiction of the transience of temporality: "the essence of an hour / Was in its passing" (10); Loy portrays the subtle and imperceptible passage of time through an amplified comparison between the ageing and mechanical desire, which are personified by anorexia in a "saucer of gruel" and the "passionate breath / Of the bronchitis-kettle" (10). Her fragmented imageries and the juxtaposition of different *tableaux* produces a sense of movement and liveliness, in a Futurist way to represent the energetic flux of urbanity and the fleeting nature of our actual experiences within it.

Loy's synthetic rendering of the "multiple, intersecting and overlapping sensations, sounds, images, smells" (Re 803), feelings and consciousnesses goes further in the next section "The Costa San Giorgio." This vignette continues to implement Futurist devices such as ungrammatical syntax, lexical or rhythmic repetition like alliteration, onomatopoeia, suggestive spacing, capitalisation, and unpunctuated stanzas. These formal acrobatics work together to create a collage-like effect, pictorially displaying a simultaneous arrangement of spatial elements rather than a linear or sequential one. They disrupt the traditional grammatical structure of narrating and allows for a more visual and sensory experience of the poetic text. Without any explanatory connection, the intermedial interplay between uppercase and lowercase letters, along with their signified meanings as disparate items, implies a totality of vision and the collaboration with imagination. This innovative technique abandons the fixed, singular point of view, instead activating a multifaceted perspective of those seeable objects and characters. The second "Picture" starts with a Futurist prelude summarising the vivacity and enthusiasm of modern Italian urbanism:

We English make a tepid blot
 On the messiness
 Of the passionate Italian life-traffic
 Throbbing the street up steep
 Up up to the porta
 Culminating
 In the stained frescoe of the dragon-slayer (Loy, *LoLB* 10)

The opening lines invite the reader-viewer to experience the layered and interconnected aspects of the passionate and chaotic symphony in this urban environment, especially compared to the less fervent and subdued culture of Englishness. The cultural contrast is created between the liveliness and vigorous "messiness" of Italy and the more restrained "tepid blot" of English presence. On her picturesque journey, the narrator is walking amidst a messy flow of "passionate Italian life-traffic" and moving towards an unmentioned destination. With an admiring mood, the repeated

“up” signifies an increasing elevation upwards the “porta,” whose “stained fresco of the dragon-slayer” exemplifies the grandeur, heroism, and triumph over challenges embedded in its Roman history and civilisation. The line of the verse, intentionally varied in length and devoid of punctuation, mirror the spontaneous overflow of collecting one’s perceptive and affective data, which mimics the unpredictability and fluidity of the modern experience.

As “Throbbing the street,” we are situated in a pictorial frame that gradually expands into a multisensory dynamic process when the speaker lingers on a busy commercial boulevard in the city:

Oranges half-rotten are sold at a reduction
Hoarsely advertised as broken heads
BROKEN HEADS and the barber
Has an imitation mirror
And Mary preserve our mistresses from seeing us as we see ourselves
Shaving
ICE CREAM
Licking is larger than mouths
Boots than feet
Slip Slap and the string dragging
And the angle of the sun
Cuts the whole lot in half (11)

Juxtaposing a vivid array of quotidian things such as the “Orange half-rotten,” “BROKEN HEADS,” “an imitation mirror,” “ICE CREAM,” “Boots,” “string,” and “the angel of the sun,” Loy adopts a kaleidoscopic point of view to design a spatial composition on her textual canvas. The urban panorama here sketches a series of disjointed or contrasting images, which are organised and reordered into a collage or cinematic montage of fragmented elements to invoke the throbbing atmosphere of Florentine daily life. As a close-up shot of commercial activities between traders and their customers, the sensory imageries of a larger “Licking” than “mouths” and “Boots than feet” add to the exaggerated, jarring, and discordant scene of the written picture. Loy sets out the fourth stanza as closely following the third: the former bursts with the sound and action of selling oranges, licking ice cream, and dragging a string; by contrast, the latter seems comparatively calm and silent with the only verb of Mary’s “wonder[ing]” (11). The verbal theatricality is thus developed on the page or the printed stage as a *tableau vivant* (living picture), which focuses on the dynamically arranged presentation of found objects. The capture of physical motions in acts of slipping, slapping, and dragging disrupts the quiet flow of the poetic stanza and infuses a vigorous sense into the otherwise static landscape. By cutting “the whole lot in half,” this Futurist method of collage makes the compositional network of different forms therein “highly structured and yet

curiously unstable” (Perloff, *Futurist Moment* 51).³⁵ Literally and metaphorically, the collaged “Italian Pictures” are designed to construct a verbal-visual structure that is rich yet contradictory in its formal and scenic density, through the dissonance or juxtaposition of stasis and activity, silence and action, and space and time from various angles and moments.

Hence, this intermedial, multisensual collection of diverse voices and characters, akin to a site of assemblage, can generate a “multidimensional, multi-directional field” that is “traversed by different planes of effect” (Goody, *Modernist Articulations* 22). It becomes a “productive field of contingent connections between particular point-signs” (22) for reader-viewers’ multiple interpretations from both linguistic and graphic perspectives.³⁶ Loy continues to wield her word-brush on the white page:

The smell of small cooking
From luckier houses
Is cruel to the maimed cat
Hiding among the carpenter’s shavings
From three boys
– One holding a bar –
Who nevertheless
Born of human parents
Cry when locked in the dark (*LōLB* 11)

On her typeset canvas, she chooses a disordered narrative to reproduce the explosive amalgamation of sensations, observations, and mental imaginations in a riot of optical, olfactory, audiovisual, tactile, and psychic descriptions. She employs a non-linear syntax, with nouns and verbs overlapping and crisscrossing like planes on a two-dimensional paper, to encapsulate a pluri-sensory and multi-perspectival movement of individually sensorial and emotive faculties.³⁷ Half-rotten oranges on sale, a barber’s mirror, lingering traces of ice-cream on lips, slipping boots, sunlight casting oblique angles, and the aroma of cooking from rows of houses – all these palpable details no longer serve solely as realistic objects treated in representational art. Instead, through the “Bits of bodies / Variously leaning” that “Mingle eyes with the commotion” (12), they become a dynamic juxtaposing of motion and stillness, intuition and physicality, and the subjective and the objective to enrich and intensify the first-hand experience of everyday life. They function analogously to angular lines, abstract shapes, contrasting colours, grotesque angles, and ambiguous

³⁵ More specifically, see Perloff, “The Invention of Collage,” in *Futurist Moment* 42-79.

³⁶ On Loy’s assemblage (especially in her late poems) cognate with collage/montage, see Amy E. Elkins, “From the Gutter to the Gallery: Berenice Abbott Photographs Mina Loy’s Assemblages,” *PMLA*, vol. 134, no. 5 (2019) 1094-103.

³⁷ For more about Loy’s radical sensuous writings of smell, taste, and touch in relation to the feminine/feminist experience based on this multisensory integration, see Allyson C. DeMaagd, “‘choked by a robot!’: Technology, Gender, and the Battle of the Senses in Mina Loy’s *Insel*,” in *Dissensuous Modernism: Women Writers, the Senses, and Technology* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2022) 55-91.

arrangements of buildings and streets depicted in *The Street Enters the House* (fig. 2-10) by Umberto Boccioni. In like manner, Boccioni's distinctly Futurist style and techniques in this oil painting reject the naturalist representation with photographic precision, and turn to create a painterly synthesis of activity, movement, and intersection as the core of a progressive construction.



Fig. 2-10 Umberto Boccioni, *The Street Enters the House* (1911). Oil on canvas, 100 by 100.6 cm. Sprengel Museum, Hanover.

From Europe to America: A Dadaist Refashioning

In the multitude of proliferating modernist groups in the early twentieth century, Mina Loy was not just “fortuitously ‘present’ in these locations at the zero hour of their modernist fluorescence [as] neither onlooker nor acolyte but as an acutely critical cross media artist” (Hayden, Introduction ix). She stood out as an intermedial poet-painter critically approaching the emerging avant-garde scenes. Loy was not a passive observer or a follower but rather a discerning participant, who questioned and challenged the dominant narratives and ideologies of her time. Her modernist stance is “critical” (Scuriatti, *Critical Modernism* 16) of dominant accounts on the normative notions of gender, selfhood, and subjectivity. As she explored deeper into the interactive relationship between language and consciousness, art creation and self-identity, Loy began to recognise the problematic trajectory of Italian Futurism and their problematic agenda. She detected the violently profascist, misogynistic attitudes hidden within the movement’s anti-woman discourses, virilism,

and sexual biases during the First World War. As a critical response, Loy expressed her skepticism about this masculine worship of Futurism in correspondence with Mabel Dodge Luhan in 1914, writing that: “in the throes of a conversion to Futurism – but I shall never convince myself – There is no hope in any system that combats ‘le mal avec le mal’...and that is really Marinetti’s philosophy” (Loy, *LaLB* lxvii). She could never convince herself of its merits and saw Futurist philosophy as a system that combats “evil with evil” and offers no hope. The male-dominated outrages and scandals of those Futurists propose to “hymn the man at the wheel [with] *scorn for woman*” and “fight moralism, feminism, every opportunistic or utilitarian cowardice” (Marinetti, “Founding and Manifesto” 21). Over time, Loy became more and more disillusioned with this male-fascist version of Futurism that F. T. Marinetti and Giovanni Papini championed for, which only perpetuates misogynistic “*scorn for woman*” and represses feminism as a kind of materialistic, self-serving “cowardice.” Her ontological criticality reflects a denial of oppressive sociocultural structures that are enforced on sexual duties and expectations. In an activist or Dadaist gesture, she struggles to create an artistic space for alternative perspectives and representations of gender roles, dismantling the patriarchal situation that hinders the articulation of women and other marginalised voices.



Fig. 2-11 Mina Loy, *Illustrations* (n.d.). Still image, 22 by 28 cm. Mina Loy Papers, YCAL MSS 6, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

In reaction to the dissimilitude of Futurist paths, Loy redirects her focus to establish a new feminine or feminist version of movement that can provoke more profound and serious aesthetic and ethical inquiries about one’s gender and sexuality. No doubt, it was the liberatory language and empowering effects of Futurism that acted as a therapeutic vaccine for Loy in 1910s, rescuing her from an unhappy marriage to British painter Stephen Haweis between 1903 and 1917. This

tumultuous period is caricatured both verbally and visually in her unfinished novel *Esau Penfold* (fig. 2-11), where Haweis in one of its drafts is illustrated with a symbolically phallic, anti-Semitic big nose. Nevertheless, while the artistic and erotic associations with Futurists like Marinetti and Papini failed to fully awaken her from a sexist nightmare, they did help her, to some extent, for the first time to declare a feminist war regarding womanly issues and feminist politics.³⁸ From this sexually emancipatory perspective of femininity, Loy surpasses biological expectations and limitations that restricted the gendered agency and autonomy before by boldly adapting and reformulating those traditional masculinist values. The poet-painter's artistic refashioning of language and artforms aims to redefine the discourses, life narratives, and identities of women, expanding the boundaries of what it means to be truly feminine rather than lunatic. In doing so, she is empowered by a Dadaist engine to demystify and subvert female concerns in relation to marriage, the sex act, naming, and procreation, which have long been governed and controlled by men within an unfairly gendered societal framework.

In many poems, Loy parodies her Futurist experience with biting sarcasm and discloses the paradoxically narcissistic machismo within the movement. The parody exposes how the masculinist Futurists denounce femininity as parasitic and dependent while simultaneously demanding a fetishised female existence that serves as a projection of male desire and ideology. As a sartorial treatment of Futurist bureaucrats and their rhetoric in "Lions' Jaws," Loy unveils the male exploitation and manipulation of female artists involved in the "flabbergast" movement, whose manifesto is emblematically "hurled by the leader Raminetti" (Loy, *LolLB* 47). In a play with their names, she satirically refers to "DANRIEL GABRUNZIO" (Gabriel D'Annunzio), "Raminetti" (Marinetti), and "Bapini" (Papini) through the orthography of deliberate misspellings. The figures mentioned here all were pioneers of the European avant-garde, but their commitments were steeped in masculinist terms, leaving behind a metaphorical "abandoned harem" of female artists who were marginalised and overlooked. The poet suggests that these women were neglected to the point of ending up in "psycho-pathic wards," where the male Futurists indulged in sexual exploits symbolised by the mention of "virgins riding alabaster donkeys" at almost "every noon" (46-47). Through these re-nominative references, Loy highlights the irresponsible and destructive nature of errant male sexuality upon the minds of women and their feminine valuation:

to crash upon the audacious lightning
of Gabrunzio's fashions in lechery
. . . and wheedle its inevitable way

³⁸ For more on this, see Carolyn Burke, "The New Poetry and the New Woman: Mina Loy," in *Coming to Light: American Women Poets in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Diane W. Middlebrook and Marilyn Yalom (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985) 37-57.

to the “expected” woman’s heart
 her cautious pride
 extorting betrayal
 of Woman wholesale
 to warrant her surrender
 with a sense of Victory (47-48)

In her sharp critique and parodic approach to the tragic fate of “expected” womanhood, Loy discloses the objectification and devaluation of femininity within these male-centric artistic movements of the time. She utilises the trope of anagrams to represent male figures like Marinetti and Papini – the latter also satirised in another poem titled “Giovanni Franchi” – who involve in self-aggrandising pursuits such as “auto-hypnotic God-head” and “plastic velocity” to take advantage of “every feminine opportunity” (48-49). By portraying these male artists in such a satirical manner, we are able to discern their inherent manipulative and opportunistic tendencies. On the other hand, by pointing out the “betrayal” and “surrender” of women to societal expectations, Loy bitterly critiques the restrictive and oppressive substance of gender roles and the toll they take on women’s independent status quo.

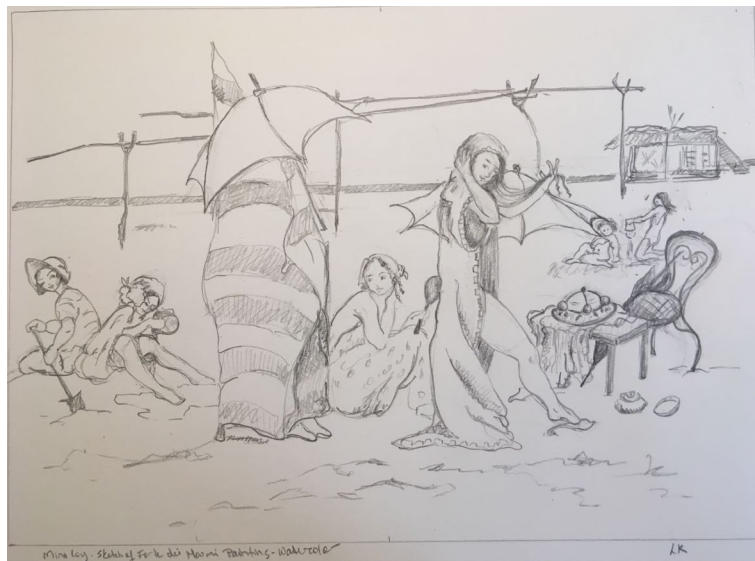


Fig. 2-12 Mina Loy, *Sketch of Forte dei Marmi* (ca. 1911). Pencil on paper, 50.8 by 63.5 cm. Private collection.

Out of masculinist desires, “Gabrunzio’s fashions in lechery” compel and coerce the woman to comply with the culturally sexist demands placed upon womanhood in a sense of impending doom. In contrast, Loy’s own fashion design showcases her innovative approach to refashioning women’s costume and formal representation. As discussed in the first part of this chapter, tailoring works as a crafty “practice woven from the threads of its physical reality and its conceptual flexibility” which “reveals the ephemerality of objects, muddies high and low artistic

categories, and allows ‘crafty’ women to subvert systems of oppression” (Elkins 1). Rather than embodying self-restraint or sensual implications within a moral framework, Loy’s fashionable clothing embraces a range of stylistic fashions as a means of self-expression, re-presentation, and empowerment. For instance, in the pencil draft of her beach costumes (fig. 2-12), she exhibits various garments such as simply embroidered dresses, loosely edged robes, as well as delicately designed hats. Paying a robust attention to the materiality of fabrics and textiles, these designs are not meant to conceal or restrict the womanly body but celebrate its vitality and fabric expressiveness of a feminine experience when worn. The tangible properties of language and perforated forms, like these beachwears, can wash and cleanse the dirtied notions of body after its socialised peregrinating in the sea. Loy, as a tailor-artist, utilises the fashion design of women’s clothes as a transformative act of sewing and re-costuming the corporeality, gaze, and self-identification in a creative manner. Through her poignant language and imagery, she prioritises the “inevitable” dilemma faced by females who have to navigate their compromised choices due to social conformity and traditionalism. Her intermedial interest in refashioning the textility of word and the texture of image, serving as an artistic representation of her feminist ideals, calls for the enfranchisement of creativity and self-determination as an urgent cultural need.

In this enterprise, Loy emphasises the indeterminacy of woman-figures, whose feminine identity cannot be authentically represented or articulated within such a context of essentialist sexology.³⁹ Rowan Harris notes that the irony and parody in Loy’s early writings is to “undermine the stability of femininity as a natural sign” (38). According to this, the poet conveys a constant urge to change and refashion the gendered pronoun, shifting it from the singular to the plural, from the certain to the indeterminable, and from the real to the fictional. She operates a fluid and malleable process of naming and self-identification, nominalistically representing herself as “Nima Lyo, alias Anim Yol, alias / Imna Oly” (Loy, *LoLB* 49). Instead of a speaking subject in lyric traditions, this rejection of a single absolutist fixation on one’s nominal identity enables her to explore the complexities and multiplicities of an uncertain, “unexpected” womanhood. By adapting different names, lives, and personae, Loy creates a variety of female figures for herself to articulate a dramatic way of storytelling based on her real-life experiences. The politics of self-naming/nominating and positioning as the “fluxional performance” (C. Miller, *Cultures* 18) of a borderless ego stands against the traditional notions of a fixed, singular subject. Her fictional distortion of self-representation and self-identification open up new spaces for diverse narrative possibilities, embracing the proteanism and performativity of feminine discourses.

³⁹ On Loy’s feminism as resistance to authority, see Kinnahan, “The Full of My Freed Voice’: Williams and Loy, Feminism and the Feminine,” in *Poetics of the Feminine* 19-74; C. Miller, “Sexology, Style, & the Poet’s Body,” in *Cultures of Modernism* 90-130.

Instead of following the Futurist “anti-woman discourse [and] violent virilism” (Re 799), Loy turns to set up a feminine or feminist model of aesthetic activism. Her break-up with Italian Futurists in both literal and physical terms led her to re-examine issues of gender, sexuality, and repressive forces within a masculine society, disclosing the historical dichotomy underpinned in the social structuration of sexual relationships. Loy’s departure from them signifies an intentional demolition of their biased representation of women and womanhood in misogynistic languages and images. In “The Effectual Marriage” subtitled by “The Insipid Narrative of Gina and Miovanni,” the poet pays attention to gender roles within the context of marriage by looking at a fictional narrative of the postnuptial life of a genius and his wife: Gina and Miovanni, or Mina and Giovanni, parodying Loy and her lover. Her poetic tone contains a mocking irony, through which she questions and undermines the traditional place of women within the domestic sphere. Miovanni is portrayed as an enlightened artist, with Gina admiring his brilliant mind as “round light shining,” who is always “Outside of time and space” and even cannot show up for supper (Loy, *LōLB* 37-38). This verbal portrait satirises the hypocritical priority of his artistic pursuits over his domestic responsibility and civil partnership with his wife. It doubts the unequal distribution of power and agency between genders, and opens resistance to the prevailing cultural norms that confine women to household chores and place men in positions of intellectual authority.

For the husband-figure of Miovanni with his masculine subjectivity, Gina only serves as a wife-figure whom “we might dispense with”:

Gina being a female
 But she was more than that
 Being an incipience a correlative
 an instigation of the reaction of man
 From the palpable to the transcendent
 Mollescent irritant of his fantasy
 Gina had her use Being useful
 contentedly conscious
 She flowered in Empyrean
 From which no well-mated woman ever returns (36)

Gina is depicted here as an “incipience,” “correlative,” and “instigation” whose “palpable” existence and “transcendent” actions merely elicit sexual feelings and responses from her husband. Her personal worth is reduced to a “Mollescent irritate of his fantasy” without feminine agency to assert herself in her own way. In a parodic fashion, Loy presents Gina as a passive figure within the gendered power relationship that often marginalise and undervalue the female’s contribution into a sexual and domestic fulfilment:

Ding dong said the bell
Mioivanni Gina called
Would it be fitting for you to tell
the time for supper
Pooh said Mioivanni I am
Outside time and space

Patience said Gina is an attribute
And she learned at any hour to offer
The dish appropriately delectable (37)

By bringing attention to the intrinsic values or “attribute[s]” of women as free individuals rather than homemakers or caretakers, Loy underscores that they shall never be measured by their utility or “useful[ness]” to their husbands. We can never say “he was magnificently man / She insignificantly a woman” (37) based on the biased criteria of their different sexual and societal commitments. Interestingly, the purposeful use of textual spaces in-between printed words further represents the problematic gap between the sexes and their assigned sexual values in a domestic setting of marriage. In their household, there is lack of face-to-face communications, so the “Patien[t]” wife must call her husband to ask him where he is having dinner; even worse, the husband responds dismissively, claiming to be “Outside time and space.” Mioivanni’s arrogance and detachment from the marital obligations contrast with Gina’s obedience and dedication to her wifely duties. In a visible manner, the poet-painter’s choice to leave these empty spaces is not arbitrary, but serves as a spatial representation of the fracture and inequality that exists between men and women in preordained gender roles. Through these designed lines, Loy reframes the narrative surrounding the uxorial role in marriage life and re-evaluates the ways of identification in which the sexual worth is alienated and perpetuated.

Back to the opening stanza of the poem, the absurd “door” (36) as a demarcation line within the house carries symbolic weight, representing not only the physical separation of spaces between male and female but also the social, cultural, and ideological inequalities enacted by male artists.⁴⁰ The “door” of the house becomes a metaphorical boundary that reinforces gender categories and their sexual divide between the interior and the external. Rather than the destination of romantic love, the notion of marriage is associated with a form of domestic confinement and a private institution where traditional gender positions are rigidly defined and enforced. The house is a domestic body and feminine property (Kouididis, *Mina Loy* 32). The presence of its separated rooms further indicates the sexual departmentalisation and stereotypical duties and areas assigned

⁴⁰ For more about Loy’s idea of the gendered space and its metaphorical house of domesticity, see Laura Scuriatti, “Negotiating Boundaries: The Economics of Space and Gender in Mina Loy’s Early Poems,” *Feminismo/s*, no. 5 (2005) 71-84; Jacinta Kelly, “Of Archives and Architecture: Domestication, Digital Collections, and the Poetry of Mina Loy,” *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 32, no. 91-92 (2017) 171-85.

to each sex. These sexist divisions reflect the sociocultural norms and impositions that restrict people within their predetermined identities based on their sexual differences: women are transcendently confined to the domestic sphere, while men occupy public spaces. To be specific, they are living in an alienated distance:

In the evening they looked out of their two windows
Miovanni out of his library window
Gina from the kitchen window
From among the pots and pans
Where he so kindly kept her
Where she so wisely busied herself
Pots and Pans she cooked in them
All sorts of sialagogues
Some say that happy women are immaterial (Loy, *LoLB* 36)

In this “Effectual Marriage,” the couple are categorised into essential bodies of “man his work” and “woman her love” (38) and spaces in the “library” and “kitchen,” symptomatic of the sexist identification and labour distribution. Loy’s poetic visualisation of this spatial division signifies a larger complex mechanism that enforces gender distinctions and their restricted sexual identities. By juxtaposing the male gaze out of his “library window,” associated with intellectual engagements and communal areas traditionally dominated by men, and the female peep out of her “kitchen window,” with women’s domestic chores in an intimate sphere, Loy sharply criticises the restrictive and confining nature of these gendered spaces in political and behavioural terms within a phallogocentric world:

What had Miovanni made of his ego
In his library
What had Gina wondered among the pots and pans
One never asked the other
So they the wise ones eat their suppers in peace (37)

In this repeated comparison, Miovanni in his “library” whereas his wife, Gina, is busy cooking in the kitchen “among the pots and pans” functions as a poignant critique of the contradictions within marital dynamics. The ironic elevation of Miovanni’s inflated sense of selfhood and his preoccupation with work reinforces the affective disconnection between the husband and the wife, which denotes his lack of consideration for Gina’s labour and the gendered surplus value placed upon her. Again, based on these meticulously designed spaces throughout the poetic lines, the gap symbolises the unbridgeable divide between the husband’s self-elevated position and the mundane tasks pressured on the wife. Loy’s intermedial vision in this parody expresses the imperative to cure the claustrophobia of the closed, determinative embodiments of gender in various forms. She

advocates for a more flexible and inclusive understanding and representation of sexual identity with a clear break from the long-accepted principles of symbolic order underpinned by languages, ideologies, and social customs. It has to go beyond the distinguishing boundaries between temporality and spatiality, masculinity and femininity, sociality and domesticity, and rationality and corporeality. For Loy, being a New Woman means not only a dynamic experience of supposed novelty and transgression, but also an activist endeavour to challenge historical authority and reevaluate every notion of it in a Dadaist vein.



Fig. 2-13 Mina Loy, *Portrait of Man Ray* (ca. 1925). Graphite on paper, 50.8 by 30.5 cm. Private collection.

Indeed, In her involvement with the New York avant-garde and especially the Dadaist movement, Loy's feminist sexology underwent an aesthetic transformation as she absorbed more powerful, destructive sources of New York Dada in a satirical reaction to Italian Futurism.⁴¹ Divorcing Haweis in 1917, she began a happy but short marriage with Dadaist poet-artist Arthur Cravan, and socialised with Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, Man Ray (fig. 2-13), and other influential Dadaists in the Walter Conrad Arensberg salons.⁴² "Compared to Loy's collisional

⁴¹ About Loy's historiographical trend of Dada, see Januzzi, "A Propos: Loy and [Historical] Dada" 578-84; Goody, "Dada, Cyborgs and the New Woman in New York," in *Modernist Articulations* 85-117; Hayden, "Loy and Dadaist Artishood," in *Curious Disciplines* 61-113.

⁴² For more about Walter Conrad Arensberg's salons in New York, see Stephen Voynce, "Make the World Your Salon?: Poetry and Community at the Arensberg Apartment," *Modernism/modernity*, vol. 15, no. 4 (2008) 627-46.

encounter with [Italian] Futurism and especially with Marinetti's dogmatic leadership," the Arensberg circle provided her a much more "dynamic, flexible, and unpredictable model for artistic community" (Bozhkova 82) in a utopian sense, open to intermedial practices and far-reaching collaborative personalities. Loy, at that moment, became enthusiastic about the iconoclastic self-imagining of Dada to reject and attack artistic and societal conventions, deeming it as an absolute rebellion against the repression and disturbance of criteria. In a postwar context, Dada emerged in response to the devastation and disillusionment caused by World War I and sought to dismantle pre-existing normalities through provocative and often absurd instincts. As formulated in Tristan Tzara's "Dada Manifesto" in 1918 and later re-paraphrased in Picabia's "Dada Manifesto" in 1920, Dadaism lays stress on the conception of nihilism and a radical negation of any established standards: "*Order = disorder; ego = non-ego; affirmation = negation: the supreme radiations of an absolute art*" (Tzara 276).⁴³ The sense of nothingness does not lead to a philosophical nihilism, but rather on a basis of conspicuous skepticism, its negating force prompts subsequent "remappings and rewritings" (Goody, *Modernist Articulations*) as means of reconfiguring and reinterpreting the hegemonic idea of representational art and its rigid perceptual shifts between the artefact and the spectator. Loy, in her conversion to Dada, more direct and astute in her intermedial pursuits than before, devoted herself to breaking down and redefining the identity of a New Woman Artisthood. She furthered her experiments with Dadaist techniques like irony, fragmented narratives, and unconventional objects in her feminist artworks. By doing so, Dada offers this poet-painter a strategic platform to expose her subject matters of gender, sexual resilience, and socio-political criticism more deeply and explicitly.

In her modernist practices, what is central to her self-exploration of the artist's role and relationship with the public is the way of beholding as a manifestation of inner experience. In "The Artist and the Public," Loy gives prominence to the artful "seeing" or the poetic vision as the incarnation of one's thoughts, so that even the goal of "Education is the putting of spectacles on wholesome eyes" (*LdLB* 285).⁴⁴ Interartistic education provides the necessary tools for perceiving and reimaging the world, benefiting from the duality of spectacle and image(ry) in both literary and pictorial arts. This is not only about the generative act of looking but also the violence of being looked at, which imposes the challenges of gender, race, and the dichotomy between high and low cultures as previously classified. At this point, Loy's poetics of refashioning as a verbal-visual rhetoric presents a new mode of seeing and articulating modernist femininity and its gendered artisthood. By enacting an alternative relation between these factors, the poet-painter redefines the

⁴³ See the full text of Francis Picabia's "Dada Manifesto," translated from the French by Michelle Owoo, in *The Dada Reader: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Dawn Ades (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006) 125.

⁴⁴ Originally published in title "In...Formation," *The Bland Man*, no. 1 (November 1917) 7.

positioning of multiple artishood and the intermedial modality that art is experienced. Her scrutiny of the (feminised) body and (male-ruled) gaze refers to the power dynamics inherent in the hierarchical perception and reception of arts. Through her Dadaist experimentation with language and form, Loy attempts to create a distinct performance of styles and materials and to renegotiate the triangle among the artist's agency, the viewer's engagement, and the social structure that governs them all.



Fig. 2-14 Mina Loy, *Consider Your Grandmother's Stays* (1916). Drawing, 10.16 by 12.7 cm. *Rogue*, vol. 3, no. 2, November 1916, p. 7.

The first sentence in her “O Marcel...Otherwise I Also Have Been to Louise’s” expresses Loy’s great displeasure at “lady in evening dress” (*LaLB* 84), followed by a journalistic recording of casual conversations among many famous Dada members at the Blind Man’s Ball. As the first “feminist criticism on Duchamp” (Januzzi 583), Loy is alert to the commodifying portrayal of women as objects, particularly through their dressings, appearances, and sexualities, which she identifies as being shaped and codified in accordance with an androcentric perspective. To escape from these heterosexual gazes and the patriarchal language and demeanour associated with them, Loy, as a poet-painter, undertakes a deconstruction and reconstruction of the female body in the context of fashion design. She realises the transformative potential of the feminine physicality as a site of fluid and ever-changing identification.⁴⁵ This plastic, metamorphic ability connects the stylised performativity of form – as clothes, language, or visible materials – to the protean representation of womanhood. As a graphic example, Loy’s “grandmother” portrait in the little magazine *Rogue* (fig. 2-14) creates a hybrid silhouette with a typical modern hairstyle and an altered gown – the “debilitating costume of the previous generations” (Goody, “Ladies” 273). Her

⁴⁵ On Loy’s dramatic performativity, see Sasha Colby, “Performance, Performativity, and the Search for Mina Loy,” in *Staging Modernist Lives: H.D., Mina Loy, Nancy Cunard, Three Plays and Criticism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2017) 106-17.

selection of fabrics and notions as concrete objects weaves together the non-verbal patterns and their semiotic meanings of a cultural textile. In a Dadaist spirit, she challenges the conservative or moralistic ideals of self-restraint and purity that have been historically inscribed in womanhood. Her trope of refashioning feminises the conventional and the avant-garde, stitching the temporal boundaries between past and present. It sews a new femininity that exceeds social responses as embodiments of alienated violence and power.

Similarly, in the poem “Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots,” Loy concentrates on the feminine virtue of virginity and how it is used as a sexist tool by men to enforce the extreme biological delimitation between male and female agencies and experiences. In terms of this motif, the poet spotlights the patriarchal manipulations and societal expectations placed upon woman, as represented by the metaphor of house and its divided rooms in “The Effectual Marriage.” Here, this metaphor of gender is repeated in the line that “Houses hold virgins / The door’s on the chain / ‘Plumb streets with hearts’ / ‘Bore curtains with eyes” (*LolLB* 21). As the primary role, sexual pureness and chastity are linked to their confinement within the domestic sphere at home. The reference to the “door [being] on the chain” further proves this cultural restriction exerted over the female sexuality and personal autonomy. The last two sentences imply the invasive surveillance and judgement to which women are subjected, with their worth defined by virginity. The “curtains with eyes” or male gazes suggest that they are constantly under public scrutiny and being evaluated based on the prescribed standards of morality:

See the men pass
Their hats are not ours
We take a walk
They are going somewhere
And they may look everywhere
Men’s eyes look into things
Our eyes look out (21)

As Loy advocates, new women’s eyes should “look out” the fictitious value of virginity, while men’s gazes still “look into things” which connotes a sense of possession and control over female body, reducing women to objects (“things”) to be consumed and valued based on their untainted purity as its ethical essence. With a self-conscious shift in perspective, they shall “look out” beyond the confines of those imposed values and stereotypes. She denounces this objectification and commodification by highlighting how it devalues the feminine agency and individuality. The gaze, whether it is from others or directed towards the self, holds the power to transform consciousness and change normative identities. In this vein, by reclaiming and redefining the gaze, one’s gendered body can be a corporeal performance on show. Being its object could then become a creative act,

a means of liberating oneself from a static statue to a dynamic self-formulation and new narrative of storytelling.

For Loy, positioned on the radical edge of intermedial modernism, the solution lies in a feminist appropriation of artforms. As a different mode of self-identification, she emphasises the “Fleashes” or the physicality and reality of the body, the materiality of language, the texture of picture, and the fluid representation of an intersectional identity:

Fleashes like weeds
Sprout in the light
So much flesh in the world
 Wanders at will

Some behind curtains
Throbs to the night
Bait to the stars (22)

The lucid image of “Fleashes [Sprouting] like weeds / in the light” suggests a revelation of the abundance and diverseness of human’s bodily forms in the world, with their autonomous powers and agencies “Wander[ing] at will.” As a further step beyond the refashioned clothes, Loy exercises her creative freedom by distorting and reinventing women’s “So much fleashes” and their physical embodiments as collective imaginaries of self-image. The gendered presence of these “fleashes” should not remain hidden behind the “curtains” that metaphorically represent the suppressive rituals imposed upon certain bodies and their modes of expression. It shall be considered as a performance site itself, as a “Bait” to the “stars,” beckoning towards a higher aspiration or cosmic connection. Based on this alternative source of artistic inspiration, Loy tries to adjust the sociocultural and psychic realms which have historically operated and charged by men. In doing so, she empowers female physicality and its symbolic manifestation to release new liberal potentialities and break free from rigid biological, sociological or political moulds of representation.

Loy’s portrayal of femininity and its gendered corporeality defy strictly precise categorisations and turns another direction towards a “quasi-surrealist and metavisionary engagement with photographic portraiture” (Januzzi 586).⁴⁶ Her feminist and avant-garde sensibility to the formal and physical embodiment of one’s body illustrates a transfiguring agency of the organic to reject any essentialist modes of representing. This act of portraying or fictional evolution of selves against the Fascist eugenics of pure form even extends to her mongrel vision of a feminist therianthrope, where the womanly body has the mythological ability to transform

⁴⁶ On Loy’s female body as mannequin in a Surrealist tendency, see Kinnahan, “Surrealism and the Female Body: Economies of Violence,” in *Mina Loy, Twentieth-Century Photography* 74-122.

into a hybrid being. The metamorphosis here into a semi-human, semi-animal creature can transcend the specific binarism and blur its boundaries between humanity and bestiality. At a metaphysical level of body transformation, her shapeshifting in a proto-Surrealist manner stands in opposition to the technological union of man and machine, like the image of bicycle celebrated as a Futurist cyborg. One of Loy's uncanny paintings, *The Bewitched* (fig. 2-15), exemplifies her artistic choice of snail as a Dadaist re-creation of the ordinary creaturely bodies in our everyday life. By depicting snails, creatures that move at a remarkably slow pace, the painter contrasts them with the Futurist celebration of high speed, rapidity, and mechanical mobility.⁴⁷ From this modernist poet-painter's perspective, the snails' faint movement and apparent indifference assert her will to abolish the notional standard of time and space, emphasising their contractible, soft muscles and human-faces that invite touch, close observation, and understanding. They symbolise a rebirth of plastic and productive maternity at the core of an organic ecosystem countering the aggressive uniformity and barrenness of masculinist paternity.



Fig. 2-15 Mina Loy, *The Bewitched* (1932). Mixed media on board, 69.9 by 88.9 cm. Private collection.

In addition to Loy's installation art, *Lobster Boy* (fig. 2-16), a hybrid creature set in a glass bell jar, the unnamed fresco at Guggenheim's villa in Prasmousquier displays a group of freakish mixtures of marine crustacean or mermaid and sexually ambiguous youths. In a Dadaist manner, the illustration of a lobster-boy figure reveals the fluidity and possible complications of one's racial or gender identity, free from any conventional expectations or stereotypes in a phallogentric, anthropocentric society. Recognisably, it is their mongrel shapes that challenge this binary system

⁴⁷ Snail is also an animal emblematic of compression and contractility as the virtues of a graceful style, see Moore, "To a Snail" 85.

and its prescribed concepts of species, sexuality, and self-identity. In these artworks featuring hybrid beings, the inclusion of hermaphroditic forms conjoins not only man and woman, but also (terricolous) human and (aquatic) animal, and the natural and the mystic. As a Dadaist, Loy disrupts the essentialist categories of represented selfhood and produces a physical or supernatural transfiguration of race and gender through hybrid forms as an experimental aesthetic strategy. Her uncanny blurring of the binaries of human, animal, and machine opens up an in-between space to think about the dichotomy between female and male, animate and inanimate, and natural and artificial. In both verbal and visual representations, this mongrel poetics or “opposed aesthetics” prompts Loy to resist against the “particular forms of decorative modernism that trouble the anthropocentric capture of woman, animal, other” (Goody, “Nonhuman Animals” 9). It aims to destroy the historical confines of a patriarchal regime and exploitative economy that have governed the dichotomies of masculinity/femininity, humanity/animality, and selfhood/otherness. Similar to Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase* at the 1913 Armory Show in an extreme exhibition of lines and shapes, Loy’s hybrid interracial form could be understood as a Dadaist response to the classical genre of the nude and its naked, declodded corporeality. From the grandma’s fashion, Gina’s space, to siren figures, they emphasise the adaptable and performative nature in a revolutionarily new formation of creaturely bodies. Loy, as a modernist poet-painter, strives to liberate womanhood from endowed values and constraining structures of social expectations, and then create an alternative femininity – a New Womanhood that does not repudiate one’s womanliness but establish its gendered authority by refashioning language and artform as its physical appearances, narratives, and designable fabrics.

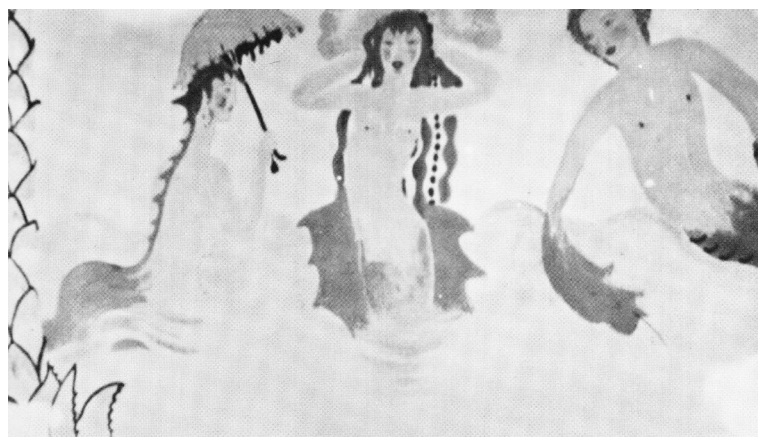


Fig. 2-16 Mina Loy, *Untitled* (1923). Wall Painting. *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, edited by Conover, Carcanet, 1985.

Chapter 3

“A draughtsman of words”: Cummings’ Prosodic Intermediality

Now, Chinese painting, thinking, abounds in symbolism, and the circle as a concept of holiness will surely hold a great fascination. Everything must be in relation to the Tao, the centre. The Tao is the mark, and the arrow is the soul.

– Marianne Moore, “Tedium and Integrity in Poetry” (148-49)

Let the candidate fill his mind with the finest cadences he can discover, preferably in a foreign language...

– Ezra Pound, “A Retrospect” (5)

Anything which forces the eye or the voice to revalue what it contemplates on the page (as in the case of Leonardo or any other artist) is Cummings’ meat.

– William Carlos Williams, “E. E. Cummings’ Paintings and Poems” (235)

At his 1945 solo show at Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, one of E. E. Cummings’ catalogues, “Foreword to an Exhibit: II,” fictionalised an interview or a conversation in a dialectical yet monologic tone. He imagined being asked by someone about the symbiotic relationship between his poetry and painting:

Why do you paint?
For exactly the same reason I breathe.
That’s not an answer.
There isn’t any answer.
[...]
And how long have you written?
As long as I can remember.
I mean poetry.
So do I.
Tell me, doesn’t your painting interfere with your writing?
Quite the contrary: they love each other dearly.
They’re very different.
Very: one is painting and one is writing. (Cummings, *AM* 344)

Unlike Wallace Stevens’ unified notion of “a fundamental aesthetic of which poetry and painting are related but dissimilar manifestations” (160), Cummings’ “twin obsessions” (*AM* 361) of writing and painting appear – though recognisably disparate¹ – concurrent and interpenetrative as its essence. He never gave up one side when dealing with the other, and was often simultaneously engaged with painting during daytime and poetry at night, upstairs in his studio at Patchin Place of the Greenwich Village or Joy Farm, New Hampshire.² The year 1931 has even witnessed the

¹ Cohen mentions these surprising disparities in three aspects: differences in his reputations as poet or painter, in their respective criticism, and in the asymmetric stylistic relations of poetry and painting at each phase (“Disparate Twins” 83).

² See “The Poet as Painter,” in Norman 191-92.

coexistence of two of Cummings' intermedial publications: *W [ViVa]*, a poetry collection of his mature works, followed by *CIOPW* – a picturebook of paintings in charcoal, ink, oil, pastel, and watercolour, where Cummings in the preface self-proclaims himself as an “author of pictures, a draughtsman of words” with ear and eye “hearing such paintings, seeing such poems, mutually to be alive” (*CIOPW*). Surrounded by these spontaneous written pictures and drawn words, Cummings, in the 1945 foreword, ended this interlocution with his answering to “one more question: where will you live after this war is over?”:

In China; as usual.
China?
Of course.
Whereabouts in China?
Where a painter is a poet. (*AM* 345)

Cummings never visited China during his lifetime, but was “much impressed by Chinese poetry” and once referred to R. H. Blyth's *Zen in English Literature and Oriental Classics* (Forrest 37-38). In his poem “plato told” in *1×1 [One Times One]*, the poet juxtaposes “lao / tsze” (Cummings, *CP* 553) with Plato and Jesus, three of whom are considered as the ultimate sources of one's inner self to seek through meditation or conviction for the transcendental knowledge of secular and spiritual truth. Taoist philosophy and Buddhist culture of ancient China somehow interested Cummings on an epistemological and conceptual level, focusing on the Zen-like state of self-transcendence where one does not differentiate but sees everything as inseparably equal.³ One of the significant principles of Zen Buddhism is to bridge “the gap between subject and object” (Grabher 55), between eye and i-ness, perception and identification, and painterly style and poetic form with a whole number of varieties. More formalistically and radically, as a further step beyond Ezra Pound's Muse of ideogrammatic system or the painted Chinese character, it is a typical genre of Chinese paintings called “literati painting” combining calligraphy and ink-wash painting – like William Blake's relief-etching – that has influenced Cummings' intermedial aesthetics and even made him yearn to live in China after the war. Its emphases on expressive brushstrokes and impressionistic uses of colour and shadow reinforce a close association with the Taoist notions of simultaneousness, creativity, and self-expression.⁴

³ On the Chinese and Japanese impact on Cummings' poems, see Michael Dylan Welch, “The Haiku Sensibilities of E. E. Cummings,” *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 4 (1995) 95-120; J. E. Terblanche, “Cummings' 'I(a)': Solitude, Solidarity, Wholeness,” *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 4 (2002) 52-65.

⁴ For more about the oriental or Chinese influences on Anglo-American modernist poetry, see Zhaoming Qian, “Prologue: The Place of the Orient in the Modernist Movement,” in *Orientalism and Modernism* 1-6; Ming Dong Gu, “Classical Chinese Poetry: A Catalytic 'Other' for Anglo-American Modernist Poetry,” *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, vol. 23, no. 4 (1996) 993-1024.



Fig. 3-1 E. E. Cummings, *Moon Park* (1920s). Brush and ink and wash on paper, 26 by 21 cm. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

In this sense, Cummings' *Moon Park* (fig. 3-1) could be viewed as a bold but just passable attempt at Chinese ink and wash painting. Set in monochromatic tone, it delineates a couple embracing each other in the nocturnal park; through the moonlight, he paints their reflections in the pond with bushes on the shore. Similar to an impressionist work of art, the painter does not intend either to simply reproduce a touching scene of a lover's reunion as what he calls "photographical realism" or completely deny its naturalistic profiles as "nonrepresentational" (Cummings, *AM* 357) in his essay "Words Into Pictures." He overturns the realistic techniques to imitate the superficial fact, and moreover, captures feeling or perceivable quintessence of the subject. Instead of vivid and colourful schemes in a traditional oil painting, Cummings here employs varied densities of ink as shades of colours with a particular emphasis on virtuoso brushwork. By doing so, he creates the full moon half-covered by clouds and smoke, ripples on the surface of the lake, as well as branches of the tree swaying wildly in the wind. The entire picture seems enshrouded in the evening mist and chilly air that might be found in the nuance of tonality and shading. In a similar fashion, the poet-painter departs from linear or descriptive language in his concrete poetry, opting for a visually complex presentation of multilayer syntax and spatial typography. He achieves so not by making the sentence "linguistically 'minimalistic'" (Cureton 272) but dissolving its syntactic lineation in various manners. For example, irregular capitalisation,

broken letters, strange enjambment, repetitions, and visually meaningful parenthesis that functions as tmesis in one of his moon poems:⁵

!
o(rounD)moon,how
do
you(rouNd
er
than roUnd)float;
who
lly &(rOunder than)
go
:idenly(Round
est)
? (Cummings, *CP* 722)

Chinese literati painting and its historical notion of “three perfections” require its creator to draw and write while combining the roles of poet, painter, and calligrapher.⁶ Under this influence, painting and poetry are deemed as “interchangeable modes of expression and that an artist can readily transpose his creative impulse from one mode to the other” (Fong and Murck xv) from a holistic view of Chinese culture. Accordingly, Cummings is always self-consciously, self-reflexively aware of the significant symbiosis of his poet-painter artisthood – as two or more selves unified in his artistic oneness: “so far as I’m concerned, each poem is a picture *γραφική* - *γραφω* ‘I write’(whence our word ‘graphic’)but originally ‘I make lines’—cf the Poet-Painter of China)and the paperspace around each poem is a where in which it heres or a surface in which it floats” (qtd. in Huang-Tiller 168). Previous research has noticed Cummings’ intermedial poetics and its inventive, revolutionary activities transforming “Words into Pictures” (as the main title of Flajšar and Vernyik’s collection of papers on Cummings’ art across borders in 2007). They try to define his cross-medial, transdisciplinary career in terms like a “poet and painter” or “poet & painter” (Cohen, *PoetandPainter* 14), a “poet as painter” (Norman 190), a “painter as a poet” (Kidder, *E. E. Cummings* 3), and a “painter in the literal sense himself” (Friedman, *Arts of His Poetry* 122). Nevertheless, neither the conjecture – represented verbally or by ampersand – nor the preposition between poet and painter could conceptualise the intrinsically hybrid nature of Cummings’ artistic and individual multifariousness. The bare juxtaposition or analogy between these two media or

⁵ To learn about how Cummings developed this poem through 29 drafts, see Aaron M. Moe, “Thirteen Ways of Reading EEC’s R-O-U-N-D *MoOn*: And the Making of a Poem,” *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 21-22 (2014-15) 199-211; also, his “Holding on,” in *Ecocriticism and the Poiesis of Form: Holding on to Proteus* (New York: Routledge, 2019) 141-52.

⁶ On the idea of “Three Perfections” or “Three Incomparables” originated in ancient China infusing the three arts of poetry, painting, and calligraphy, see more in Alfreda Murck, *Poetry and Painting in Song China: The Subtle Art of Dissent* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Wen C. Fong, *Art as History: Calligraphy and Painting as One* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015); Michael Sullivan, *The Three Perfections: Chinese Painting, Poetry, and Calligraphy* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999).

artforms cannot disclose the formally and aesthetically dynamic process of Cummings' word-image interrelation, but only simplifies them into parallel without a point of intersection. Even if Kidder claims that "we do Cummings a disservice if we erect into a principle of parallelism [interart comparison] the easy and superficial relations between poetry and painting that are based solely on subject matter" ("Twin Obsessions" 368) or formal feature, however, what Cummings consistently seeks for is still not a "unity" or "single unified aesthetic" (368) that could be easily identified as influence, reference, or adaptation. Hard to find out which is the real self and which is the imaginary other, his poetic and painterly egos act not as opposites but bilateral symmetry to organise a harmonious sense of completeness:

one's not half two. It's two are halves of one
which halves reintergrating, shall occur
no death and any quantity; but than
all numerable mosts the actual more (Cummings, *CP* 556)

Hence, Cummings' innovative artistry of composition is designated to recompose and reintegrate numerous "halves" of selfhood whose seemingly fragmented multiplicities of experience, in the end, tend towards an actual identity. Aiming to be somebody like "the Poet-Painter of China" and live there where "a painter is a poet," Cummings as a modernist *poet-painter* might prefer this visible power of hyphen, instead of juxtaposing or comparing, which interconnecting with an equidistance stands for a processive cross-fertilisation of mutual growth, discovery, and becoming.

Therefore, in the light of intermediality, this chapter will concentrate on the mutual development of Cummings' poet-painter artisthood against the backdrop of international avant-garde and transcultural modernism. In his continual correspondences with Pound, he was not only influenced by Pound's ideographic movement of Imagism but also his transcultural translations and interpretations of Chinese classical poetry, aesthetic theory, and philosophies like Confucianism and Taoism. The intermedial, transnational exchange between the Eastern and the Western, at an early stage, encouraged Cummings to resuscitate the obsolete structure of poetic language and radically experiment with East Asian aesthetics of economy, simplicity, and formal expressiveness. Meanwhile, during his transatlantic journey in Paris, this poet-painter explored the European avant-garde, e.g., Fauvism and Cubism led by Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso in the first phase of the twentieth century. His Cubo-Fauvist palette as a modernist craft was developed by employing rough colour, abstract line, and expressive artform and language. At this point, both trans-pacific and cross-continental aesthetics have influenced Cummings' intermedial prosody of modernism rather than just a multimedial representation (Nikitina 1). Breaking up the generic boundary between verbal and visual productions, the formal and philosophical nature of Chinese

and European arts offer him a middle ground or a third way to reconceptualise line and lineation, stroke and word, form and layout, shadowing and space out of the previously separated media. To become an “author of pictures, a draughtsman of words,” it is the intermedial, transcultural modernism that enables Cummings to integrate various styles and their cultures into a series of idiosyncratic avant-garde experiments by bringing new energies from both sides of word/image, poet/painter, and West/East.

Being Primitive: A Modernist “Poet-Painter of China”

In one of his undergraduate term papers for the Advanced Composition class in spring 1915 at Harvard, E. E. Cummings for the first time showed his continual interest in Asia, or specifically, Chinese and Japanese arts. By referring to Charles Budd’s translated *Chinese Poems* (1912) and Yone Noguchi’s *The Spirit of Japanese Poetry* (1914), his essay “The Poetry of Silence” conducts a brief examination into the “essentially primitive literatures of two always inspiring countries, China and Japan” (Cummings, “Poetry” 131) where there was a transcultural exchange pertinent to the Western avant-garde movements at the start of the twentieth century. In the introduction, Cummings sums up the “vital essence of their message [from Monet and Cézanne to Brancusi and Duchamp-Villon]” – as the “slogan of these revolutionists” striving for the New Art – into a single word “Primitive” (131). He then defines the “Primitive” as “(=first, earliest) refers to that technique which deals with the subject only in the simplest terms, artistically speaking, – rejecting all but the essential characteristics” (134). It seems like a minimalist act that intends to strip off all the superficial, descriptive in order to capture the subjective essence, with its focus on the imagist manner of directness, visual immediacy, and clear presentation.⁷ Early in “Impressions,” a series of quasi-imagist poems collected in his first poetry collection *Tulips & Chimneys* (1922), Cummings put this Primitive principle into literary practice:

the sky a silver
dissonance by the correct
fingers of April
resolved

into a
clutter of trite jewels

now like a moth with stumbling

⁷ On the three principles of Imagism, see F. S. Flint, “Imagisme,” *Poetry*, vol. 1, no. 6 (1913) 198-200.

wings flutters and flops along the
grass collides with trees and
houses and finally,
butts into the river (CP 60)

The haiku-like nature of this piece of “Impressions” simplifies the complete syntactic structure into an intensive arrangement of poetic imageries transforming from “sky a silver” into “a / clutter trite jewels,” which is possessed of the “extraordinary charm [of] pure impressionism” (Cummings, “Poetry” 132) suggestive in Japanese hokku and tanka.

Since youth, Cummings has aspired to become a poet of “simplicity, / Force, and clearness” (CP 1069) as shown in another early poem titled “My Prayer,” written during his Latin school years from 1908 to 1911. He emphasises the craftsmanship of writing a poem like an artisan who tends to “lay / A strong, simple, big-rocked wall” and “fill in the fissures with the finer stones and clay / Of alliteration, simile, metaphor” (1069). This poetic principle echoes what Ezra Pound requests a neophyte of Imagism to know “assonance and alliteration, rhyme immediate and delayed, simple and polyphonic, as a musician would expect to know harmony and counterpoint and all the minutiae of his craft” (*Literary Essays* 6) in his “A Few Don’ts” for Imagists. Interestingly, even after receiving Pound’s *Ripostes* from his Harvard classmate S. Foster Damon in autumn 1915 and also quoting Amy Lowell and Richard Aldington in a 1916 paper “The Poetry of a New Era,” Cummings did not directly paraphrase the Poundian term of Imagism in the paper, but chose to bring up his own conception of defining the New Art. As mentioned in the afterword article to this reprinted version of “The Poetry of Silence,” Michael Webster points out what Cummings tried to do was to “inven[t] his own modernist practice somewhat independently of Pound’s imagist theory and practice” (“Afterward” 141); the latter does not see “imagist technique as ‘primitive,’ and Pound’s focus on technique, along with his distrust of abstractions, preclude any mention of a mediative state of mind of being like ‘silence’” (143).

Indeed, Cummings’ notion of being primitive is neither purposefully Imagist that stops at a concrete but static level, nor technically minimalist that works on the geometric or conceptual abstraction. It might sound similar to Primitivism also drawing attention to the exotic oriental countries and their local cultures. Although both borrowing from non-Western ancient traditions, however, Cummings’ idea of primitiveness shares not so much in common with Primitivists, such as Paul Gauguin or Pablo Picasso especially in his African-influenced Period 1907-1909.⁸ While Gauguin’s Tahitian motif in *Nafea Faa Ipoipo* and Picasso’s Iberian style in *Les Femmes d’Alger*

⁸ Alternatively, to understand how Primitivism works in modernist literature (e.g., Frantz Fanon and D. H. Lawrence) as a new way of providing critical readings and scholarly paradigms, see Ben Etherington, *Literary Primitivism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017).

treat the cultural appropriation as a new means of depicting the external reality against the capitalist civilisation, Cummings' "Primitive" is more purely aesthetic and formalist towards a cognitive reconsideration of reading and spectatorship. For example, suggestive and connotative as in the moon poems, his watercolours (fig. 3-2) tend to be characteristic of a Chinese landscape marked by the expressive use of freehand brushes and transparent colours. The skilful proportion of water and colour together creates a natural presentation of the moon, clouds, rolling mountains, and the forest with vibrant optical effects; moreover, it conveys the spiritual essence of one's field of vision and frame of mind over the bare imitation of physical semblance. Instead of being imitative, we shall recognise through his analyses of Chinese and Japanese poetry here that being "Primitive" is to mobilise our perceptual and emotional experience in face of verbal-visual-sonic complexes in either textual or pictorial work of art, offering us an active "technique embodying absolutely subjective beauty" (Cummings, "Poetry" 132). The "absolutely subjective beauty" is just what Webster calls the "mediative state of mind of being like 'silence'" that makes it different from the objective intensification of Pound-led Imagism.



Fig. 3-2 E. E. Cummings, *Untitled* (1958). Watercolour, 34.3 by 23.8 cm.
Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, Rochester.

To further explain this primitive technique, Cummings compares the tonic rhythmicity of Chinese odes (*tsüeh/shi*) and the suggestiveness of Japanese sonnets (*hokku/haiku*) to a "cubist bust, portraying an egg-shaped head, two enormous eyes, and a sinuous fragment of upper arm" of

Constantin Brancusi's *Mlle Pogany* (134). Brancusi's highly stylised, minimally formatted portraiture of Margit Pogany is an ideal sample of Cummings' primitiveness in an essential act of "elimination" (134). Cummings' late poem "n," to some extent, ekphrastically represents the extreme simplicity and balance of Brancusi's bronze sculptures:

n
 OthI
 n

 g can

 s
 urPas
 s

 the m

 y
 SteR
 y

 of

 s
 tillnes
 s (Cummings, *CP* 814)

The minimalist arrangement of words into three separated stanzas starting and closing with the same letter, "s," "y," "s," presents us with a beautifully-crafted yet uncanny symmetry of the visual shape of the poem. In a readable order, it shall be put as a proverb saying that "Nothing can surpass the mystery of stillness." Similar to the previous idea of Cummings' "silence," the "mystery of stillness" here suggests a Chinese Taoist feature of the self-referential power of emptiness and primitiveness. As the paper goes on, by comparing to Realism and other old school of arts where "the whole is indirectly inferred through details concretely presented," a truly sincere primitive should eliminate what is unessential in the model and render all details "inferred from the directly presented aspect of the whole" ("Poetry" 135). In other words, Cummings' "Primitive" turns out to be a technical and conceptual innovation striving for unrealistic, nonmimetic representations. It works through one's perception and imagination instead of imitation or description – comparable to Chinese and Japanese poetry that rest on concrete imageries, expressive forms, literary openness, and overflow of poetic sentiment.⁹

⁹ For more about Chinese poetic hermeneutics (e.g., spatial form, linguistic economy, metaphysical emptiness, and so forth), see Ming Dong Gu, "Part IV Literary Hermeneutics," in *Chinese Theories of Reading and Writing: A Route to Hermeneutics and Open Poetics*

How did Chinese poetry and painting attract Cummings to a culturally distinctive mode of expression at the forefront of intermedial, transcontinental modernism? Opposing the claim that “cosmopolitan multiculturalism [is] typically conceived as antithetical in discussions of modernism, and orientalism is represented as Eurocentric,” in analysing Loy’s cosmopolitan avant-garde and Cummings’ in this case as well, Cristanne Miller argues for the importance of “Asian discourse” that could “extend the boundaries of tolerance, supporting their cosmopolitan and international poetics rather than marking its exclusions” (*Cultures of Modernism* 131). The ideograph-oriented Chinese art as an inseparable part of “Asian discourse” provides Cummings and other Anglo-American modernists an outlet for new articulations, which deviate from previous Aristotelian mimetic or Neoclassical tradition to an experimentally radical form.¹⁰ Contrary to the academicist style of the late nineteenth century in the West, “East Asian aesthetic discourages artists from reproducing the appearance of their subject; it boosts expressing emotion by spontaneously catching the spirit” (Qian, *East-West Exchange* 8). This Pacific-Rim aesthetics shares the common theme with European and American avant-garde movements in abandoning the representational principle and adopting an alternative model of verbal/visual expression, so that artists could catch the subjective essence through their new forms of art. Against the dominant ideology of Western cultural superiority, or its disguise as Eurocentric Orientalism, what has attracted modernist poets like Cummings and Pound towards the orient is “really the affinities (the Self in the Other) rather than the differences (the Otherness in the Other)” (Qian, *Orientalism and Modernism* 2). A transcultural dialogue took place between the orient and the occident for each to learn and borrow from the other.

In his book *East-West Exchange and Late Modernism* (2017), Zhaoming Qian broadens his interartistic study from early American modernism between 1913 and 1923 in *Orientalism and Modernism*, to a project of the post-1945 avant-garde with its heightened attention to “meaning in space, increased obsession with imaginative sensibility, and augmented respect for harmony between humanity and nature” (18).¹¹ These oriental insights on spatial simplicity, spontaneity, and naturalness opened up new ways for the formal and technological inventions of modernist aesthetics as a powerful source. The closer and deeper “transpacific intertextuality/East-West collaboration” (18) encouraged many modernists to give up the obsolete pattern of poetic words

(New York: State University of New York Press, 2005) 209-61; also, his work *Fusion of Critical Horizons in Chinese and Western Language, Poetics, Aesthetics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

¹⁰ Chinese ideographic writing (writing-as-image) is used as a primary source of formal innovation and experimentation in the texts of Western modernism. See Christopher Bush, *Ideographic Modernism: China, Writing, Media* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹¹ A number of essays have explored the presence of East Asian (classical Chinese arts in particular) in the development of Anglophone modernism. See Zhaoming Qian, ed., *Modernism and the Orient* (New Orleans, LA: University of New Orleans Press, 2012); Sabine Sielke and Christian Kloeckner, eds., *Orient and Orientalisms in US-American Poetry and Poetics* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009); Robert Kern, *Orientalism, Modernism, and the American Poem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

and empower their formal experimentation with the “*transpacific displacement*” (Huang 3) of different languages, media, and cultures.¹² Interacting with another part of the world across the Pacific, they could hence benefit from not only textual but also visual migration (Chinese ink painting, pottery, and calligraphy) of cross-cultural meanings in a new historical epoch. For Cummings, those alien concepts – “minimalism, nonmimesis, ‘wholeness of Heaven and Earth,’ balance of yin and yang” (Qian, *East-West* 142) – and especially the unique tradition of “Poet-Painter of China” would at a certain level help him to harmonise the poet-self and the painter-other, East and West, the classical and the contemporary, and discursivity and visibility, thereby developing his modernist intermedial artisthood.

In the same winter of 1910 when Roger Fry organised the *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* exhibition at Grafton Gallery in London, the British Museum held the first largest overseas Exhibition of Chinese and Japanese Paintings (Fourth to Nineteenth Century A.D.) in its Print and Drawing Gallery; on the other side of the Atlantic, even before the 1913 Armory Show, there was an itinerant display of Chinese exquisite porcelains initially at the Century Club in New York and then moved to the galleries of the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn in spring 1909 (Qian, *Modernist Response to Chinese Art* 3+23).¹³ Chinese pictorial and decorative arts were brought to the public vision in both Europe and America during the 1910s, which functioned as “an apparatus of cultural power, enticing beholders to enter and be influenced” (xvii). We could suppose, at that time living in Cambridge and New York, Cummings probably visited the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston where Ernest Fenollosa served as a curator in the Department of Chinese and Japanese Art, and also the newly established Department of Far Eastern Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Interested in visual art and foreign culture at an early age, he might be unlikely to miss these precious art exhibits travelling such long distances from the other side of the world. When entering Harvard, Cummings studied for an A.B. “*magna cum laude* in Literature especially in Greek and English” since 1911. However, he gradually seemed to engage more in comparative literature and culture through a variety of modern languages (e.g., Italian, German, Spanish, French, and Russian) rather than be confined to a homogenising tendency of pure Anglo-Americanness.¹⁴ This multilingual, transcultural engagement sustained him with innovative skills to use English “not for analytical discourse but for creative expression in unique ways” (Kennedy 71). Cummings was also talented

¹² On ethnography, translation, and intertextual travel as three ways of the transpacific migration of various cultural meanings, see Yunte Huang, Introduction, in *Transpacific Displacement* 1-25; later, his *Transpacific Imaginations: History, Literature, Counterpoetics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

¹³ More specifically on the introduction of Chinese art in United Kingdom and United States at the beginning of the early twentieth century, see two chapters in the first part “China in Galleries” of Qian’s *Modernist Response to Chinese Art*: “Pound and Chinese Art in the ‘British Museum Era’” 3-21 and “Chinese Art Arrives in America: Stevens and Moore” 22-43.

¹⁴ On Cummings’ curriculum at Harvard, see Richard S. Kennedy, “E. E. Cummings at Harvard: Studies,” *Harvard Library Bulletin*, vol. XXIV, no. 3 (1976) 267-97; Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno, “The Graduate Student as Poet,” in *E. E. Cummings: A Biography* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2004) 67-90; Cheever, “Harvard” 30-44.

at verse translation or poetic paraphrase as a young poet himself during his sophomore and junior years. Either for home assignment or personal interest, he translated several classics, such as Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* and Horace's *Odes*, from ancient Greek and Latin into the modern English.¹⁵ Perhaps it is throughout his classical and world literary studies that Cummings got further access to ancient Chinese legacy: his reading of Chinese myths and legends, his knowledge of Chinese poetic composition, as well as his musical note on the subject of melodic "intervals" (mistranscribed as "internals") in reference to *konghou* or Chinese harp (Rosenblitt, *E. E. Cummings' Modernism and the Classics* 203), and so forth.



Fig. 3-3 E. E. Cummings, *Scofield Thayer* (ca. 1920). Brush, ink, and graphite on paper, 34.6 by 30.5 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Cummings' modernist contemporaries, such as Pound, Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams, and Wallace Stevens, all showed a strong interest in absorbing the poetic otherness of Chinese art in their own literary ambition and innovation. For instance, Pound's correspondence with his Chinese acquaintances, Moore's invited lecture around *The Tao of Painting: A Study of the Ritual Disposition of Chinese Painting* (1956), Williams' co-translation of Tang poems with a Chinese scholar, and Stevens' personal collection of Chinese art objects. By contrast, Cummings' contact with Chinese culture appears more limited, mainly owed to his conversation – written or face-to-

¹⁵ On his classical studies, see Rosenblitt, "E. E. Cummings and the Classics," in *Modernism and Classics* 18-39.

face – with the famous orientalist Pound over the course of both entire careers. Always drinking and eating in a Chinese restaurant in Boston, his friend and literary mentor Scofield Thayer (fig. 3-3) sent Cummings a copy of *Cathay* together with the second issue of *BLAST* in the summer of 1915.¹⁶ This tiny collection of poetry translations, for the same aim as Imagism and Vorticism to find a vivid presentation, contains Pound’s appropriations of classical Chinese poetry translated into English idiom and pioneeringly brings a cross-cultural energy into the formation of American poetic modernism.¹⁷ Under this influence, Cummings read many of Pound’s works and even published his review on T. S. Eliot’s *Poems* simultaneously with Pound’s early *Canto* in the June 1920 issue of *The Dial*. In the following year, Thayer got the opportunity of introducing Cummings to Pound in Paris, and this Chinese enthusiast began to transmit the oriental knowledge to his young fellow through their letters from 1926 to 1962.

From their correspondence, we can find that, Pound consistently tried to offer Cummings his learning and understanding about China not only in terms of the ideographic system of written language but also its historical, social, and cultural values.¹⁸ His list of recommended reading for Cummings could be classified into four types: literarily on Chinese classical poetry and prose, James Legge’s multivolume translation *The Chinese Classics* (1861-93); philosophically on Chinese traditional thought, *The Symbols of Yi King* (1934) by Z. D. Sung; politically on Chinese Communism after World War II, Jack Belden’s *China Shakes the World* (1949); economically on ancient China’s feudal system, *Food and Money in Ancient China* (1950) based on *The Book of Han* translated and annotated by Nancy Lee Swann. In addition, he was generous in sharing his works-in-progress with Cummings during their discussion on Chinese classics, *The Classic Anthology Defined by Confucius* (1954) for instance, or mailed with the letter a leaflet advertising the forthcoming works in his edited Ideogramic Series, Fenollosa’s *Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry* (1936) and his translation in Square Dollar Series, *Confucius: The Great Digest, the Unwobbling Pivot, the Analects* (1969). Moreover, he introduced Cummings to a Harvard professor in Chinese and comparative literature, Achilles Fang, asking this sinologist to meet and:

By all means provide the kumrad KUMMINKZ [Cummings] with hydrogen, atoms, and whatever, and let him explode after all its HIS country and he shares the disgrace of the ODES being unprinted, and help up for trivial reasons/
 ALSO for having stayed alive and out of jail during the era of infamy/
 excuse being that was IN JAIL during the other one/prematurely. (qtd. in Qian, *Ezra Pound’s Chinese Friends* 130)

¹⁶ Cummings created and published a series of line-drawn, pen or pencil sketched portraits of Thayer on *The Dial* during the 1920s, including *Scofield Thayer at Home*, *Scofield Thayer Passing on Manuscripts*, *Scofield Thayer at the Dial*, *Scofield Thayer at the Brevoort*, and so on.

¹⁷ See more in Zhaoming Qian’s introduction to the new reprint of Pound’s *Cathay* (New York: New Directions, 2015) 13-23.

¹⁸ On Cummings’ lifelong friendship with Ezra Pound, see Barry Ahearn, Introduction, *P/C*, by Pound and Cummings 1-12. Michael Webster, “Pound Teaching Cummings, Cummings Teaching Pound,” in *Ezra Pound and Education*, edited by Steven Yao and Michael Coyle (Orono, ME: National Poetry Foundation, 2012) 47-66.

In offering the “hydrogen, atoms” of sinology to help Cummings “explode” with new poetic articulations, they became acquainted via several letters in early 1950s. Fang finally met “kumrad kumminkz & frau [Mr and Mrs Cummings]” after the former three lectures of his Charles Eliot Norton Professorship, where Fang noted down KUMMINKZ’s extolling remark on Pound as “the greatest and most generous poet of the world” (132). As a follow-up talk, he then might have the chance to discuss with Cummings about his assistance in the process of Pound’s translation projects, including a bilingual *Confucius* and *Classic Anthology*.

Critical of the previous orientalist’s Eurocentrism, Pound was at first attracted to Chinese classical literature and art, and soon considered this occidental counterpart a resourceful ground to challenge the conventionality of Western naturalistic representation and appeal for an intermedial, transcultural collaboration. Chinese ideogram and its aesthetic implication enabled American modernist poets to seek for an alternative method, instead of emphasising the likeliness represented in the verbal text, this one drawing attention to the visual presentation and spatial design of the word itself that could rejuvenate our habitual mode of sight and reading. In a letter to Cummings on 24th November 1952, Pound said that “an english word is NOT the equivalent of an ideogram, and that ANYone above the level of a louse wants the original text to FACE a translation” (Pound and Cummings 334). Even if an English translation of ideogram can assist one to better understand the meaning of Chinese words, nevertheless as Pound continued in the letter: “that is not enuff” (334). Exemplified by *The Cantos*, he invents a visually dynamic page by adopting “his use of collage, his eclectic free verse, and his incorporation of citation and even pictogram into” (Perloff, *Infrathin* 113) the text, influencing late modernists like Charles Olson and Louis Zukofsky. What excites the reader now shall not only be the sound, description, or linear pattern of original texts, but also the direct presentation and spatialisation of their new pattern within shifting contexts to be seen and read. To exercise this ideographic model, Pound’s Chinese influence comes out not merely theoretical but also practical. Apart from the written Chinese characters of “feather,” “burn,” and “best regards” appearing in their correspondence, sometimes Pound stamped three ideograms of his Chinese-style name at the bottom corner of the letter as what he did poetically in *The Cantos*, pronounced like *Bao-en-de* that means “protection, kindness, virtue” (392). Likewise, Cummings also practised Chinese calligraphy, at one time recorded on a paper where there is the transliteration of his surname into Chinese characters, *Kang-min-shi*, implying the notions of being “keen, sharp, bright.”¹⁹

¹⁹ I am grateful to Michael Webster for sending me this note by Gillian Huang-Tiller on Cummings’s attempts to write the transliteration of his name into Chinese idioms, which is scheduled to be published in *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society* (2023).

Evidently interested in Chinese poetry and calligraphic writing, Cummings tended to acquire a Taoist aesthetics of being natural, suggestive (or what he calls “Primitive”), and spontaneous – differentiated from Pound’s faith in Confucianism. He once recommended to Pound his own reading of Chuangtse perhaps in company with *Zhuangzi* in Lin Yutang’s *The Wisdom of China and India* (1924). Later, in a letter on 10th September 1945, he gave the credit to Lao-tzu by writing to Pound that “Your good friend Kung (by the Tao) has on the other hand cheered me mightily during my quite unpremeditated isolation; to Lao & to him, deep bows” (Pound and Cummings 166). His idea of Taoism lays stress on transcendence, intuition, and becoming, combining the substantive Eastern influence with the New England’s cultural heritage of transcendentalism.²⁰ As those transcendentalists like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau “distilled their views from Western philosophers who had extracted them from the East” (Cone 344), Cummings also restates and appropriates the Taoist or Zen Buddhist philosophy in his intermedial prosody. Tao, the path or the way of life in Chinese, refers to the “changes that continue to thread through the natural process which remains open in the sense that it accommodates those changes, is elusive: it cannot be pinpointed with a finality of cause or stasis” (Terblanche, *Poetry and Ecology* 84). In the April 1922 issue of *The Dial*, Cummings published his prose poem “at the head of this street a gasping organ,” and immediately following his poem, there is an article by Bertrand Russell sweepingly on “Chinese Civilization and the West.” The poet might have a glance at this brief introduction to Chinese traditional thoughts, and take careful notice of Lao-tze’s description about the operation of Tao as “production without possession, action without self-assertion, development without domination” (Russell 362).

Influencing the Nietzschean ethics of will to power, Lao-tze’s Taoist thought could be found in Cummings’ *i: six nonlectures* in his 1952-1953 Charles Eliot Norton lectures at Harvard. He closes his last speech by a “nonanswerable” question “who, as a writer, am I?” by encapsulating “multitudinous” answers into a single one:

I am someone who proudly and humbly affirms that love is the mystery-of-mysteries, and that nothing measurable matters “a very good God damn”: that “an artist, a man, a failure” is no mere whenfully accreting mechanism, but a givingly eternal complexity – neither some soulless and heartless ultrapredatory infra-animal nor any un-understandingly knowing and believing and thinking automation, but a naturally and miraculously whole human being – a feelingly illimitable individual; whose only happiness is to transcend himself, whose every agony is to grow. (Cummings, *i: six nonlectures* 110-11)

²⁰ On the relationship between Cummings and transcendentalism, see Ashton D. Howley, “Squaring the Self: Versions of Transcendentalism in *The Enormous Room*,” *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 11 (2002) 145-58; Martin Heusser, “Transcendental Modernism: E. E. Cummings’ Moon Poems,” in *Aspects of Modernism: Studies in Honour of Max Nänny*, edited by Andreas Fischer et al. (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1997) 55-74.

To be a “feelingly illimitable individual,” Cummings’ “naturally and miraculously whole” or oneness of artishood consists of multiple selves and identities in a perpetually motional process of transcending and growing. Given the special value on its innate dynamics, Tao is a metaphysical and abstract concept as visualised in one of Cummings’ symbolic paintings with the same title of *The Road (Tao)* (see fig. 3-4).²¹ Besides the Taoist characteristics of Cummings’ poetry that Etienne Terblanche summarises as “smallness, fluidity, and co-occurrence” (142), this painting, furthermore, shows an impressionist tendency of capturing the spontaneous feeling when the artist was standing in front of the muddy road he depicted at the rosy sunset, and transcendently it attempts to collect the fragmented images of one’s memory of the vibrant flowering shrubs on the right hand and the dead yellow earth on the left. The road is just the place for a “feelingly illimitable individual” to transcend and to grow with no “un-understandingly knowing and believing and thinking automation” but only feeling and experiencing. The Tao in-between the flower nursery and the wasteland hence embodies a natural balance of the yin and the yang, the alive and the dying, body and mind, and East and West that could be realised from the pictorial integrity and transcendence on the canvas.

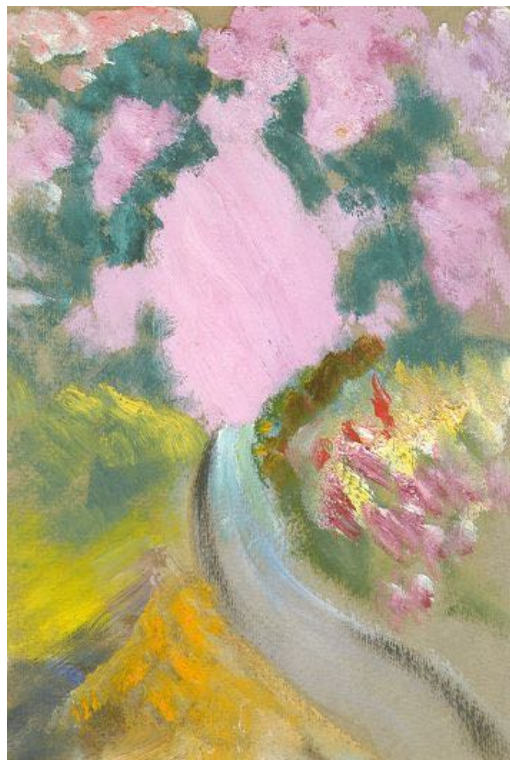


Fig. 3-4 E. E. Cummings, *The Road (Tao)* (n.d.). Oil painting. Private collection.

²¹ More about Cummings and Taoism, see Terblanche, “Cummings and Taoism” and “Selected Taoist Qualities of Cummings’ Poetry,” in *Poetry and Ecology* 84-102 and 142-70; Cone, “The Tao” 343-44.

In the spirit of Tao, Cummings was constructing not only paintings but also poems with open, instinctive, and sometimes wordless signs or spaces that present a “primitive” aspect of the whole – as an indication of the connection between Taoist watercolours/calligraphy and his visual experimentation with the poetic form. For him, the purest mode of knowledge is the spontaneous intuition that can perform in a direct, natural, and uninhibited manner, which in a transcendentalist sense focuses on the nature over the technology and individual feeling over objective rationality. Without apparent external or intellectual cause, one should capture the quintessence or inner substance of life by perceiving and self-being, “since feeling is first” and “who pays any attention / to the syntax of things / will never wholly kiss you”:

my blood approves,
 and kisses are a better fate
 than wisdom
 lady i swear by all flowers. Don't cry
 – the best gesture of my brain is less than
 your eyelid's flutter which says (Cummings, *CP* 291)

Kisses with heart afire are “better” than wisdom in cold blood, and in the presence of nature’s witness, even the “best gesture of my brain” performs worse and weaker than “your eyelid’s flutter.” By prioritising “feeling” over knowing, Cummings celebrates the organic and vigorous power of feeling, kissing, and palpably doing unconfined from the rigid frame of rational thinking. His inclination to Taoist principles of intuition and naturalness then subverts the Western traditional hierarchy of the basic binaries: e.g., mind (“brain”) over body (“eyelid”), reason (“wisdom”) over perception (“kisses”), imitation (of “syntax of things”) over expression (of “feeling”), and writing (poetry) over picturing (painting). In this vein, it is rather perceiving quotidian things than thinking complex “syntax” that can free us from the logical bareness to build up a perceptually and corporeally intimate link with “the leaping greenly spirits of trees / and a blue true dream of sky;and for everything / which is natural which is infinite which is yes”:

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
 breathing any – lifted from the no
 of all nothing – human merely being
 doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and
 now the eyes of my eyes are opened) (*CP* 663)

In this late poem collected in *XAIPE* (1950), Cummings again argues for the multiple sensual experiences of “tasting touching hearing seeing / breathing” that are the Taoist version of the Tao

or the Way to approach the essential world and to understand both actual and unreal things “lifted from the no / of all nothing.” As bracketed in the end couplet, with “the ears of my ears awake” and “the eyes of my eyes” opened, the lowercase-i “ who have died” before is brought back to life “today” (663). For the speaker, “this amazing / day” (633) is not only the birthday of the sun and other lovably natural beings but also the anniversary of self’s growing that contains the potential to pursue for one’s infinity, inimitableness, and self-affirmation of “yes.” Its transformation of being transcends the Western “anthropocentrism” (Grabher 49) as everything is equal in the eyes of the Tao. At this moment of self-transcendence, the rebirth of self is united with that “of life and of love and wings:and of the gay great happening illimitably earth” (633). This unification into a natural whole of oneness merges life and death, being and nothing, the “personality of the poet-self” and the “evanescent ‘personalities’ of natural phenomena” (Webster, “Singing is silence” 212), and more noticeably, the poetic i-ness of awakened ears and the painterly eye with open eyes.

Another Taoist poem is collected in Cummings’ most idiosyncratic work, *No Thanks* (1935), full of his radical prosodic experiments like “mOOOn Over tOWns mOOOn” and “r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r.”²² Formalistically, the visual pattern of the poem “birds(” looks like a piece of English calligraphy displayed in an Eastern format of hanging scroll with wing-shaped parentheses:²³

```

birds(
here,invent
ting air
U
)sing

tw
iligH(
t's
    v
    va
    vas
vast

ness.Be)look
now
    (come
soul;
&:and

who
    s)e
    voi

c

```

²² Richard D. Cureton elaborately analysed Cummings’s experiments with form in *No Thanks* and categorises his visual strategies into five types: visual iconicity (semantic/narrative), visual voice (phonological), visual ambiguity (interpretative), arbitrary form (meta-textual), and concrete form (readerly). See more in Cureton 248-75.

²³ For more about Cummings’ bird poems and avian poetics, see Moe, “Flock of Birds,” in *Zoopoetics* 68-73.

es
 (
 are
 ar
 a (Cummings, *CP* 448)

It depicts a vivid picture where a flock of birds flies through the soft glowing light from the sky at sundown, inventively suggesting the existence of the wind. As the “birds invent the air by using the twilight’s vastness,” Cummings’ abnormal printed spaces and indented letters depict the speed, intensity, and direction of the wind from left to right. The vastness of the “tw / iligH(/ t” (twilight) and the “air” shall be identified through random spacing, enjambment, and typographic indention of poetic words and lines, which, already clued in this poem-picture, need the reader-viewer to “look” at the fragmented things in extreme detail and hear their “voi / c / es” (voices) through our bodily functions. Based on a close observation, the air “now” arises and appears to us as its invisible “soul” that could only be felt and imagined in our mind. The poet-painter intends to calligraph the soul or spirit of the “air” by “U /)sing” (using) visible birds and twilights; in other words, he is to visualise the invisibility of natural existences by transforming the substantial form into the spiritual essence. At last, the poem ends with a stanza of chirps and whirrs verbalised as “are / ar / a” whose sounds gradually decrease to zero in a cinematic technique of fade-out.

In a similar manner to this Asian handscroll format of poem-writing, a certain number of Cummings’ watercolours are also regarded as oriental or stylistically comparable with Chinese calligraphy and ink wash paintings. Through the Taoist idea of “Imaginary Reality” within Chinese art and literature in his *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition* (2009), Li Zehou explicitly demonstrates the significant difference between Chinese classical poetry/painting and the Western in terms of their prime concern whether for “feeling” or “scene”:²⁴

The same principle is at work here as in Chinese poetry and painting, in which the aspect of natural objects (their type, form, color, or size) is not clearly or concretely laid out, but in which they nonetheless possess an imaginary reality. [...] In this sense, even though imaginary reality is divorced from concrete sensory perception, it incorporates the experiences of real life and the feelings associated with everyday social life. It is said that “feeling should lead, scene should follow”; precisely because the imagination is under the tutelage of the emotions, the specific aspects it reads into the scene will vary with changes in time and place, and according to the individual reader or viewer. (156)

The verbally or visually imaginary realities are created by a creative association of the artist’s virtuoso techniques that rely on free strokes and shunned details. They then cooperate with the

²⁴ For more discussion on the ancient Chinese sense of beauty and interdisciplinary aesthetic theories of Chinese literature and art in historically chronological order, see Li Zehou, *The Path of Beauty: A Study of Chinese Aesthetics*, translated by Song Lizeng (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

audience's noumenal experience of intuitions and emotions at both sensory and formal levels. In this way, the artwork can move unreservedly across "time and space, cause and effect, objects and phenomena, and through fiction to expand or contract, add to or even change the original aspect of all these things" (Li 156) – across what Cummings categories as the different worlds of "REALITIES," "UNREALITIES," and "ACTUALITIES."



Fig. 3-5 E. E. Cummings, *Tower in France* (n.d.). Ink on paper, 20.3 by 30.5 cm. Ken Lopez, Hadley, MA.



Fig. 3-6 E. E. Cummings, *Tall Tree and Woods* (n.d.). Watercolour, 45.2 by 30.5 cm. Ken Lopez, Hadley, MA.

Charles Norman, in his biography titled *E. E. Cummings: The Magic-Maker* (1972), is straightforward to claim that “[Cummings] is more Oriental than occidental, as though he really had been an inhabitant of China ‘where a painter is a poet’” (177). He explains this argument in two ways. Firstly, as Cummings calls his poems essentially pictures (“poempictures”), Norman detects that in several watercolours he was “not so much painting a picture as capturing a poetic metaphor in paint; that is to say, he was celebrating Nature, as he does so often in his poetry” (177). The capitalised “Nature” here does not merely denote the natural scene, such as plants, animals, and other products of the earth as frequently depicted in his poems or pictures, but also the “poetic metaphor” or Taoist inherent qualities of the real nature which ask for observers’ direct experience and imagination. Neither his *Tower in France* (fig. 3-5) nor *Tall Tree and Woods* (fig. 3-6) attempts to show us a photographic copy of urban or rural landscape, but with free brushstrokes and expressive colours, they are going to paint the ideas, chase for the spiritual naturalness, and grasp the essentials of our inner attachment to the external environment. In Li’s words, this is how “the nonspecific wind, flower, snow, or moon can be coloured by concrete individual experience” and might explain why Chinese and Cummings’ intermedial works of art can be “so inclusive, so variable, and so universal” (156). Another reason Norman explains Cummings’ paintings as being “more Oriental” is that his “swift execution” cannot “satisfy western eyes used to projections of mass instead of space” (177). Again, Cummings’ executive freedom and swiftness of lines, shapes, and different shades of colours engage more intensively with the connotative meanings of the work than the signification of physical reality. It is through the imaginary, the perceptual, and the emotional that we could fully approach and comprehend the real, the unreal, and the actual. Completely different from the Western linear perspective since Renaissance, Cummings’ “Oriental” watercolour, like Chinese freehand brush work, stresses the entire space over the horizon line, spatiality over linearity, and the subjective (artistic conception) over the objective (graphic projection). Some Chinese poetry/painting criticism can encapsulate these features of his oriental aesthetics: “fusion of feeling and scene,” “a poem in the painting” and “a painting in the poem” (Li 157) which all helps Cummings to further develop his poet-painter artishood.

After reading and seeing some of Cummings’s poems and paintings in *The Dial*, Marianne Moore once evaluated his intermedial art as characteristic of “pur[e] personal feeling” and spatial “economy”: “His work says it again – the painting, writing, drawing: especially the line drawings comprising curves, swirls, and leaning ellipses, are like Chinese calligraphy which does not hesitate.”²⁵ Apart from the thematic and formal use of feeling and space, one can easily discover

²⁵ Marianne Moore, “E. E. Cummings 1894-1962 The Academy December 5, 1962” (Typescript), box 26, James Sibley Watson/The Dial Papers, Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

the calligraphic style of curves, swirls, and leaning ellipses, for example, in Cummings' *Bullfight* sketch (fig. 3-7). His work synthesises the related artistry of Chinese calligraphy and ink wash painting, conveying a fleeting moment of movement, spontaneity, and freedom. To do so, the artist employs different forces of drawing lines (thinner or bolder) and quantities of ink/water (heavy or light) to create the antagonistic tension between the properly dressed matador and the wild bull. Cummings' acrobatics of word and image is foregrounded by his intensive composition of brush skills and unstructured forms so as to retain what Moore mentioned as "this sacrosanctity of untainted naturalness."²⁶ The calligrapher-poet is contented with the adjusted balance between coarseness and fineness out of this genre, as he spoke in a letter to Edward Nagle: "to fart in ink, as it were, let me add – am delighted" (Cummings, *SL* 80). The rigid, realistic style of sketching gives way to a fluid, romantic expression of calligraphing, which enriches the denotative function of varied sizes of line and densities of ink with a transformative emphasis on motion and emotion charged by the dynamic experience of life.



Fig. 3-7 E. E. Cummings, *Bullfight* (1924). Brush, ink, and graphite on paper. *The Dial*, vol. 76, no. 1, January 1924.

As a verbal example, Cummings' opening poem in *50 Poems* (1940) linguistically presents us with a calligraphic work comprising split letters, grotesque punctuation marks, irregular capitals, and flowing spaces in a well-structured grouping of 4-1-4-1-4-1-4-1 lines:

!blac
k
again

²⁶ Ibid.

t
 (whi)
 te sky
 ?t
 rees whic
 h fr

 om droppe

 d
 ,
 le
 af

 a::go

 e
 s wh
 IrlI
 n

 .g (CP 487)

Set in a “!blac / k” (black) backdrop against the “(whi) // te” (white) sky, the vertical arrangement of the poem looks like a withered “t / rees” (trees) in a pictorially economical fashion, from which a “le / af” (leaf) dropped and danced in “wh / IriI / n // .g” (whirling) eddies. It could be seen as a prototype of Cummings’ leaf poem, later even reduced and condensed with no ornament into a minimalist version of “l(a,” also as an opening poem published in *95 Poems* (1958): “l(a // le / af / fa // ll // s) / one / l // iness” (CP 673). The latter exhibits a more balanced grouping of lines into an 1-3-1-3-1 symmetry with a series of eye rhymes, whose visual repetition and rhythmicity are designated to spotlight a natural wholeness (“one-liness”) and process of falling – a temporal extension of growing or becoming on the final stage.²⁷ In her lecture “Tedium and Integrity in Poetry” inspired by *The Tao of Painting* at Mills College, California in 1957, Moore introduces the audience to the idea of Tao, the “way” or “path” of Chinese painting, centring “much less on seeing the real world than on making of it another world” and all “things visible serve style” (144). Painting and calligraphy are not a fixed “profession but an extension of the art of living” and “an expression of maturity by someone who had lived and experienced things, and a painter was likely to be an astronomer, a musician, a medical man” (146) and undoubtedly a poet. In Moore’s lucid

²⁷ Cummings’ eye rhymes take an important role in his development of visual poetics and intermedial prosody, see Martin Heusser, “Radical Eye Rhymes: Visual Strategies in Modernist Poetry,” in *Relational Designs in Literature and the Arts: Page and Stage, Canvas and Screen*, edited by Rui Carvalho Homem (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012) 221-36.

statement of the core of Chinese painting, it is obvious to identify some relationships with Cummings' watercolour for both indicate a "fusion of that which pertains to heaven, the spirit, and of matter, which pertains to earth, as affected by the painter's insight and skill" (147). To explain it, Moore then touches upon the ancient canons of Chinese painting: "brush is the means of creating structure; the ideal takes form" and with applying colours and organising compositions, "the most important factor in unifying and harmonising the elements of a picture is space" (147-48) which is synonymous with the Tao. Under the Taoist influence, Cummings' intermedial method is thus to see poetic word as image, lineation as brushstroke, punctuation as colour, and spacing as a referential unit of composing a picture that could capture the "world of the spirit, [Chinese] *ch'i*" or the "Latin *spiritus*" (Moore, "Tedium and Integrity" 147).

At this point, Cummings' leaf poems offer us an ideal model of making pictographic use of the capitalised, enjambed, spaced letters in his spatial design of the typeset page as a canvas. Instead of a sense of singularity or loneliness, they have played a revolutionary role in transforming the verbally linear form into an intermedial constellation of words and signs meant to be seen as a whole. Using the Derridean term in his *Of Grammatology* (1976), we come to know that the "linearisation of writing" and "linearist concept of speech" (72) for basic communication have been interrelated to our conceptualisation of time, presence, and actuality from the origin of Western intellectual history.²⁸ On the contrary, Cummings' "le / af" in a nonlinear order breaks down the oral tradition based on the linearist sequentiality of sound or spoken language. Its nature of anti-linearism enables its spatial fragments out of the graphically written language to seize the Taoist "spirit of graphic presence" (K. Harris 198). In *Infrathin: An Experiment in Micropoetics* (2021), Marjorie Perloff asserts that Pound's character in *The Cantos* is not just a verbal image or "decorative" as an adjacency or paratext but those Chinese ideograms "derived from Confucius, provide alternative perspective to the Western linear drive that insists on forward movement from A to B to C" (110-11).²⁹ Analogously, Cummings' broken letters and innovative spaces also replace the linear, syntactic coherence with a calligraphic presentation of spatiality and multidimensionality. By overturning the grammatical order of "which from" and "leaf a" in this creative calligraphy, the poet-painter breaks the conventional lineation of organising phrases and boldly visualises the speed, gravity, and direction of the leaf's movement falling down to the

²⁸ Through the poststructuralist theories of Lacan, Derrida, and Kristeva, Kurt Harris defines two sorts of languages based on "I/i": one is capitalised paternal, scientific language of time, subject, masculinity, and linear mode of discourse (with syntactic, sound-based, ordered signification); the other is lowercase maternal, figurative language of space, object, femininity, and spatial mode of visuality (with semiotic, graphic, disordered representation). See K. Harris 189-99.

²⁹ On Pound's ideogrammic invention and spatial design of page, see Marjorie Perloff, "Reading the Verses Backward: The Invention of Pound's Canto Page," in *Infrathin* 65-90. On further discussion about the non-linear visual poetics, see her "After Free Verse: The New Nonlinear Poetics," in *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, edited by Charles Bernstein (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 86-110.

ground. Thus, the concreteness or visible materiality (*verbivocovisual*) of Pound's ideogrammic and Cummings' calligraphic prosody of "making it new" has precisely shown us a blueprint of intermedial, transcultural modernism, where they learnt from Confucianists and Taoists, Chinese poems and paintings, and the formal and stylistic plurality of "Poet-Painter of China."

Intermedial Prosody in Transcontinental Avant-Gardes

Apart from the Pacific-Rim impact of Oriental aesthetics and its intermedial artform of calligraphy, Cummings was abidingly attentive to another transcontinental aesthetics across the Atlantic, namely, the European avant-garde. One well-marked copy of Arthur Jerome Eddy's *Cubists and Post-Impressionism* (1914) and the other of Willard Huntington Wright's *Modern Painting: Its Tendency and Meaning* (1915) are preserved in Harvard's Houghton Library, where he saw lots of French artworks and initially gained a systematic comprehension of Post-Impressionists and their modern art followers: for example, Paul Cézanne, Francis Picabia, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Wassily Kandinsky, and so on. These avant-gardists made up a heavenly place for Cummings at that moment, as written in the opening verse of "Portraits" in his collection *Tulips & Chimneys* (1922):

of my
soul a street is:
prettinesses Pic-
abian tricktrickclickflick-er
garnished
of stark Picasso
throttling trees

hither
my soul

repairs herself with
prisms of sharp mind
and Matisse rhythms
to juggle Kandinsky gold-fish

away from the gripping gigantic
muscles of Cézanne's
logic

 oho
 a street
there is

where strange birds purr (Cummings, *CP* 69)

During his college years, his editing and writing mate at *The Harvard Monthly* and *The Harvard Advocate*, S. Foster Damon took the "provincial" Cummings to the International Exhibition of

Modern Art in Boston, Massachusetts in 1913 (Cheever 34-35).³⁰ As its debut, the 1913 Armory Show offered the young poet-painter a glimpse into the radical innovation of styles of Continental art movements, notably Fauvism and Cubism, which contrasted with American realist traditions. In this group portrait, Cummings grasps the core of modernist aesthetics as a presentative plurality, and began to incorporate painterly techniques in the intermedial prosody of creating his poempictures. He heard a flock of artistic “birds” purring in a “strange” or defamiliarising way: Picabia’s dense patchwork (“tricktrickclickflick-er”) of *The Dance at the Spring*, Picasso’s multiple viewpoints in *Woman with Mustard Pot*, Matisse’s colour “rhythm” in *L’Atelier Rouge*, Kandinsky’s *Improvisation 27*, and Cézanne’s “gripping gigantic / muscles” of *Baigneuses* – far away from any representational construction before. With Machel Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* at the centre of disputes, those “‘nonrepresentational’ or ‘abstract’” paintings and sculptures served as Eliotian catalysts of transcultural contemporaneity in the artistic arena, enabling American artists to replace “‘photographic realism’ or even ‘naturalism’” (Cummings, *AM* 357) with something originally new.

In the commencement address titled “The New Art” at Sanders Theatre for his graduation, Cummings keeps a vivid record of his observations during the visit to this international exhibition:

At the 1913 exhibition the puzzled crowd in front of Brancusi’s “Mlle. Pogany” was only rivalled by that which swarmed about the painting called “Nude Descending a Staircase.” “Mlle. Pogany” consists of a more or less egg-shaped head with an unmistakable nose, and a sinuous suggestion of arms curving upward to the face. There is no differentiation in modelling affording even a hint of hands; in other words, the flow of line and volume is continuous. But what strikes the spectator at first glance, and focuses the attention throughout, is the enormous inscribed ovals, which everyone recognises as the artist’s conception of the subject’s eyes. In this triumph of line for line’s sake over realism we note the development of the basic principles of impressionism. (4)

Again, as praised in his 1915 term paper “The Poetry of Silence,” Cummings is obsessed with the minimalist primitiveness of Constantin Brancusi’s *Mlle Pogany* (fig. 3-8), an abstractly sculptured bronze on a basis of the continuous “flow of line and volume” rather than the physical resemblance to model “a hint of hand.” Instead of taking a sculptural photo of Margit Pogany, the artist eliminates all descriptive details by carving a marble directly from his memory, portraying her characteristic in a simplified form: “a more or less egg-shaped head with an unmistakable nose, and a sinuous suggestion of arms curving upward to the face.” This purist work of art focuses on the materiality of the medium, where the “impressionist” capture of moving “line for line’s sake” triumphs over static “realism.” In their poetic and plastic avant-garde, what Cummings and

³⁰ “Practically everything I know about painting and poetry came from Damon,” Cummings recalls in Norman, *The Magic Maker* 43.

Brancusi try to do is to transpose the focal point from substance to structure, from a still life to subjective “eyes” (the “enormous inscribed ovals” of *Mlle Pogany*), from the represented object to the way of seeing and re-presenting: “Cummings had a painter’s eye, shaded in modernist mentality, and sparked by the poet’s imagination” (Wasserman 158).



Fig. 3-8 Constantin Brancusi, *Mlle Pogany* (1913). Bronze with black patina, 14.6 by 15.6 by 18.7 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

By defining Cubism and Futurism in his own words, though rough and obscure, Cummings sharply points out their common use of new means and designs to “express their personal reaction to the subject, i.e. – what this subject ‘means’ to them” (*AM* 3). The “subject” here, futuristically or cubistically, could be taken as sounds, colours, techniques, perspectives (like seeing “life through a magnifying glass”), environments, as well as motions in term of its tactile or expressive values. Milton A. Cohen in his *PoetandPainter: The Aesthetics of E. E. Cummings’s Early Work* (1987) touches on his aesthetic connection with the art of craftsmanship and its making of matters: with “modernist’s ambivalence towards the object,” Cummings “was fascinated by its ‘thingness’ – its planes and lines, solids and hollows, so temptingly transmutable into an abstract design” (36).³¹ It is true enough that Cummings’ “thingness” is concerned with basic units, raw

³¹ Cohen divides Cummings’ profession as a painter into two phases: a promising modernist from 1915 to 1926 and a retiring subjectivist from 1927 to 1962. See Cohen, “Cummings the Painter,” in *PoetandPainter* 33-64. Plus, see his “E. E. Cummings: Modernist Painter and Poet,” *Smithsonian Studies in American Art*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1990) 54-74.

materials, and stylistic designs that could be transmuted into an abstraction; nevertheless, even so in his early works, the poet-painter himself might not disbelieve in the physically “perceptual magnetism” of the object (36) as Cohen argues in the book or tend towards the aesthetics of abstraction or “the abstract for the abstract’s sake.” As stated clearly in one of Cummings’ undergraduate notes (from the viewpoint of a mid-teen Harvard aesthete), art “is capable of expressing abstract” with “[m]otion, sound, smell, taste, syncopation, etc.” as its various goals for “Beauty.”³² His idea of the New Art, thus, shall be considered as an alternative for giving a visible shape of the abstract, that is, concretising the subjective essence by a nonrepresentational approach and combining the primitive thingness or its nature of figuration with the “perceptual magnetism” through a palpable configuration. Take, for example, in Cummings’ poems “as freedom is a breakfast,” “joy’s the voice,” “time is a tree(this life one leaf),” and “love is the sky” (*CP* 511).

This is why Cummings could continue his speech by making analogies of plastic arts with the musical and literary. In discussing modernist poetry, he, at first, quotes Amy Lowell’s imagist piece of work “The Letter” and glorifies her “ultramodern” presentation of the “absolute vividness” shown in the first two lines: “Little cramped words scrawling all over the paper / Like dragged fly’s legs” (*AM* 7-8). He then jumps from this visual “thingness” to an extreme one in Gertrude Stein’s *Tender Buttons*, which fundamentally unveils the linguistic materiality and objectivism of poetic words. Cummings says, “Gertrude Stein subordinates the meaning of words to the beauty of the words themselves” and her “art is the logic of literary sound painting carried to its extreme” (8). The “literary sound painting” refers to Stein’s highly stylised use of lexical and phonetic repetitions with or without variations in a precise, calculated manner, such as the fictional portraits of Anna, Melanctha, and Lena in *Three Lives* or the poetic one of “If I Told Him, A Completed Portrait of Picasso.” In *Tender Buttons* (1914), Stein writes “All this and not ordinary, not unordered in not resembling. The difference is spreading” (Stein 11). Like Duchamp’s concept of *infrathin* or the slightest shade of difference, the poet’s varieties of reiteration pay more attention to the linguisticity of the word – the “graphic materiality of language and its [self-]referential function” (Bradford, “Brotherhood of Visual Poetics” 9) – than its signification or literal meaning.³³ In Cummings’ view, the “great imagination on the part of the authoress” (*AM* 9) dissolves and subverts the historical domination of the signified to the signifier, the “meaning of words” to “the beauty of the words themselves.”

³² E. E. Cummings, “Notes: Art,” box 95, folder 1, MS Am 1892.7 (149), E. E. Cummings Additional Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

³³ For more discussions on Stein and Duchamp, see Perloff, “‘A Rose Is a Rose Is a Rose Sélavy’: Stein, Duchamp, and the ‘Illegible’ Portrait,” in *Infrathin* 29-64; also, her “Of Objects and Readymades: Gertrude Stein and Marcel Duchamp,” *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, vol. 30, no. 2 (1996) 137-54.

Although he assumes that Stein's "unparalleled familiarity of [both literary and pictorial] medium precludes its use of the purpose of aesthetic effect" (9), Cummings still insists on the purpose of art as tracing subjective feeling through intermedial means. A nuance or shift in Stein's elliptical writing can change the subtlety and indeterminacies of mediation in-between different media. The visual arrangement of repetitious words and sounds resonates with Marjorie Perloff's idea of the "verbal-visual-sonic complex" (*Infrathin* 18), which weaves rhythm, sound structure, and spatial pattern into a formally meaningful construction. It thereby asks for what she calls *micropoetics* – examining every phoneme, morpheme, and syntactic contour at the microlevel – and an *infrathin* (*inframince*) reading based on differences rather than similarities (2). Her materialist discussion about art and language further clarifies Duchamp's notion of art as "*making – poiesis*" instead of creating or barely painting, which, as posited by the case of his readymades, "substitutes for the common synecdoche 'the painter's hand' – the individual talent to deploy line and colour (or, in the case of poetry, to deploy words to convey unique personal emotion) – the appropriation and reconfiguration of items already in existence" (10). Cummings also attempts to reconceptualise his works and artisthood from a defined classification of "poet" or "painter" to "*faits*" (things made) and "*faiteur*" (maker of things) in a broader sense (Fallon 49). However, different from Duchamp who did not recognise a deeper level of objectivity within the colour, line, or word itself, Cummings as a modernist *faiteur* (poet-painter) is in line with the Steinian poetics of thingness.

A similar viewpoint is presented in an article "People Stare Carefully" published in *The Dial* by Marianne Moore, who conceives his poems a kind of "verbal topiary-work":

Settling like a man-of-war bird or the retarded, somnambulistic athlete of the speedograph, [Cummings] shapes the progress of poems as if it were substance; he has "a trick of syncopation Europe has," determining the pauses slowly, with glides and tight-rope acrobatics, ensuring the ictus by a space instead of a period, or a semi-colon in the middle of a word, seeming to have placed adjectives systematically one word in advance of the words they modify, or one word behind, with most pleasing exactness. (39)

Within a sense of energetic dynamics, Cummings' style involves a deliberate, almost acrobatic manipulation of language and artform. Moore exemplifies this by describing his "syncopation" – a musical term referring to the purposeful interruption or displacement of rhythm – that takes the form of unusual line breaks and unexpected pauses. Cummings' "topiary" approach to poetry gives emphasis on the compositional elements and the tangible substance of poetic or non-poetic objects. Moore demonstrates that his use of linguistic or typographical "acrobatics" and dictional "exactness" shapes the constructive "progress of poems" as a verbal artisan. His poetic form as the "physique of the poem" depends upon the "look of being in its author's eyes, his most certain self" (40). Beyond the cultural and generic limits, Cummings' emphases on making, structural

compositionality, and “architectonics” (Huang-Tiller, “Iconic Meta-Sonnet” 30) of a free-verse poem, emancipates itself from the mimic representation of a single medium to a material reliance on every letter stroke, every space across different media and artforms.

From Gillian Huang-Tiller’s “iconicity” of a fixed poetic form (28) or Michael Webster’s mental “iconism” of an icon-symbol transformation (“Magic Iconism” 113) to the approach of this study, intermediality celebrating difference rather than similarity seems to be a more proper term to understand the Cummingsian association of spatial formats (i.e., graphic layout, flowing syntax, and dynamic mediality of word on the page) with the perceptual, cognitive experience of reading and seeing in the same time.³⁴ It implicates an interactive (*verbiuocovisual*) relationship among verbal narrative, vocal pattern, and visual performance of language and its deliberate composition to renegotiate one’s impression, perception, and imagination. Cummings’ intermedial awareness has already been found from the outset of “The New Art” before his radical painterly experimentation of typewriter language and pictorial design: “The New Art has many branches – painting, sculpture, architecture, the stage, literature, and music. In each of these there is a clearly discernible evolution from models; in none is there any trace of that abnormality, or incoherence, which the casual critic is fond of making the subject of tirades against the new order” (*AM* 3). Cummings’ general notion of the “New Art” only realises a normal or coherent trace of their developments at a macroscopic level, but the interart cross-fertilisation or medial “interconnectedness” (Fallon 49) in his mind has indeed encouraged him to transcend the unilateral expectation of any genre, language, and culture, opening the *infrathin* possibilities of his symbiotic act of writing and drawing. Richard Bradford speaks of “visualism” much more than “Concretism,” for the former could transform language into visual images whilst the latter – mainly referring to the case of pattern poetry or shaped verse – just makes an iconic link between poetic form and content (“Brotherhood” 13-14).³⁵ Compared to Bradford’s visualist translation from one thing to the other, the prism of intermediality with its focus on the mediation of sound-image and the signified could better analyse and interpret the “synaesthetic craftsmanship” (15) of Cummings’ poempictures, which alternatively creates an intermedial interface and phenomenal co-presence of the textual (poetry) and the graphic (painting) as an organic whole.

³⁴ Many chapters in several books of John Benjamins’ Iconicity in Language and Literature series have explored the iconicity in Cummings’ poems, such as the semantic iconicity, see Heusser, “The Semantics of Structure,” in *Iconic Investigations* 159-72; the sound-symbolism of iconicity, see Terblanche, “Iconicity and Naming,” in *Signergy* 179-91; the eco-iconic form, see Terblanche and Webster, “Eco-Iconicity in the Poetry and Poem-Groups,” in *Insistent Images* 155-72; the iconic visual poetry and its iconic means, see Webster, “Singing is silence,” in *Miming Meaning* 199-214. Also, on Cummings’ numerical scheme as a kind of iconic prosody, see Webster, “Cummings’ Silent Numerical Iconic Prosody,” in *Media inter Media* 423-38.

³⁵ On his visualist method of the “sliding scale” (based on the double pattern), see Richard Bradford, “The Sliding Scale: Concrete Poetry and Cummings,” in *The Look of It: A Theory of Visual Form in English Poetry* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1993) 126-145; also, his “The Sliding Scale,” in *Graphic Poetics* 117-40.



Fig. 3-9 Gaston Lachaise, *Portrait Bust of E. E. Cummings* (1927). Bronze, 36.83 by 21.59 cm. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Cambridge, MA.

Cummings wrote an essay on art criticism for *The Dial* in 1920, called “Gaston Lachaise,” which could be read as an extension of his earlier “The New Art” essay by talking about one of his most championed sculptors, Gaston Lachaise, and his avant-garde artistry. They became good friends during the late 1910s, after Cummings’ graduation from Harvard and move to Greenwich Village in 1917 (fig. 3-9). In a more mature style of writing, he claims that Lachaise’s “perhaps favourite (French) word is *simple*” under the influence of Cézanne’s “famous hate of contemporary facility and superficiality” (*AM* 14). The idea of *simplicity*, as Cummings goes on, led him to a recreation of nature which is “new and fundamental” – quite different from Brancusi’s “mere economy of form through the elimination of unessentials” (14). In a self-referential fashion, it means the “form which completely expresses itself, form that perfectly tactilises the beholder, as in the case of an electric machine which, being grasped, will not let the hand let go” (14). The self-sufficiency and formal autonomy of his vaselike sculptural nudes also reminds Cummings of something akin to Chinese art, and the Oriental aesthetics fascinated both artists from an exotically transcultural point of view. “Significantly in contrast to [Paul] Gauguin” interested in the South Pacific, Lachaise “turns his eyes to the north” and aims “to experience the bignesses and whitenesses and silences of the polar regions” (15). His use of geographical displacement of the north and the south brings forth a hybrid of cultural and artistic effects to disclose the truth with the quintessence, to “negate the myriad with the single, to annihilate the complicatedness and

prettinesses and trivialities of South civilisations with the enormous, the solitary, the fundamental” (15). At this point, Lachaise’s non-objective form of sculpture, for Cummings, is “not a ‘modern statue,’ not a statue OF Something or Some One BY a man named Gaston Lachaise – but a complete tactile self-orchestration, a magnificently conjugation largeness, an IS” (21). Beyond the conventional art, it is, metaphorically, a large orchestration consisting of tactile, self-sufficient lines and volumes as musical notes with a great number of delicate variations. His “IS” – as a keyword of Cummings’ intermedial prosody – is also not a noun but a verb or a mixture that constantly transforms itself in a transcendental process of being and self-becoming.

To achieve this, Cummings treats the compositional process of organising (verbal/visual modes of) colours, lines or lineations, and multimodal spaces as the central to his intermedial prosody, which absorb the stylistic plurality and idiosyncratic crafts of the European avant-garde. Such self-referential complexes substitute the grand narrative of realistic representation with a microstructure of the verbal-visual-sonic composition. In a letter of June 1918, he described his early paintings to his mother, Rebecca Haswell Cummings, as “organisations of colour and line, presentative, semi-abstract, & abstract” (qtd. in Kidder, “Twin Obsessions” 36). In “E. E. Cummings’ Paintings and Poems,” William Carlos Williams also notices his concern about the material organisation of “things” and the unusual presentations:

You do not feel, or should not, like eating a painting but looking at it, devouring it with the *eyes*. I think it is what the paintings literally *say* that is important to Mr. Cummings. That can be of no importance to a painter, only the design – and the colour, the same thing, the inarticulate design. And Mr. Cummings is of all things articulate. (233)

From Williams’ perspective, only through the lowercased *i* and *eyes*, we could truly hear what Cummings’ artworks are designated to *say* – the articulation of inarticulate things like colours, lines, and the most importantly, the “design” of them all. Cummings’ unconventional “design” or making of either paintings or poems is marked by the Continental avant-gardes, especially by those Fauves and Cubists. Scholars have investigated this artistic connection: with Futurism, Kilyovski’s Cubo-Futurist reading of “r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r” (99) and Olsen’s summary of Cummings’ Futurist devices to create “kinesis or spatial movement” (“Futurist Art Movement” 157); with Dada, Tashjian’s interpretation of his typographic language as Dadaist “anti-art” (167) and Abella’s of his “antagonistic poetry” as well as his other Dadaist anti-narrative (80); even a bit with Surrealism, Fallon’s analysis of his “surreal images and absurdist scenes” in prosaic works (58). At any rate, Cummings’ subjective movement of i-eye throughout the printed and drawn spaces is actually more active and natural than the Dadaist nihilism or the Futurist plastic mobility engined by the mechanical energy. Even if his fiction (*EIMI*) and play (*Him* or [*No Title*]) drop a hint of

postmodernist or postdramatic absurdity, Cummings' spontaneity or simultaneousness of poetry – seeking for intuitive experience rather than nonsense – should be associated more closely with an “organicist view” and its “transcendental/romantic background” (Ruiz 112). His Cubo-Fauvist employment of colour and line, on the other hand, has still not been fully recognised and needs our further consideration in understanding Cummings' prosodic intermediality not as a monomedial translation but an intergrowing unsystem.

Cummings' Cubo-Fauvist Palette

From Cambridge, Massachusetts to Paris in April 1917, E. E. Cummings immersed himself in the early twentieth-century Parisian aesthetics, like Fauvism and Cubism. He met and befriended William Slater Brown and they discussed “art, literature, and aesthetic theory, especially abstract art and modern French poetry” (Kennedy 152). He and his friend browsed the second-hand bookstalls of the *bouquinistes* along the River Seine, reading French Symbolist poets like Arthur Rimbaud and Stéphane Mallarmé and Cubist Guillaume Apollinaire. They went to the theatre for the premiere of Erik Satie's ballet *Parade*, with costumes and sets designed by Pablo Picasso. Cummings also bought art prints of paintings by Paul Cézanne and Henri Matisse that he admired for years.³⁶ While traveling through Paris as a passionate painter, he drew figures and scenes in his sketchbooks to capture their impressionist details. He even created a colour chart by sticking coloured papers, leaves, and tinfoil into the page of his workbook, with notes about the sensations he felt during the journey and the practices of colour and light.³⁷ Likewise, in *The Enormous Room* (1922), Cummings recalls experimenting with the found colours from various materials in the prison to explore the abstraction of painting together with his friend Brown (known as B in the novel):

...B and I spend most of our time when on promenade collecting rather beautifully hued leaves in la cour. These leaves we inserted in one of my note-books, along with all the colours which we could find on cigarette-book chocolate-wrappers labels of various sorts and even postage-stamps. (We got a very brilliant red from a certain piece of cloth.) Our efforts puzzled everyone (including the plantons) more than considerably; which was natural, considering that everyone did not know that by this exceedingly simple means we were effecting a study of colour itself, in relation to what is popularly called “abstract” and sometimes “non-representative” painting. (ER 224)

³⁶ On Cummings' first Paris experience in 1917 and later return during 1921-1923 as well as his contact with Parisian culture from then on, see Cheever, “The Western Front” 45-57; Fallon 48-59; Michael Webster, “E. E. Cummings and Paris,” *Spring: The Journal of E. E. Cummings Society*, <https://faculty.gvsu.edu/webster/cummings/Paris.htm>.

³⁷ E. E. Cummings, “Sketchbook,” box 75, MS Am 1823.7 (19), E. E. Cummings Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

In these “abstract” or “non-representative” attempts, their chromatic collection of colours – from leaves, cigarette-boxes, chocolate-wrappers, postage-stamps, and clothes – reveals an “exceedingly simple” but natural means of studying the colour itself as a basic unit of visibility. His purposeful study of colour and unconstrained brushwork makes a further step away from the naturalist, representational value of painterly realism and even Impressionism. With its pure and symbolic nature of Favism, this method instead calls attention to the pictorial composition that, based on simplified but radical use of colours and lines, can convey not just depths and movements but also our imaginations and sensations when looking at it. Words and colours serve as intuitive presence underlying the subject-object unity of seeing and being to transcend the body-mind dualism since the Cartesian First Principle of Philosophy – “I paint (my poems), therefore i am” (Grabher 48). In his autobiographical narrative, Cummings refers to the “authentic art” or “Art” that has been previously concealed by the Platonic doctrine of seeing and imitating “on canvas and in stone and by words this so-called word” (ER 224). His “Art” intends to emancipate us from the allegorical cave which is “entirely and thoroughly and perfectly annihilated by that vast and painful process of Unthinking which may result in a minute bit of purely personal Feeling” (224).

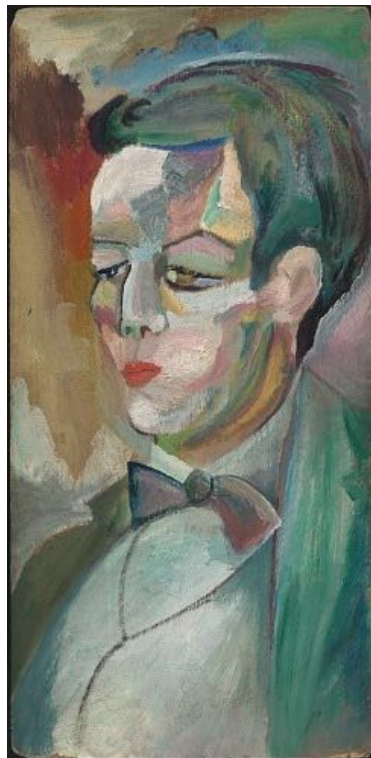


Fig. 3-10 E. E. Cummings, *Scofield Thayer* (1921). Oil on artist board, 44.5 by 21.5 cm. National Portrait Gallery (Smithsonian Institution), Washington, DC.

From “Unthinking” to “Feeling,” Cummings’ transvaluation of the old-fashioned to his “New Art” reflects a Fauvist tendency towards Matisse’s expressive style for natural essentials,

mutually assured of the painter's vision and the poet's eye. His admiration for Matisse's artwork could be seen in one of his notes to theorise the avant-garde into a "total work of art" (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) interconnected with each other; therein, Cummings lists Matisse as representative of modern painting parallel with Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot of modernist poetry, James Joyce of modernist novel, Arnold Schoenberg of twentieth-century music, and Constantin Brancusi of modern sculpture.³⁸ They both endeavour to present the vision and spiritual essence of what they see and feel in the actual world. At the first glance, Cummings' portrayals of *Scofield Thayer* (fig. 3-10) and *Dicky Ames* could immediately remind us of Matisse's *Woman with a Hat* in an unfinished (*non finito*) condition, prominent brushwork, and shocking, non-naturalistic colours.

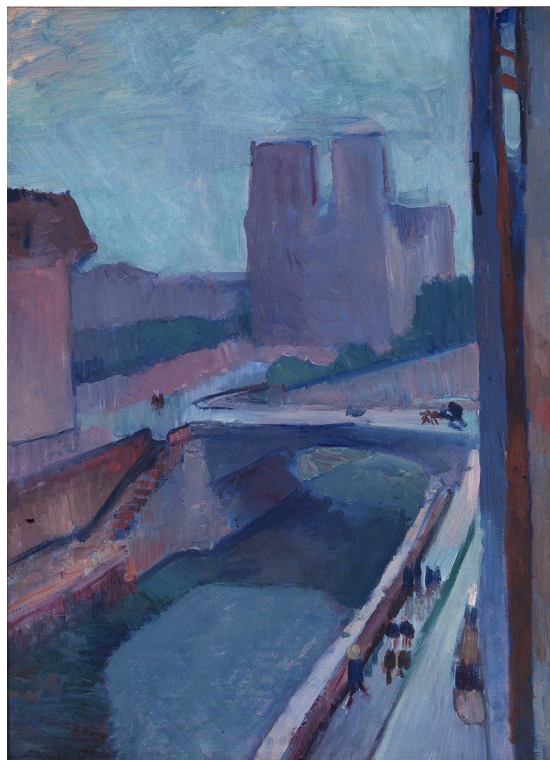


Fig. 3-11 Henri Matisse, *Notre-Dame, une fin d'après-midi* (1902). Oil on paper mounted on paper, 72.5 by 54.5 cm. Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo.

Noticeably, there is an ekphrastic relationship between Cummings' "Paris;this April sunset completely utters" and Matisse's *Notre-Dame* (fig. 3-11).³⁹ During his Dark Period, the painter employs a loose brushwork and an intense colourism of blue and purple to produce a sombre, sentimental atmosphere. From a window near the river, his stylistic colour scheme and structural

³⁸ E. E. Cummings, "Camp Devens," box 87, MS Am 1892.7 (70), E. E. Cummings Additional Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

³⁹ Though not analysing Cummings' generic border-crossing in an ekphrastic tradition, Claudia Desblaches claims that Arcimboldo's paintings and Donatello's sculptures erect a direct influence on the structural and creation of his poems. See her "Crossing Generic Boundaries: Sculpture, Painting and Engraving as Compensations for E. E. Cummings' Hermeneutic Short-Cuts," in Flajšar and Vernyik 156-69.

composition generate the perpetual experience of observing and passing by the Notre-Dame, which, like the April sunset, completely “utters serenely silently a cathedral”:

spiral acres of bloated rose
coiled within cobalt miles of sky
yield to and heed
the mauve
 of twilight(who slenderly descends,
daintily carrying in her eyes he dangerous first stars)
people move love hurry in a gently

arriving gloom and
see!(the new moon
fills abruptly with sudden silver
these torn pockets of lame and begging colour)while
there and here the lithe indolent prostitute
Night,argues

with certain houses (Cummings, *CP* 183)

As the third “Post Impressions” in his second collection of *é* [*AND*] (1925), Cummings’ ekphrasis illustrates what the Fauve painter has recorded is the Cathedral as a serene, silent thing as its sculptural volume is shadowed by the “cobalt” sky and the “mauve / of twilight” in the visual form. With “spiral” strokes and “gloom[y]” colours on the canvas, the poet-painter compares Matisse’s spontaneous and rough treatment of the composition to the slender, dainty, and gentle movement of descending stars and rushing walkers on the street. Through our eyes, the bright glow of “new moon” (the “sudden silver”) could be seen among the clouds in the top left corner, which is constructed by a sparse cluster of brushstrokes also appearing as the light reflection in the water. The executive virtuosity sparks off an alternate mode of expression from mimesis, and Matisse views this formal expression not as decorative but artistically intuitive.⁴⁰ In 1948, he wrote to Henry Clifford, the Director of Philadelphia Museum of Art, about his major exhibition: “colour – not as description, that is, but as a means of intimate expression” and one shall place colour – as image or symbol – in accordance with “a natural design” directly from “feelings” (Matisse 141). He calls this the “Nature” – by which a person can “identify himself with her, by entering into the things” – infused with the idea of Taoism and even phrased in Taoist terms, and the Nature is able to arouse one’s “feelings” by connecting the colour and other compositional elements with a spiritual or transcendentalist exploration: “If drawing is of the Spirit and colour

⁴⁰ Both stress the transcendental, pre-perceptual nature through artistic intuition, in light of Henri Bergson’s and Benedetto Croce’s aesthetic theories. See Charlotte de Mille, “Grafting a Dream: Henri Bergson, Claude Debussy, and Henri Matisse,” in *Rival Sisters, Art and Music at the Birth of Modernism, 1815-1915*, edited by James H. Rubin and Olivia Mattis (New York: Routledge) 297-311.

of the Senses, you must draw first, to cultivate the spirit and to be able to lead colour into spiritual paths” (140), which very much sounds like the Tao.

In both of Cummings’ poems and paintings, colour has been used from a methodological perspective, observing the Impressionist light and shadows that describe the natural scene, as well as evoking one’s emotional or subjective pulse through the expressive form with the Cubo-Fauvist radical palette. The first stanza of “Impressions: V” presents us an Imagist picture of the sunset, in an ekphrastic manner referring to Claude Monet’s *San Giorgio Maggiore at Dusk*: “stinging / gold swarms / upon the spires / silver” (Cummings, *CP* 63). The golden rays of the setting sun look like the “swarms” of bees that are “stinging” the “silver” top of the bell tower. On painter’s canvas and poet’s paper, the architectural structure of the church is delineated by the visual and verbal colouration of light and air floating in the background. Also, in one of “Sonnets – Unrealities” originally published in *Eight Harvard Poets*, Cummings’ freely brushed colours as a distinct way of seeing take precedence over substances or contours and represent the Romantic concept of nature. As a postromantic colourist, Cummings applies pure and mixed colours to create an intensive effect of chromatic vibration and visual ambiguity. The picturesque play of sunlight and air reinforces the spontaneous, immediate movement of one’s awareness and feeling in a bright and diverse array of hues:

 this is the garden:colours come and go,
 frail azures fluttering from night’s outer wing
 strong silent greens serenely lingering,
 absolute lights like baths of golden snow.
 This is the garden:pursed lips do blow
 upon cool flutes within wide glooms,and sing
 (of harps celestial to the quivering string)
 invisible faces hauntingly and slow. (Cummings, *CP* 144)

Furthermore, the poet-painter also pays attention to not merely the chromatic complement but its similitudes (the similarity of chromaticity) – the different, subtle shades of the same colour, boldly featuring in a visible presentation of fleeting lights and shadows. His Fauvist theory of how to organise colours and lines is then dependent upon not just luminance differences but also the overall structure of the poetic canvas. His *infrathin* use of colours suggests a harmonious relationship between the natural and the human, between a “green / hill” and “little you-i” (Cummings, *CP* 593) in a network of multiplicities. It is:

 blue took it my
 far beyond far
 and high beyond high
 bluer took it your

but bluest took it our
away beyond where

what a wonderful thing
is the end of a string
(murmurs little you-
as the hill becomes nil)
and will somebody tell
me why people let go (593)

The gradients or changing colours of “blue,” “bluer,” and “bluest” take us “far beyond far / and high beyond high” and “away beyond” anywhere. The painterly directness explores the texture and articulative form of colour palettes instead of mythic or allegorical meaning as in classical representations, releasing one’s feelings and raw sensations from a framed mindset into the cognitive infinite. A similar alternative takes place in Cummings’ *50 Poems* (1940), throughout poems 46 to 47, where he transforms the comparative varieties of “greEEn’s” dancing “on hollow” into his lowercased i and “o small you,” a continuum of multiple possibilities and micropoetic energies. The little you-i is now “sitting in a tree- // sitting in a treetop”:

riding on a greenest

riding on a greener
(o little i)
riding on a leaf

o least who
sing small thing
dance little joy

(shine most prayer) (534-55)

The poet meticulously paints the distinguishing “small thing” of the greenness in a range of hues of green, “greener,” and “greenest,” from which both “small you” and “little i” are united in a transcendental sense with a “leaf” to sing and dance the “little joy” of being flexible, multiplied, and unconfined. The small i as a single leaf is freed from the rigid system of a hierarchical tree that has long been inscribed with sociocultural and political strictures in reality. Nature, for Cummings, is typically “anthropomorphic – a projection of the artist’s unabashed romanticism” (Cohen, “Disparate Twins” 89). This nature-human anthropomorphism and its transspecies connection of i-leaf achieve a remarkable unity of naturalistic concern and abstract treatment, spontaneity and subjectivity, feeling and expressing, and the intuitive and boundlessness.

As he presents a series of wild, bright colours in his Fauvist palette, Cummings constructs a stylistic surface and emotional atmosphere in both formal and mental terms. A subjective

arrangement of pure colours is paradoxically employed in his “Impressions: IV” to visualise abstract concepts or to endow them with an inner resonance: “the hills / like poets put on / purple thought against / the // magnificent clamour of / day / tortured / in gold, which presently // crumpled / collapses / exhaling a red soul into the dark” (Cummings, *CP* 62). In a Cubo-Fauvist fashion, the simultaneous contrast of “purple,” “gold,” “red,” “dark” brings us a multileveled effect of reading and imagining the image with both physiological (“hands”) and psychological (“heart”) processes (62). Similarly, Cummings’ watercolour (fig. 3-12) reduces the illusionary depth of a linear perspective into a boldly presentative plane, which, rather than the impasto thickly applied in oil paintings, embraces the expressive ordering of colour relationships and that of paint applications. The watercolour medium of *Untitled* with fast brushstrokes and light touches is easy to convey the painter’s individual responses to nature or spiritual paths of the Nature. In a riotous celebration of painterly materials, he juxtaposes complementary colours next to each other throughout the paper from the ground to the sky, e.g., blue bushes and orange wildflowers, yellow lights and purple trees, green mountains and the red sunset. Avoiding the mixture of colours, Cummings takes his restricted palette of the primaries (red, blue, yellow) and the secondaries (green, orange, purple) and organise them into a large whole area to expand the field of vision and amplify the optical effect through the intensification of contrastive hues. Hence colour, operating in a visibly concrete than “abstract way” (Kidder, “Cummings and Cubism” 274), connotes a kinaesthetic movement between the external and the internal, namely, between the physical appearance and our modes of seeing/feeling.



Fig. 3-12 E. E. Cummings, *Untitled* (1945). Watercolour, 25.3 by 35.5 cm. Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, Rochester.

Also, in the poem “will out of the kindness of their hearts a few philosophers tell me,” varied patterns of dints and brushworks delineate a vivid field opposite to the top of “this hill at Calchidas, in the sunlight”:

down ever so far on the beach below me a little girl in white spins, tumbles; rolling in sand.
across this water, crowding tints: browns and whites shoving, the dotting millions of
windows of thousands of houses – Lisboa. Like the crackle of a typewriter, in
the afternoon sky.
goats and sheep are driven by somebody along a curve of road which eats into a pink cliff
back and up leaning out of yellowgreen water. (Cummings, *CP* 281)

Like Matisse’s *Luxe, Calme et Volupté* (1904), this stanzaic fragment of poem-picture is a quintessentially a Fauve landscape with its “crowding tints,” beastly chroma, and simplified forms of those natural objects. The poetic canvas shows us two layers: firstly, a “shoving” horizontal line of “millions of windows of thousands of houses” in Lisbon looks like the hilly buttons on a typewriter, suggesting a Pointillist stroke of “dotting” colours and blending tinted spots into a full range of tone; secondly, a diagonal line of a curved road breaks in the undiminished intensity of a cliff and water as the background with “goats and sheep” like emptied brushstrokes on the surface of the page. From an atmospheric perspective, buildings, mountains, and seawater are painted in flowing “browns and whites,” “pick,” and “yellowgreen” to depict a subjective scene while spotlighting its textures and our perceptual and sentimental process of accessing them. Cummings’ liberated and inconsistent use of colour and line does not attempt to abstract the intuitive expression of feelings but on the contrary, his formal pattern arranging syllables and spaces in a defamiliarising way intensifies the tactile, palpable concretising of the materialistic form to show the reader-viewer how he sees and feels.⁴¹ Radically, he even played with the idea of “pairing punctuation marks with colours, and he assigned colours to correspond with the voices and moods of verbs and the case, person, and number of nouns” (Webster, “Silent Numerical Iconic Prosody” 424).⁴² His colourist theory is more than making literary, pictorial, and musical analogies – word arranged on the page equal to colour/line in a painting. He experiments with verbal material, visual form, and vocal scheme to develop a *verbivocovisual* constellation of his intermedial prosody.⁴³ Cummings’ dynamic composition of colours and words is a spatial constellation rather than linear structure or mimetic mould, transferring the focus from the stability of thinking to the movement

⁴¹ Similarly, Matisse says: “The entire arrangement of my picture is expressive: the place occupied by the figures, the empty spaces around them, the proportions, everything has its share. Composition is the art of arranging in a decorative manner the diverse elements at the painter’s command to express his feelings” (70). See his “Notes of a Painter” (1908), in *Art in Theory, 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, edited by Charles Harrison et al. (London: Blackwell, 2003) 69-75.

⁴² On the Houghton notes mentioned here, see Cohen, “Colour and Grammar,” in *Poet and Painter* 210-17.

⁴³ As a manifesto and statement on concrete poetry, see Eugen Gomringer, “From Line to Constellation,” in *Concrete Poetry: A World View*, edited by Mary Ellen Solt (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1969) 67.

of seeing (between inward/impression and outward/expression): “the eye is the organ of colour [and] Colour is: to see” (qtd. in Cohen, *PoetandPainter* 163).

The *Sound* and *Noise* series is a good example of his Cubo-Fauvist combination of colour and shape, the seeable and the hearable, and image and music. In *Sound No. 2* (fig. 3-13), Cummings synthesises purely unmixed colours with geometric shapes and lines, either curved or rectilinear to create a group of vortexes in an open-up, decentred composition. These “noisecoloured / curvecorners” are flexibly combined into one, “gush silently perpetuating solids (More / fluid Than gas)” (Cummings, *CP* 313). They are reduced to fluid imageries and visible discourses in line with the musical rhythms by exploring the textures and properties of colour and shape. Instead of Analytical Cubism with multiple perspectives from whole to pieces, *Sound No. 2* should be considered as a Synthetic Cubist work, or more closely, a Synchronist symphony consisting of fragmented or hollow circles, dotted strips, and irregular squares as different kinds of musical instruments. Like notes arranged by a composer in a harmonious way, varied chromatic scales and geometric patterns are put together on paper to highlight the structural balance and compositional harmony of deforming and reconstructing. Cummings’ poem and painting are thus seen as a pair of “Diptychs” (a mirror relation to define ekphrasis), of which the “anamorphic” and “deformed lines, curves, and words” concretise the signified by styling the abstract signifier and turn the decorative, “denotative into figurative” and presentative (Desblaches 165-67).⁴⁴



Fig. 3-13 E. E. Cummings, *Sound No. 2* (1919). Oil on paper, 47.8 by 60.6 cm. Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, Rochester.

⁴⁴ More specifically about this ekphrastic pair, see Desblaches, “Cummings’ Diptychs or Dynamic Cones: *Noise Number 13* and ‘the surely’” 162-65.

In one of his verbal “Portraits” on Pablo Picasso, Cummings further explains the visual-sonic complex of Cubo-Synchronism:

Picasso
you give us Things
which
bulge:grunting lungs pumped full of sharp thick mind

you make us shrill
presents always
shut in the sumptuous screech of
simplicity

(out of the
black unbunged
Something gushes vaguely a squeak of planes
or

between squeals of
Nothing grabbed with circular shrieking tightness
solid screams whisper
Lumberman of The Distinct

your brain’s
axe only chops hugest inherent
Trees of Ego,from
whose living and biggest

bodies lopped
of every
prettiness

you hew form truly (Cummings, *CP* 95)

Picasso never believes in abstract art, for one always has to start with something even if he or she wants to remove all of its decorative traces of reality.⁴⁵ This is why, in the first line, Cummings pays his tribute to Picasso who “give[s] us Things” which present “the sumptuous screech of / simplicity,” “a squeak of planes,” “circular shrieking tightness / solid screams whisper.” These sounds or noises, reflected in Cummings’ numerical series of oils, signifies not only an unusual tonal or rhythmic fusion in music but also the Cubist features of simplicity, tightness or solidness, and *passage* of planes. To achieve this, Picasso as a “Lumberman of The Distinct” creatively destructs the “hugest inherent / Trees of Ego” fixed in a single viewpoint, and by chopping and hewing the body of things reconstructs a “form truly” with “every / prettinesses” from a multitude of perspectives, colours, and facets. “The Symbol of all Art is the Prism,” Cummings once

⁴⁵ It is from his interview with Christian Zervos, published under the title “Conversation avec Picasso” in *Cahiers d’Art*, vol. 10, no. 10 (1935) 173-78.

announced, and its Cubist “goal is unrealism. The method is destructive. To break up the white light of objective realism, into the secret glories which it contains” (qtd. Kennedy 4). “Prism” and other basic units of geometric patterns formulate a “Distinct” point of view and a novel approach to build up a new spatial relationship between the solid space of reality and the flat surface of canvas. For both artists, simply painted shapes, “Things” or the various forms of things, are their main priority, concentrating on the idiosyncratic design and craftsmanship that breaks down object or figure into “Distinct” planes and recollects them in a three-dimensional whole. Picasso speaks of Cubism as an “art dealing primarily with forms” in his “Statement, 1923”: “We give to form and colour all their individual significance, as far as we can see it; in our subjects, we keep the joy of discovery, the pleasure of the unexpected” (12). Based on this formalist consideration, Cummings’ intermedial prosody is to invent a “fabric” or “binding rhythm” which “integrates the whole thing and makes it a single moving ThingInItself” (SL 63-64) in both poems and paintings.

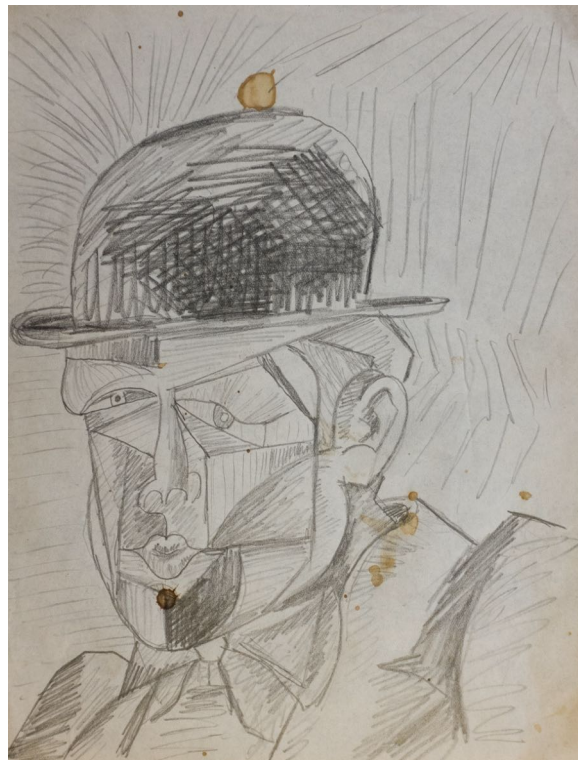


Fig. 3-14 E. E. Cummings, *Head – Crazy Quilt* (1919). Pencil on paper, 27.6 by 21.6 cm. The Kidder Collection.

Influenced by Picasso’s sculptural face with multiple planes (fig. 3-14), Cummings’ intermedial Cubism primarily features in the scenic theatricality of his group portraits and multigure poems, which present a collage of colours/facets, narrative voices, and multiple viewpoints simultaneously on the same page. His collage poem “anyone lived in a pretty how town” makes well-structured juxtaposition in each stanza, using the natural phenomena as its found

materials: of seasons, “spring summer autumn winter;” of climates, “sun moon stars rain;” of ecological relationships, “when by now and tree by leaf” and “bird by snow and stir by still” (Cummings, *CP* 515).⁴⁶ The Cubist assemblage of different times and spaces, similarities and differences into one piece of work exhibits an extremely intensified presentation of fragmented, multiple aspects of the town life between a “Woman and [a] man(both little and small)” (515). Like Pound’s personae in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, Eliot’s speakers in *The Waste Land*, and Joyce’s cinematic perspectives in “The Wandering Rocks” of *Ulysses*, Cummings’ “typewriterography” (Webster, “Floating particles of papers” 60), or typewriter aesthetics of organising words and spaces, enables him to experiment with pronoun, compound, capital, enjambment, syntax, as well as spacing of the poetic structure, transforming it from a linear narrative into a Cubist tableau:

5
 derbries-with-men-in-them smoke Helmar
 cigarettes 2
 play backgammon,3 watch

a has gold
 teeth b pink
 suspenders c
 reads Atlantis

x and y play b
 cries “effendi” “Uh” “coffee”
 “uh” enter
 paperboy,c (Cummings, *CP* 82)

Set in a loose poetic frame and an ambiguous surrounding, the algebraic naming of these onstage men conveys a strong sense of Picasso’s *Three Women* (1908) by stripping off their facial details and social identities only with mask-like nomination. The formal reduction, “combination” and “intersection” of individual figure suggests that “the aggregate acquires more significance” (Dickey 216). Their simplified shape of bodies, in abstract letters or numbers, essentially explore the Cubist way of representing figures in a solid form and a theatrical context. The direct connection of the human figure and the performing space, where the stage erases the actors’ bodies into uncannily simple forms and breaks down the power of the singularity or random individuality. The merging of the figure with the quivering, chaotic space decentralises the dominant perspectival gaze and invites a multiplying mode of actions, scenes, and points of views.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Webster in “Cummings’ Collage Poems” summaries three basic characteristics of Cubist collage poem: (1) use of found materials; (2) juxtaposition and interweaving voices; (3) segmented words (56).

⁴⁷ See more about this in Claire Warden, *Modernist and Avant-Garde Performance: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

In each stanza, Cummings shifts his painterly viewpoint from a long shot (“2 / play backgammon,3 watch”) to a close-up (“a has gold / teeth b pink / suspenders c / reads Atlantis”), from silent descriptions (“x and y play”) to spoken voices (“b / cries ‘effendi’ ‘Uh’ ‘coffee’”), from stases (“has”) to actions (“cries”):

x and y
 play,effendi approaches,sets
 down coffee withdraws
 a and c discuss news in

turkish x and y play b spits
 x and
 y
 play,b starts armenian record

pho
 nographisrunn
 ingd o w, n phonograph
 stopS. (Cummings, CP 82)

Cummings’ random enjambment functions as spectatorial multiplicity cutting from one shot to another (from x-y-b to x, y, b) and his grotesque use or disuse of spaces as a switch between fast motion and slow motion to capture the violent movement of characters and the diminuendo of phonograph. In a collage form, his visible fragmentation of letters, spaces, and stanzas seeks to create a moving, kinetic actuality – rather than the static reality – in a living world. In a similar spirit, Cummings’ uncoloured *Figurative Abstraction* (fig. 3-15) displays a sense of pictorial theatricality by means of simplified figures, geometrically schematised houses, and fast brushes of ambiguous shadow within a cone-shape composition of the picture. Its penciled scene shows us a chaotic rhythm of the modern city and depicts an intense conflict between the artificial (military machine) and the natural (environment). People and the background seem to be merged into a dramatic moment in its precisionist deployment of line and shape. The pictorial theatricality here creates a spatiotemporal continuum with the dynamics of movement, voice, and scenography. Its *mise en scène* (the placing/placed/setting of the scene) is drawn by Cummings on the canvas as a dramatic action. The visual coordination of physiognomies and silences leads to a “totality” – as Jacques Copeau defines – “of the stage spectacle, emanating from a single thought which conceives, regulates, and harmonises it” (qtd. in Pavis 12). Intermedially, the poet-painter’s orchestration of colours and lines, facets and spaces, images and words celebrates the simultaneity and aliveness of one’s live performing on the stage.



Fig. 3-15 E. E. Cummings, *Figurative Abstraction* (n.d.). Pencil on paper, 26 by 21 cm. Ken Lopez, Hadley, MA.

In the coda “Rossetti and E. E. Cummings” of *The Modern Portrait Poem* (2012), Frances Dickey indicates that Cummings’ “multifigure” portrait in a Cubist manner brings to light the “multiplicity” or plurality of aesthetic modernisms (215). His opening “Portraits: I,” for instance, manifests this “mixture of Modernist influences at work on his writing” by incorporating many avant-garde artists from Picabia, Picasso, Matisse, Kandinsky, to Cézanne into a multifigured collage, where their subject matters, styles, and techniques are described in “plural” nouns (215).⁴⁸ Dickey further divides the main settings of Cummings’ group portraits into two types: in the street or in a café; by doing so, the critic infers there is a naturalistic tendency of his portrayals to document the “anonymity” of urban cities and the “lost innocence” of modern people, especially women and young girls (215-16). Notwithstanding, Cummings’ largescale, multifigure portraits, though some of them do satirise and critique capitalist modernisation, they do not depend on a critical realist way of representation but instead they desire to present us a multiplied worldview from a Cubist kaleidoscope of angles, perspectives, and narratives. Even across historical periods and places, his poem “my uncle” portrays his “uncle Daniel,” “uncle Frank,” “uncle Tom,” and “my uncle Ed” at different moments of their lives shifting from the battlefield of the Civil War to the Brattle Street, from “fought” in the past to “knits” in the present, from action to stasis, from the alive to the dead (Cummings, *CP* 251). Not only colours and facets, but also time and space are multiplied in Cummings’ intermedial prosody and twisted in an experimental form to search for *infrathin* possibilities of expressing self and reality.

⁴⁸ On Cummings’ portrait poems, see Dickey, “Coda: Rossetti and E. E. Cummings” 213-17.

Part II
Experimental Modernism and Intermedial Artistries

Chapter 4
“Word made flesh”:
Intermedial Portraits in Loy’s Ekphrases and Art Poems

It comes to this: of whatever sort it is,
it must be “lit with piercing glances into the life of things”;
it must acknowledge the spiritual forces which have made it.
– Marianne Moore, “When I Buy Pictures” (*Complete Poems* 48)

What but design of darkness to appall? –
If design govern in a thing so small.
– Robert Frost, “Design” (396)

taken I am an instrument in the shape
of a woman trying to translate pulsations
into images for the relief of the body
and the reconstruction of the mind.
– Adrienne Rich, “Planetarium” (146)

In a review titled “Marianne Moore and Mina Loy,” published in *Others: A Magazine of the New Verse* (1917), Ezra Pound lauds these two modernist poets and associates them with the last type of his typology of poetry:¹

(1.) melopoeia, to wit, poetry which moves by its music, whether it be a music in the words or an aptitude for, or suggestion of, accompanying music; (2.) imagism, or poetry wherein the feelings of painting and sculpture are predominant (certain men move in phantasmagoria; the images of their gods, whole countrysides, stretches of hill land and forest, travel with them); (3.) and there is, thirdly, logopoeia or poetry that is akin to nothing but language, which is a dance of the intelligence among words and ideas and modification of ideas and characters. (394)

Critics have often regarded Loy as an exemplar of Pound’s “logopoeia” (Altieri, *Art of Twentieth-Century American Poetry* 79; Perloff, “English as a ‘Second’ Language” 203; Goody, *Modernist Articulations* 3), focusing on poetic language as a primary and sufficient means of artistic expression that performs a “dance of intelligence among words and ideas and modifications of ideas and characters.” Loy’s artwork is known for its internal wordplay and linguistic inclusiveness of the scientific, philosophical, and literary. However, as a modernist poet-painter, her intricacy of verbal structures also absorbs the visual image of “phanopoeia” and the sound effect of “melopoeia.” Her poems display a sort of painterly composition of blending pictorial elements, polysyllabic stanzas, and deliberate alliterations, which simultaneously present us the “word made flesh / and feeding upon itself / with erudite fangs” (*LolB* 89) like her artistic idols James Joyce and Gertrude

¹ Pound later in 1934 rephrases this classification into phanopoeia, melopoeia, and logopoeia in his *ABC of Reading* (New York: New Directions, 2010) 37. On Pound and Loy, see Peter Nicholls, “‘Arid clarity’: Ezra Pound, Mina Loy, and Jules Laforgue,” *Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 32 (2002) 52-64; Debora Van Durme, “Conjuring Melodies from Arid Air: Mina Loy and Pound’s ‘Melopoeia,’” *Cambridge Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 3 (2008) 324-48.

Stein.² Loy's formal concern with language is actually a composite, hybridised expression. In this sense, her style of words-in-freedom can be better understood as the compound term of "sound-images, what she called the *'belle matière'* of art, [which] is rooted in the word-conscious style of the Decadents, Pre-Raphaelites, and Symbolists before" (Januzzi 411). Loy's experimental approach to poetic words benefits from her particular occupation as poet-painter, which enables her to explore the autonomy, self-sufficiency, and multimodality of intermedial modernism. This further encourages her to use the formalistic forces of the artwork as a self-reflexive way to address racial, sensual, and political issues. Her modernist experiments with various materials and techniques from non-poetic forms create a distinctively intermedial artistry. In Charles Altieri's terms, Loy's "self-consciously impersonal poetics" possesses linguistic intelligence and psychological power, serving as multisensual "catalysts for combining [audiovisual/verbal] elements of feelings" (*Art* 80-82), consciousnesses, and experiences.

Exemplified by her alphabetic inventions like *Build Your Own Alphabet* (fig. 4-1) and *The Alphabet that Builds Itself* (fig. 4-2), similar to Pound's work with Chinese ideograms, Loy splits up the strokes of English letters to deconstruct and recombine them into new shapes – sometimes even in a reverse order.³ In the letter to a manufacturer, she explains this educational game of alphabet-building that contains "pieces of let[t]er to be put together [made] of attractive inexpensive plastics, or brightly lacquered cardboard," and aims to stimulate one's "observation of form, construction and similarities" through these playful and innovative designs.⁴ The colour-lined alphabets – as the minimum unit of written language, beyond the fixity of their physical forms and semiotic meanings, become flexible objects, thoughts, and identities that can be rearranged and perceived from various perspectives. Much like the alphabet itself, which needs to be taken apart, turned upside down, or reassembled, Loy's segmental letters and her plastic theory of poetic language embody a "kinetic, geometric, recombinant [nature], and open to mutation" (Konkol 294). This unique modernist vision touches the tangible aspect of the materiality and physicality of artform that we often take for granted. In this vein, Loy's intermedial artistry reinforces her poetics of refashioning, a creative process as a dynamic interplay of the perceptual eye and the analytical mind, encouraging a more interactive and participatory engagement with word-building and meaning-making.

² On the visual presentation and conversationalist quality of Loy's poetry, see Stauder 212-16; Kouidis, "Rediscovering Our Sources" 169-81. On rhythmic and musical effects, see Andrew Michael Roberts, "Rhythm, Self and Jazz in Mina Loy's Poetry," in Potter and Hobson 99-128. On cinematic engagement and popular media, see Alex Goody, "Mina Loy and the Hollywood Industry," *Literature & History*, vol. 21, no. 1 (2012) 76-93.

³ See more in Ernest Fenollosa's essay "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry: An Ars Poetica" appended by Pound's writing "With Some Notes by a Very Ignorant Man," in *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, edited by Haun Saussy et al. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008) 41-74.

⁴ Mina Loy, *Letter* (1941), Mina Loy Papers, box 7, fol. 184, YCAL MSS 6, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

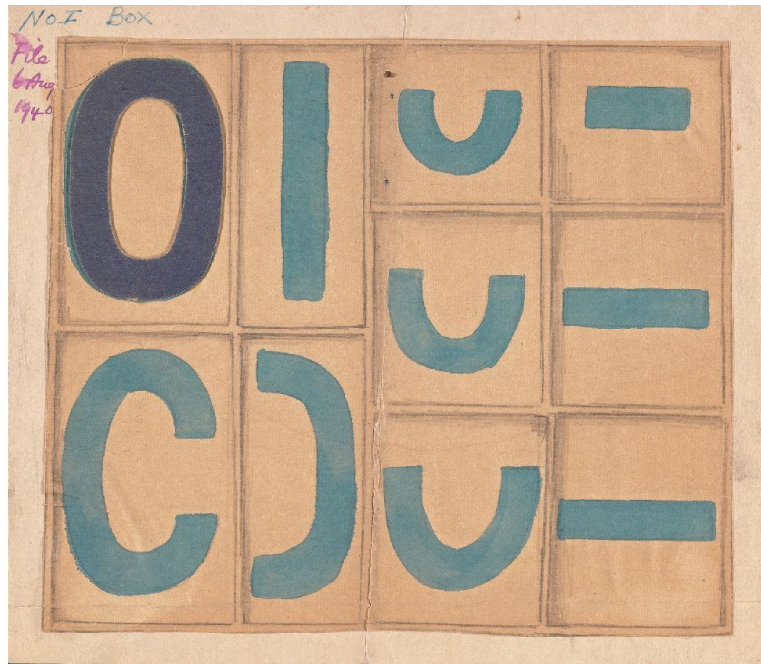


Fig. 4-1 Mina Loy, *Build Your Own Alphabet* (1941). Colour illustrations. Mina Loy Papers, YCAL MSS 6, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

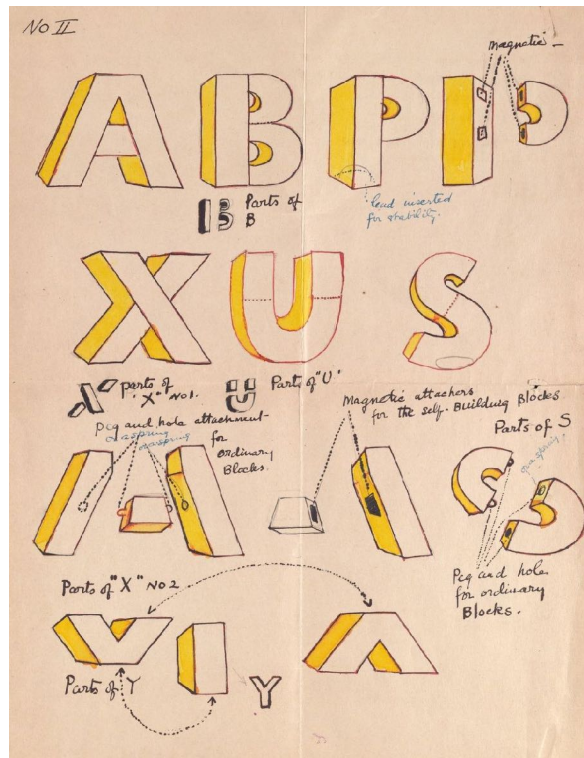


Fig. 4-2 Mina Loy, *The Alphabet that Builds Itself* (1941). Colour illustrations. Mina Loy Papers, YCAL MSS 6, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Scrutinising Loy's identity as a poet-painter highlights the appropriated and crossbreeding nature of her mongrel poetics or opposed aesthetics, as discussed in her long poem "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose." Loy gives priority to the actual act of seeing and perceiving to witness and challenge problematic representations of art, gender, individuality, and societal community without adhering to pre-existing boundaries. Her alphabetic designs not only teach us to see and observe anew, but also emphasise how our eyes and minds shall read and reinterpret visual and verbal data. Loy's intermedial portraiture, as analysed by Tyrus Miller in *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction, and the Arts between the World Wars* (1999), appears "not as a photographic or film image but as the machinery for recording such images," and the portraitist herself merges her body "with the optical apparatus, but also the female spectator's role in bringing the images to appearance" (218). It involves the female spectator's role in bringing these images to life and creates an immersive experience for reader-viewers. As explored by Linda Kinnahan, alongside the newly-emerging aesthetics of "photographic movements and technologies of vision" (*Mina Loy, Twentieth-Century Photography* 63), the influence of photography on Loy pushes her to find alternative ways of seeing through word and image. Loy's refashioned "radium of the word" informs and facilitates a "metaphorical process of seeing" to construct, deconstruct, and recreate in a modernist rhythm (64). This approach seeks to establish a connection between the subjective mind and the interpretative eyes, revealing one's experiences through visionary expressiveness. Hence, the poetic vision becomes Loy's artistic aura or a desire for authenticity and originality, which challenges the male-white-heterosexual stereotypes that often dominate artistic expressions. Blending the textual and the graphic, its stylistic fluidity and inclusion can deny the patriarchal gaze with a single, insoluble point of view.⁵

Therefore, through the prism of intermediality, this chapter will investigate her verbal-visual language and its relation to a thematically and formally indefinable representation of bodies and identities across the divide of sexual, political, and sociocultural differences. By treating her manifestos and aphorisms as an inventive genre of designing rather than mere writing, how does Loy convey urgent messages of her feminist version of Futurism, distinct from the militarist and even misogynist one led by Marinetti? Next, in what ways is her use of verbal "radium" akin to Marcel Duchamp's readymades, portraying avant-garde contemporaries like Joyce and Stein? In terms of her painterly abstraction in ekphrases, how do Loy's exceptionally abstract, composite artforms in a constructivist manner overcome the divisions between high and mass culture, the creator and the public, the natural and the artificial, and time-based poetry and space-oriented art?

⁵ On the relationship among Loy's aura, photography, and Walter Benjamin's technical reproduction, see T. Miller, "Everyman His Own Fluoroscope: Mina Loy's *Insel* between Aura and Image Machine," in Schreiber and Tuma 341-56; Kinnahan, "Loy among the Photographers: Poetry, Perception, and the Camera," in *Mina Loy, Twentieth-Century Photography* 28-73.

After answering these questions, the chapter extends what Alex Goody claims as the “positive force of self-fashioning” (“Ladies of Fashion” 280) to a liberating reconstruction or self-conscious refashioning, through which Loy’s formal experimentations replace masculinist, elitist consistencies with a feminine, fluid process of contingencies. It leads the poet-painter to a reconceptualisation and recreation of sexual, artistic, social identity and its identification. As politicised embodiments at the core of modernist aesthetics, this intermedial turn of avant-gardism can diminish authoritative superego and open up a new space for the articulation of altered selfhood, narration, and world picture in revolutionarily new discourses.

Fashion and Design: The Art of Manifesto/Aphorism

From Italian Futurism to New York Dada, Mina Loy shows her intermedial artistry in her practice of making manifesto and its shortened version – aphorism, both considered as the “poetry of revolution” (Puchner 4) amidst radical modernisations. These avant-garde literary forms address the political, sociocultural, and aesthetic challenges of modernity.⁶ The idea of their generic revolutionariness can be traced back to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels’ *Communist Manifesto*, which sought to give a voice to the marginalised, make the neglected visible, and bring the unconscious to consciousness.⁷ Manifestos and aphorisms are not just political analyses but also rhetorical strategies. According to Marshall Berman, the genre of “*Manifesto* is remarkable for its imaginative power, its expression and grasp of the luminous and dreadful possibilities that pervade modern life. Along with everything else that it is, it is the first great modernist work of art” (102). Walter Benjamin’s term “aestheticising of politics” (42) applies to these revolutionary forms, as they become poetic and artistic manifestations of the political goal of changing the world. Loy’s manifesto art, exemplified in her summative poem “O Hell,” reflects her fervent desire for transformative power and advocates for a refashioned vision of liberated, non-sexist self-womanhood:

To clear the drifts of spring
Of our forebear’s excrements
And bury the subconscious archives
Under unaffected flowers

Indeed –

⁶ About the manifesto as a special literary and artistic genre, see Perloff, “Violence and Precision: The Manifesto as Art Form,” in *The Futurist Moment* 80-115; Luca Somigli, *Legitimising the Artist: Manifesto Writing and European Modernism 1885-1815* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); Puchner, Introduction: Manifestos – Poetry of the Revolution 1-7; Lyon, Introduction: Polemics in the Modern Vein 1-8; Ben Hutchinson, “The ‘Alibi’ of Style: Modernist Manifestos” 198-238.

⁷ On the politics of manifesto and its Marxist relation, see Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981).

Our person is a covered entrance to infinity
Choked with tatters of tradition

Goddesses and Young Gods
Caress the sanctity of Adolescence
In the shaft of the sun (*L&LB* 71)

Loy's manifestoing voices for an ideological critique of "our forebear's excrements," "subconscious archives," and the remnants of masculinist bourgeois modernity, denouncing the limitations of the past and creating a novel mode of expressing identity. Her striking move combines the visually heightened prose and wordplay of Futurism – full of Marinetti's words-in-freedom and typographical remoulding – with the proactive and militant spirit of Dada that results in an anarchic longing for an expression of newness and nowness. She transforms the "tatters of tradition" into a renewed identification of boundless and infinite possibilities. The blending of manifesto and its aphoristic type bridges aesthetics and politics, but also unites the discursive and the pictorial, and the communal and individual. This dynamic interplay offers Loy the precept for revolutionary attitudes and discourses to renew the representation of humankind. Through this collective act, she challenges the dominance of "reason, progressivism, and universalism associated with the liberal bourgeois public spheres" (Lyon 5).

To *manifesto* is not simply to instruct or remonstrate in a didactic tone, but rather theatrically perform its experimental tune as a lively obbligato. Making manifestos means to "imagine or hallucinate the Promised Land [in] its own way a utopian project" (Danchev xxviii), and by doing so, the artist makes headway through this resistant medium to respond to and transform the constructed reality. Beyond functioning as a mere means of communication, the performative activism of manifestoing conveys its significance as a public document, a hybrid genre, a collective voice, a polemical discourse, and a polytechnic style at the expense of its distinctive form. In Loy's 1914 "Aphorisms on Futurism," she manifestos the importance of a radically "new form, as offered by creative genius" that maps one's "CONSCIOUSNESS" using both verbal and visual languages. "Aphorisms" is akin to a book of moon-itineraries guiding us to an ethereal place, reflecting her quest for new horizons and innovative expressions.:

TODAY is the crisis in consciousness.

CONSCIOUSNESS cannot spontaneously accept or reject new forms, as offered by creative genius; it is the new forms, for however great a period of time it may remain a mere irritant – that moulds consciousness to the necessary amplitude for holding it.

CONSCIOUSNESS has no climax.

LET the Universe flow into your consciousness, there is no limit to its capacity, nothing that it shall not re-create.

UNSCREW your capability of absorption and grasp the elements of Life – *Whole*.

MISERY is in the disintegration of Joy;
Intellect, of Intuition;
Acceptance, of Inspiration. (*L&LB* 151)

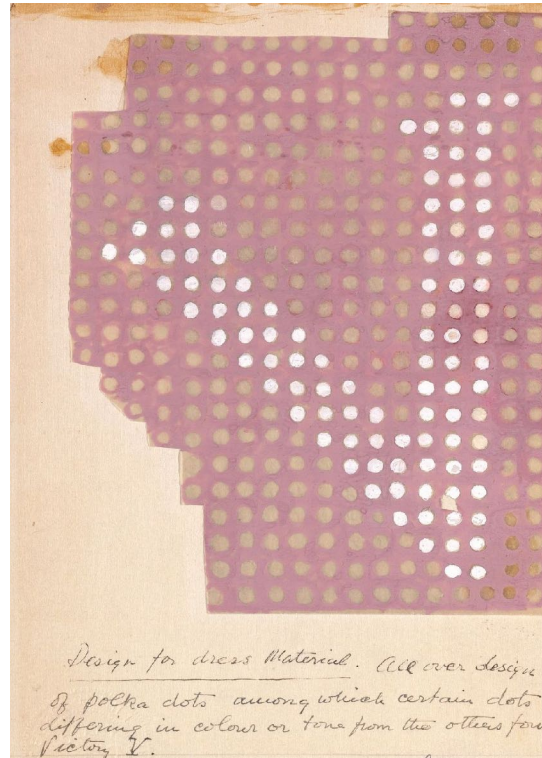


Fig. 4-2 Mina Loy, *Design for Dress Material* (1941). Colour illustrations. Mina Loy Papers, YCAL MSS 6, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

As the archetype of avant-gardism, Loy’s aphorism should be regarded as a concise, short-paragraphed variation of the manifesto, distinguished by its capitalised initials, emphatic italics, and internal line-space.⁸ It serves as potent tool for religious or political propaganda, announcing its activist goal of “MAKING place for whatever you are brave enough, beautiful enough to draw out of the realised self [...] THUS shall evolve the language of the Future” (152). These eye-catching words, presented as separate and self-contained units in aphorisms, can be likened to the white-dotted “V” pattern for victory found on Loy’s fabric material (fig. 4-2). This resemblance, at a stylistic level, goes beyond mere visual appeal and compels a deeper reading hermeneutically with multiple layers of meaning and interpretation. Their succinct yet evocative nature captures

⁸ However, about the specific studies of aphorism, see Andrew Hui, *A Theory of Aphorism: From Confucius to Twitter* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019); Gary Saul Morson, *The Long and Short of It: Form Aphorism to Novel* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012); Melvin Maddocks, “The Art of the Aphorism,” *The Sewanee Review*, vol. 109, no. 2 (2001) 171-84.

the essence of her artistic vision and ideological stance. Both in a sense of assertiveness and conviction, they demand auditorial attention and provoke inner contemplation, drawing the reader-viewer into an intellectual engagement with the printed or drawn text. Each word or dot stands a dramatic signifier, capable of evoking a myriad of free associations and connotations. Looking from a broader perspective, Loy makes her claim for designing rather than merely writing, treating the artistic design of such formal patterns as expressive values. The prophetic totality of Futurism and its political pronouncements finds their manifestation in each epigrammatical sentence, acting like a list of fundamental articles that define their beliefs. Moreover, within the ostensibly singular entry of each aphorism, there lies a collective display of bombastic exuberance. These individual lines, with their fervent energy and emphatic expressions, come together to form a larger and more cohesive structure of the comprehensive worldview, one that propounds Futurism's audacious prospect and subversive agenda.

Another example of Loy's "Aphorisms on Modernism" forcefully enumerates a series of key concepts, each boldly represented in block letters spelling out "MODERNISM," "CONSCIOUSNESS," "GENIUS," "EMOTION," "IRONY," "HUMANITY," "MORALITY," "CHRISTIANITY," "GOOD FORM," and "ANARCHISTS" (*LaLB* 311). These concisely refined statements, in a macroscopic view, employ the advertising strategies of mass communication to herald a literary renewal, moving away from the constraints of Victorian naturalism and *fin-de-siècle* aestheticism. They call for radical changes in art and literature and pave the way for a progressive reconceptualisation of aesthetic modernism. Loy's aphorisms possess an aggressive tone, characterised by obscure diction and syntax, which, combined with the purposeful use of bold letters, creates a premised polemical effect that questions and distrusts the legacies of traditional culture and its notions of realistic representation. This disputation is not solely an aesthetic endeavour but carries political implications as well. Through the performative, infected art of manifestoing, Loy could realise her conceptual linkage between artistic innovation and the drive for social reforms. Remarkably, she disrupts the traditional "we/them" dichotomy that "typically underwrites the logic of the manifesto speaking position" and adopts a more "intimate and personalised form of address" (Lusty 248) by using the "you/our" pair. The subtle linguistic shift here gestures towards a direct and empathetic address, engaging with the audience as a participant in the shared vision and thought. Furthermore, this persuasive, hortatory move from the first-person plural pronoun to the second empowers the reader-viewer to take an active role in the given programme, encouraging them to exercise their agency and become active listeners and communicators. The negotiation of interior art and external environment emerges from an in-between positioning, an open space where mutual dialogues and interactions are nurtured. The

aphoristic fragmentary discourse takes a “dialogue mode” (Caws, “Poetics of the Manifesto” xxv) rather than working as a one-sided, rigid proclamation. In this sense, Loy’s manifesto is more than a bloodless propaganda machine; instead, it offers a platform for potential interactive articulation that allows for the exploration of different speaking voices and diverse perspectives.

In her creative work “Mi & Lo,” despite its unfinished state from the 1930s, Loy shifts the contrarian tone of the manifesto to a more dialogic one, showcasing a combination of aphoristic prose and dramatic script. The first act centres around the topic of “Form,” which becomes both the heading and subject matter of their conversation. She crafts a unique place for philosophical inquiry, introspection, and artistic experimentation. Like Plato’s Socratic *maieutics* and Oscar Wilde’s manifestic preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Loy introduces us two fictional characters of *mi* and *lo*. Interestingly, *mi* is an apparent orthographical abbreviation of the first part of her first name, “Mina,” while *lo* echoes the first two letters of her surname, “Loy.”⁹ These characters act as vessels for her musings and give voice the poet-painter’s multifaceted, intermedial persona. They should thus be regarded as the embodiments of the author’s imagined alter selves, self-consciously and self-reflexively, talking about the aesthetic philosophy of artform, representation, and the perceptible world together:

lo

The first half being the question to form and the second half the answer of form.

mi

From being thus a token of the truth in which the question and the answer are incorporate and inseparable: truth being the question that answers itself – as immortality existing as a question in man’s mind, is answered by its confirmation in the macrocosmic mind of god. (Loy, *SE* 266)

The dialogue between *mi* and *lo* in “Mi & Lo” mirrors Loy’s inclination to explore the complexities of her (inter-)artistic identity and its relation to the world around her. Through their parabolic discussion around the topic of “Form,” *lo* and *mi* are trying to clarify the theoretically intricate relationship between the subjective self and the external reality. They contemplate the physical appearance of “man-form” and the creative recognition of form as the elucidation of one’s process of sight and thought. The figure of *mi* suggests that “Man is not the conceiver of form” (267), which leads to a distinction between the “form” in the “macrocosmic mind of god” – equal to the Platonic Ideal-Form or the absolute – and the “microcosmic forms” (266) that mediate our perception and consciousness of everyday phenomena. Loy claims that “Form is a signal reconnoitred by the intellect on its march upon the illimitable;” in this context, artists, as the

⁹ In fact, Loy never took her husbands’ names but after the first marriage, she altered her last name from “Löwy” to “Loy.” For more on Loy’s transfiguration of her family name, see C. Burke, “The Subconscious Archives,” in *BM* 13-64.

“intellect” and genius of their time, exercise the “tenacity and increase of perception toward its ultimate reception of macrocosmic forms” (267) provided by the phenomenal universe. Functioning as a mediator, she points out that the role of artistic creation is to bridge the gap between the macrocosmic and microcosmic forms, the perceptible and the cognizable, and the transcendent and the mundane. By grappling with the intricacies of form in both abstract and concrete aspects, Loy unveils the interconnectedness of the expressive self with the broader fabric of existence, which highlights the transformative potential of art in shaping our comprehension of inner and outer realities.

In her essay “The Metaphysical Pattern in Aesthetics,” Loy underscores the vital role of the interposition between the creator and the spectator, as well as the artwork and its audience. Within this context, modernist artists bear the responsibility to “present the map of their individuality without the secondary reconstruction of the pictorial coherence of our customary vision” (263). Loy’s essay, in an aphoristic form, demonstrates the processive dynamics – both perceptually and psychically – of modernism. She contends that modernism, referred to as the “modern movement,” seeks to break away from the rigidity of completing a representation in a static manner, as stated in her words: “The intention of the modern movement is to liberate art from the convention of pushing this individualistic aesthetic structure to a final pictorial conclusion” (264). According to Loy, modernist art and literature should transcend its unvarying and uninspired connection to the physical reality. In contrast to the “final pictorial conclusion” of representational realism, avant-garde artists should deliberately estrange and disrupt our habitual ways of seeing. Instead, they should, through their “perception of phenomenal dynamics,” advance towards revealing the “purely metaphysical structure of an aesthetic creation” (264).

Again, similar ideas echo in the conversation between “Mi & Lo”:

lo

Then it is the confinement to form that incites the intellect to exceed itself.

mi

Form is the expressive encroachment on the increate from which – Appearance with its several significances derives.

From the untraceable precedent all form emanates; as sentry to the presence of creation. (267)

Loy’s expressive, unrestrained form of depicting phenomena serves the purpose of dislodging us from the realm of stagnant perception and propels us into a new space of fresh creativity and psychological dynamism. In her commendation of Louis M. Eilshemius’ artworks in “Pas de Commentaries,” Loy unveils that Eilshemius’ complicated mechanism of painting embodies a “prolonged psychological engineering of a work of art [as] instantaneous photographs of his mind

at any given moment of inspiration” (*LaLB* 304). From this vantage point, Loy rests on an attempt to intensify the convergent apparatus of both the sensory and the cognizant, thereby eradicating the alleged constraints imposed by societal, cultural, and linguistic norms of the past. Assuming the role of an observer-creator, she stresses the manifold perspectives of vision and the artistic potentials inherent within them. Through her exposition, Loy is able to envision and reimagine an alternative future, gender, and identity, fostering the anticipation of inventive design that can invigorate both the object of art and the subject of consciousness.

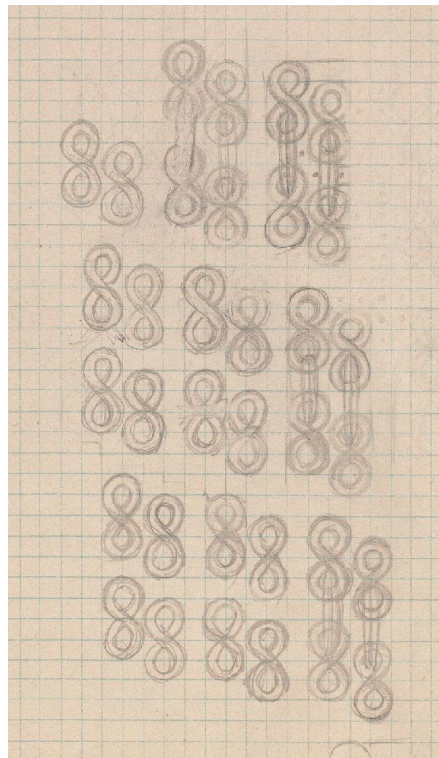


Fig. 4-3 Mina Loy, *Ring Designs* (1941). Sketch. Mina Loy Papers, YCAL MSS 6, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Through her intermedial enterprises, Loy redefines the facets of face, physique, and attire, designing them into formal signs or tangible symbols of personality and social standing. She invents a series of experimentally new artforms as vehicles to re-present and reconstruct notions of sexuality and selfhood. The act of altering physically through clothing means more than surface aesthetics; it becomes an avenue not only for accentuating the corporeal self and the embodied experience it encompasses but also for orchestrating a performative and, arguably, a posthuman backgrounding that underlies the organic corporeality of self-identity. Loy’s deep-seated interest in fashion and elegance led her to dedicate substantial and consistent periods of time in locales such as Paris, Florence, and later New York, diligently crafting a diverse range of items – from evening gowns to swimwear, from hats to stage costumes, and even extending to book covers,

lampshades, children's toys, and jewellery (fig. 4-3).¹⁰ These creations of fashion design, beyond their commercial appeal as commodities, function as her creative means for narrating identity, skillfully interweaving aesthetic forms and personal expressions. Thus, the rhetoric of designing, whether it pertains to language or other paratextual features within a text, takes on a formal and thematic significance far beyond mere ornamentation. It demolishes the stereotypical gaze as an established mode of perception based on conventional reading paradigms, and through this inventive process of refashioning, it disfigures and reshapes the portrayal of the speaker as an assertive, voicing subject.¹¹ Such artistic craftsmanship, through both verbal and visual mediums, emerges as the quintessence of Loy's modernist re-presentation. Her artmaking articulates the possibility of reconstructing humanistic physicality and subjectivity, providing a vision that rescues us from the desolate realm described by T. S. Eliot's "Hollow Men," where entities are trapped as "Shape without form, shade without colour, / Paralysed force, gesture without motion" (*Collected Poems* 79), an existence that languishes in an arid, lifeless expanse.

Illustrated through her fashion sketches featuring five ladies (fig. 4-4), Loy's philosophy of clothing is acutely attuned to the constrictive, binding lines of corsets emblematic of Victorian moral conservatism. Her purposeful employment of boldly contrasting colours, understated fringes, and flowing silhouettes, intertwined with the spirit of the new century's evolving trends, exposes an icon of New Woman – a figure synonymous with bodily self-governance and ideological liberation.¹² Incorporating the Art-Nouveau imageries of vivacity, motion, renovation with the geometric stylings of modernist aesthetics, Loy, in her role as a tailor or sartorial artist, launches an alternative fashion of femininity. This innovation of womanly attire eschews the notion that draped garments are merely symbols of human frailty and sin as espoused by the Victorian era. Rather, it asserts a newfound autonomy and self-determination by portraying clothing as a canvas for expression, negotiation, and reinvention. Loy conceives of clothing as a medium of non-verbal communication, an approach to sharing one's interior experiences, desires, and thought without the confines of words. The act of costuming thus connotes a process of self-crafting, and her fashion design is intrinsically imbued with a feminist manner which provocatively re-evaluates and casts new light on the very fabric, accoutrements, embellishments, and accessories of fashionable womanhood. In this sense, alterations in the materiality and composition of these dresses mirror the transformations in poetic language and form. Significantly, these changes are

¹⁰ Concerning the idea of fashion, fashioning, and Loy's experience as a fashionable exotic persona which represent female body and performative womanhood out of popular culture in resistance against modernist elites' canons and sexual essentialism, see Rowan Harris, "Futurism, Fashion, and the Feminine," in Potter and Hobson 17-46; Susan E. Dunn, "Mina Loy, Fashion and the Avant-Garde," in Shreiber and Tuma 443-56.

¹¹ About feminist designs and digital humanities, see Suzanne W. Churchill et al. 243-56.

¹² On women's choices of varied clothing styles and makeup in an era of technological and visual modernity, see Liz Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004).

not under control anymore and evolve into a cultural force capable of crossing the boundaries of gender, medium, and individual identity. Loy's formal design offers a powerful means of challenging and renegotiating the existed regimes, showing the malleability and potency embedded within artistic and material domains alike.



Fig. 4-4 Mina Loy, *Fashion Designs* (1914). Watercolour. *Mina Loy: Navigating the Garde*, edited by Suzanne W. Churchill et al. University of Georgia, 2020.

Much like the conspicuousness of costumes in our daily lives, our faces function as the immediate physical veneer that exists perpetually under scrutiny, while in the meantime as an agency for artistic projection and expression. Loy eloquently notes that the “face is our most potent symbol of personality,” and an adult “has facial contours in harmony with the condition of his soul” (Loy, *LaLB* 283). In her manifesto-essay “Auto-Facial-Construction,” she artfully draws attention to the complex interplay between one’s facial visage and their personalities, bridging the domains of body and mind, appearance and essence, and modern physiognomy and psychology – where there pops up anthroposcopy.¹³ Loy’s advocacy for “facial integrity” (283), as presented in her prose, denotes the fusion of bodily visibility and the transcendence of corporeal objectification. This is intrinsically connected with the physical body, emotional resonance, and the dynamic workings of the mind. She argues against the reduction of the human face to a bare entity of visual consumption, which, on the other hand, ceases to be a passive vessel and becomes an extension of the innermost qualities, an epitome of beliefs, aspirations, and emotions.

¹³ More on Loy’s bodily reform in text and gender, see Armstrong, “Auto-Facial-Construction” 106-29; Walter, “Getting Impersonal: Body Politics and Mina Loy’s ‘Anti-Thesis of Self-Expression’” 127-70; Maeera Shreiber, “‘Love Is a Lyric / of Bodies’: The Negative Aesthetics of Mina Loy’s *Love Songs to Joannes*,” in Shreiber and Tuma 87-110; Lucia Pietroiusti, “Body and the Text/Body of the Text in Mina Loy’s *Songs to Joannes*,” *Journal of International Women’s Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2008) 29-40; Ellen McWhorter, “Body Matters: Mina Loy and the Art of Intuition,” *European Journal of American Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2015).

By promoting the face, body, and their attire as the outward manifestation of identity – an aesthetic representation, so to speak – Loy illuminates the multidimensional link between the exterior form and the inner self. From the superficial to the profound, she forces us to view the faciality and its adornments as integral components of a holistic, multifarious selfhood, paving the way for a more nuanced understanding of how we present ourselves to the world:

For to what end is our experience of life if deprived of a fitting esthetic revelation in our faces? One distorted muscle causes a fundamental disharmony in self-expression, for no matter how well gowned or groomed men or women may be, how exquisitely the complexion is cared for, or how beautiful the expression of the eyes, if the original form of the face (intrinsic symbol of personality) has been effaced in muscular transformation, they have lost the power to communicate their true personalities to others and all expression of sentiment is veiled in pathos. Years of specialised interest in physiognomy as an artist have brought me to an understanding of the human face which has made it possible for me to find the basic principle of facial integrity, its conservation, and, when necessary, its reconstruction. (283)

The triad of “transformation,” “expression,” and “reconstruction” signifies more than an aesthetic overhaul; it encapsulates a modernist rejuvenation of the face, body, and their carefully chosen clothing and accessories. These multiple facets of human existence are elevated to the status of artistic mediums through language and artform as potent modes of self-expression. Subjected to intentional “artificial manipulation and mediation” (Rives 141), they undergo a process of reorganisation that transforms them into performative embodiments of identity, surpassing sociocultural norms tied to sexual, racial, and political conventions. Loy’s reimagining of the self through literary or pictorial lenses, reflected in the new representation, resists the formlessness that has historically shrouded distorted versions of female and artistic identities, and allows them to regain voice and power in communicating their “true personalities to others.” In doing this, Loy steers our interpretative gaze towards the concealed depths of the invisible interiority by engaging in a refashioning of both body and language in their visible exteriority. As the Surrealist body portrayed in her *Surreal Scene* (fig. 4-5), human corporeality is not merely a reflection, signifier, ornamental paratext of mentality, but rather a fashionable arena for self-conception, expression, and contingent interpretation.¹⁴ Given this perspective, the subject’s personality could be “a harmonious work of art, crafted through careful attention to the exterior” (Rives 152) manifestations of cultural and biological attributes. Challenging the hegemonic narrative of male heterosexuality, Loy wields an aesthetic weapon to emphasise the female experience and its maternal reproduction as decisive sources of feminine creativity. The surgical alterations or sartorial modifications applied to women’s faces and bodies work as bridges that traverse the

¹⁴ On the idea of Surrealist body, see Kinnahan, “Surrealism and the Female Body: Economies of Violence,” in *Mina Loy, Twentieth-Century Photography* 74-122.

divide between the flesh and the spirit, the material and the immaterial, and the physical and the psychological, establishing an interweaving unity.



Fig. 4-5 Mina Loy, *Surreal Scene* (1930). Collage and gouache, 32.2 by 24.6 cm.
Roger L. Conover Collection.

Loy's manifesto-designs not only contain thematically inflammatory declarations, but they also intricately weave formal and typographical eccentricities into their external structure, highlighting the significance of fluidity and plasticity.¹⁵ Her visionary approach, often desecrated as “perspectival,” operates as the “shaping force behind Loy's iconoclastic conceptual and visual sensibilities” (Lyon 157). It aims to reshape the intangible aspects of womanhood and gender roles by infusing them with a visibly designed form and language within a dynamic composition. An example of this can be found in Loy's unpublished “Feminist Manifesto” from 1914, where she ventures to reconstruct sexual relationships beyond the restrictions of supposedly incompatible divisions imposed by biology, culture, and politics. This feminist manifesto, both in its formal presentation and thematic content, calls on women to reject traditional male dominance and the social roles assigned to them as wives, mothers, or lovers in the public sphere. Instead, it empowers them to embrace their complete selves and cultivate a sexually and intellectually feminine and feminist identity. Loy's bold ambitions here echo with Hélène Cixous' concept of *écriture féminine*,

¹⁵ Specially on Loy's modernist manifesto writings, see Lusty, “Sexing the Manifesto” 247-56.

or female writing, which encourages women writers to leverage their unique gendered narratives as a source of authority. Their shared feminist stance struggles to depolarise the masculine rhetoric of reason and eradicate the suppressive effects of patriarchy.¹⁶ In a radical gesture, Loy emancipates women's individuality from oppressed situations and even frees their narrative structures and the arrangement of words articulated in the process. Her intermedial aesthetics, appealing to both the auditory and visual senses, captures the "eye of the style" (Churchill et al. 245) in a feminist fashion of design that attacks male-centric tastes. The deliberate use of underlining, bold fonts, and enlarged typefaces creates emphasis rooted in the visible dimension of writing, aligning with Saussurean signifiers that generate meanings through associative yet differential relations within a larger structural context. By enlarging and boldening certain elements, these spatially spotlighted signifiers found an eye-catching layer of narration, forming a new frame that stands apart from the surrounding text. Loy then amplifies the impact of her message in an intermedial way that enables her reader-viewers to access her manifesto not only on a textual level but also a visually arresting composition.

In tune with her ironic style, Loy starts by interrogating the contemporary status of women within society through a rhetorical question: "Inadequate / Women," "Reform" and "Reality," "Is that all you want?" (*LoLB* 153). This introspective inquiry shows her discontent with the current state of the feminist movement, labelling it as "Inadequate;" her frustration escalates as she demands not just "Reform" but also the more radical actions of "Wrench" and "Absolute Demolition" that can obliterate the archaic economic, educational, and (hetero)sexual "Reality" (153). These underlined words, magnified in font size and strategically placed throughout each paragraph, appear almost like disparate individual voices in unison, accentuated and collected from different places, colours, ages, and classes. Functioning as a narrative level, their amplified presence in visible form hints at an underlying secondary or alternative layer of storytelling. This effect of verbal collage makes a powerful and aggressive articulation, as shown from phrases that can be rearranged into provocative statements: "Brave" "Woman is" "NOT" "masculine" and "Feminine" "are" "not" "Parasitism, & Prostitution" (153-54).¹⁷ These manifestic declarations can be read as words within the words – a dramatic reinterpretation of the text. As this secondary narrative emerges, its voice becomes even louder and more commanding than the original, through the poet-painter's skilful infusion of volume into the ostensibly silent written expressions, offering a more comprehensive experiential engagement. In a departure from normative, essentialist

¹⁶ See Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," translated by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1976) 875-93.

¹⁷ For an intermedially comparative reading of Loy's manifesto and her late Bowery collages, see Tuğba Karabulut, "Futurism and Feminist Performativity: Mina Loy's 'Feminist Manifesto,' *Househunting*, and *Christ on a Clothesline*," *Women's Studies*, vol. 49, no. 1 (2020) 1-30.

categorisations of gender roles, Loy appropriates women’s activities and responsibilities in her poetic work to rewrite the fundamental principles of modern sexology. Rejecting the “patriarchal taxonomy” (Crangle, “Feminism’s Archives” 251) and the male-centric partitioning of women into the categories of “the mistress, & the mother” (154), she is engrossed in liberating women from the constraining clutches of mythmaking and the regulatory morality associated with romantic love, sexual purity, and feminine virtues. Similar to the parodic portraits in “The Black Virginity,” Loy’s subversion of the man-made fictitious “bogey” of “virtue” stresses its status as a fabricated instrument of oppression, particularly concerning female physical chastity and sexual innocence. This construct has endured through generations, propagating the idea that “the woman who is a poor mistress will be an incompetent mother – an inferior mentality – & will enjoy an inadequate apprehension of Life” (154). Loy’s response serves as a forceful counterblow, which redirects attention towards the past where “entirely debarred maternity” (155) was equated with the “unconditional surgical destruction of virginity” (156). Her stance shifts, advocating that motherhood should now be celebrated as a source of pleasure and self-realisation “in defiance of superstition that there is nothing impure in sex – except in the mental attitude to it” (156).

More specifically, in Loy’s poem “Parturition,” the narrator explicitly stages the process of childbirth as an important maternal realisation and a journey into existence:

Mother I am
 Identical
 With infinite Maternity
 Indivisible
 Acutely
 I am absorbed
 Into
 The was – is – ever – shall – be
 Of cosmic reproductivity (*LoLB* 7)

During this evolutionary procedure, women become the epicentre, the “centre / Of a circle of pain / Exceeding its boundaries in every direction,” embedded within the “harmony of physiological potentiality” (4). While undeniably marked by the pain and isolation of a propagative body, the feminist struggle against patriarchal reality and its sexist politics is not a straightforward mission and may require considerable sacrifice. Yet, in the midst of trauma and violence, the concept of maternal reproductivity takes on a cosmic grandeur, an inventive agency to reshape traditionally conceived notions of gender and sexuality. It is a catalyst for reconstruction and transformation that enables Loy to redefine her role as modernist poet-painter, escaping from restrictive and sculpturally fixed identity and identification. For her, the radical philosophy of

“maternalism” (Lusty 255; Peppis 180) is not confined to the biological act of reproduction alone; rather, it encloses the broader gendered creativity and imagination of a female artist.

This metaphorical integration of the reproductive body and the creative mind, sexual desire and aesthetic stimulus, breaks away from oppressive structures and norms. In contrast to the entrenched male-dominated order of hierarchies, the reproductive nature of motherhood, seen as a true emblem of femininity and the authentic value of womanliness, explores a new space for experimentation and innovation that capture the jarring experience of generative and constructive selfhood. As Loy designs these feminist manifestos with Futurist and Dadaist tricks, she deftly navigates the interplay between physical artefacts and their formal garb as a speaking subjectivity on and off the pages or the surface of texts. By drawing the tie between “I” or ego and the “eye” or vision, the poet-painter recasts conventional sexual roles and gender identities in different directions through the malleable and expansive potential of art-language. This intermedial engagement with material plasticity and fluidity opens a channel for the alteration, reimagination, and regeneration of sociocultural narratives, in alliance with the larger aims of feminist reformation and artistic reinvention.

The Readymade Word in Loy’s Verbal-Visual Portraiture

Through her interactions with fellow avant-gardists of her era, Mina Loy embarked on a journey of exploration into innovative modes of expression as alternative to literary and cultural conventions. In her artist-portrait poems such as “Gertrude Stein” and “Joyce’s ‘Ulysses,’” Loy does not simply transpose the fictional narratives or techniques of her contemporaries into the writing of poetry; she instead intends to forge a different form of linguistic artistry characterised by its fluidity, malleability, and performativity, leading to myriad avenues for multiple interpretations and comprehension. Introduced to Gertrude Stein through Mabel Dodge Luhan at the Villa Curonia in Florence, Loy’s initial meeting with Stein in 1911 marked the genesis of a close friendship.¹⁸ At that moment, Stein acknowledged in the biography of Alice Toklas that Loy was among the earliest audiences who not only displayed interest in her literary works but also demonstrated an astute grasp of her experimental prose – especially in the formal absence of commas.¹⁹ Their shared aspiration extends beyond the confines of traditional representationalism, as they seek to delve into the dynamic interplay between the individual psyche and the poetic

¹⁸ On Stein’s acquaintance with Loy during the Italian days, see Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1933) 162.

¹⁹ On comparative studies between Loy and Stein, see C. Burke, “Without Commas” 217-25; Prescott, “A Radium of the Word: ‘Gertrude Stein’” 133-36.

language. This captures the ongoing evolution of one's psychological state – beyond the thematic scopes and superficial depths inherent in mere eyewitness reportage, which often adheres to the trajectory of social realism.

In pursuit of this novel artistic venture, Loy and Stein began to question the reliance on punctuated lineation of words, where meaning was traditionally constituted and anchored to a rigid, predetermined grammatical structure, contingent upon a linear succession of oppositional understanding in a chain of signified notions. The deliberate omission of commas serves to engender a certain mental spatiality on the page. It facilitates the liberation of vocabulary and phrases from the fixation of rational syntactic organisation and gives rise to a visual collage of sound-images that seem to drift through a stream of consciousness, evoking an almost unconscious current.²⁰ The act of composing without commas is an aesthetic strategy to disrupt the presumed utility of linguistic signs and the conventional assumptions associated with them, since “grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation were in themselves meaningless, to show instead they actually constituted meaning and sometimes prevented certain kinds of things from being said” (C. Burke, “Without Commas” 218). At this point, the role of poetic words undergoes a notable transformation, which ceases to be a conservative component of linear progress or conceptual fulfilment. It rather surges forth in a more active, reflexive capacity, operating as signifiers endowed with autonomy, self-sufficiency, and linguistic independence. This rethinking or refashioning of language elevates the poetic word to the status of a readymade, distinct from a compositional unit or instrumental tool for mimetic representation. The readymade word is metamorphosed into a self-contained work of art, with its own intrinsic significance and evocative power.

Similar to Marcel Duchamp's groundbreaking series of readymade artworks at the dawn of the twentieth century, such as *Bicycle Wheel* (fig. 4-6) in 1913 and *Fountain* in 1917, the poetic language crafted by Stein and Loy could be interpreted as readymade or assisted readymade to a large degree. These avant-garde artists strategically select verbal or visual elements, designing and rearranging them in altered sequences that challenges and redefines the established qualities and criteria around a traditional artform. This implies considerations of composition, style, technique, taste, and value judgement, among other relevant aspects (Kamien-Kazhdan 69). The concept of the readymade finds a definition in André Breton and Paul Eluard's *Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme* (1938), attributed to the abbreviated signature “M.D.” that suggests an authorial connection to Duchamp. According to this, a readymade pertains to “an ordinary object elevated to the dignity

²⁰ On Stein's critique of commas as hierarchically servile of the old systems of mind and discourse, see Stein, “Poetry and Grammar,” in *Lectures in America* (London: Virago Press, 1988) 209-46.

of a work of art by the mere choice of an artist” (qtd. in Evnine 407). Grounded in the notion of the “mere choice of an artist,” the essence of the readymade involves imbuing an everyday, quotidian thing with artistic intention, modification, and reorganisation. This process of redoing emphasises the artist’s ability to conceive new patterns or ideas within the found object, thereby reshaping its conceptual framework into a manufactured work of art.²¹ It dismantles the viewpoint that art must originate from the skilled manufacture of an artist. The abstract materiality of the readymade serves as an idealised form that untangles intricate relationship between the perspectival eye and its cognitive process of perceiving and knowing the represented subject. As a recreative act, the art of the readymade challenges the habitual modes of reception by transforming the chosen object into a malleable and ideal medium through which new meanings can be generated. By selecting ordinary matters and designating them as art, Duchamp disconnects the collaboration between the artist’s hand and the open creation of signification.

Also, Duchamp extends this approach to poetic language, treating it as a verbal readymade or an intentionally placed found object on the page:

No more physical adaptation of concrete words; no more conceptual value of abstract words. The word also loses its musical value. It is only readable (due to being made up of consonants and vowels), it is readable by eye and little by little takes on a form of plastic significance; it is a sensorial reality a plastic truth with the same title as a line, as a group of lines. (78)

Marjorie Perloff points out this sort of “*pictorial nominalism*” (*Infrathin* 5), a notion that entails dissociating language from its conventional linguistic or melodic qualities. This process draws in not only the detachment of words from their “concrete” or “abstract” connotations but also a transposition into an intermedial “form of plastic significance.” To further elucidate this idea, Perloff adapts what Duchamp said into her newly defined art of “*infrathin*” – an artform wherein “difference is more important than similarity”:

Readable by eye. The poet, Duchamp here implies, is one who understands that “ate has nothing in common with eat,” that the same is never the same, and that hence every word, every morpheme and phoneme, and every rhythmic form chosen makes a difference. To be a poet, in other words, is to draw on the verbal pool we all share but to choose one’s words and phrases with an eye to unexpected relationships – verbal, visual, sonic – that create a new construct and context – relationships that create *infrathin* possibilities. And not only the poet: the reader in turn comes to “poetry” with an eye and ear for such telling difference. (*Infrathin* 6)

²¹ Readymade focuses on the artist’s intentional choice to play a part in the disruption and rearrangement of the found object. It is noticeable that, in *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, Roger L. Conover groups six unpublished notes of Loy into a separate section entitled “Ready Mades,” including “Aphorisms on Modernism” and “Dante Gabriel Rossetti.” The editor might encourage the reader to realize the readymadeness of Loy’s artwork that could be read from multiple perspectives.

The spirit of the readymade, as shown by Duchamp's audacious innovation of a rearrangement of found objects, rests upon a distinctive perspective that thrives on unconventional and "unexpected relationships." This artistic vision traverses various mediums of verbal, visual, and auditory, to induce a revolutionary sensory experience in which one can simultaneously read, observe, and hear the artwork. In respect of poetic form, it dictates that "every word, every morpheme and phoneme, and every rhythmic form chosen" by the artist intentionally defies traditional lyrical or narrative outline. These formal elements, instead, work unexpectedly as meticulously crafted choices of the utmost calibre. Perloff's conception of "infrathin possibilities" are thus coming from the cadences of everyday speech, the fractures of syntax, and the fragmentations of space, artfully presented and integrated into one's bodily tempo and imaginary experience.



Fig. 4-6 Marcel Duchamp, *Bicycle Wheel* (1951). Readymade, 129.5 by 63.5 by 41.9 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Accordingly, in her verbal portrayal of "Gertrude Stein" through poetic words, Loy draws a thought-provoking parallel by likening Stein to Marie Curie, the Nobel laureate in physics and chemistry. Both Stein and Curie appear to be pioneering figures who have played crucial roles in pushing the boundaries of their respective fields – literary and scientific – and in bringing about transformations in the world through their radical explorations of new forms and materials. Stein's creative compositions are comparable to Duchamp's readymades. Her texts, like Duchamp's found objects, operate in a space where the direct correspondence between language and reality is

fragmented, creating an alternative landscape that rejects the literalist representation. In Perloff's words, Stein's "compositions resemble Duchamp's 'objects' in their wholesale rejection of the mimetic contract – a rejection that, to my mind, goes well beyond Cubist distortion and dislocation of what are, after all, still recognisable objects and bodies" (Perloff, *Infrathin* 34).²² To escape from the formal adherence to imitative traditions, both Stein and Curie navigate into uncharted territories and develop more innovative methods for describing and reconstructing the world around them. Their experimentation is rooted in a fundamental reassessment of the inherent readymadness of linguistic and scientific elements. By deconstructing the existed materials and forms, they struggle to uncover new avenues for understanding and reforming the physical reality. At some levels, Stein can be deemed as:

Curie
of the laboratory
of vocabulary
she crushed
the tonnage
of consciousness
congealed to phrases
to extract
a radium of the word (*L_oLB* 94)

Inspired by the modernist experiment of Stein, Loy similarly treats the medium of poetic language as a thing, a tangible entity, a corporeal presence, and a meticulously chosen subject for scrutiny. In the "laboratory / of vocabulary," the poet-painter aims to abstract and "extract / a radium." Like Curie's chemical extraction, Stein is portrayed to obtain the elemental essence of words from different points of view, effectively changing and reconfiguring their linear arrangements. Conceptualising poetic words as readymades blurs the distinction between different mediums to challenge conventional linguistic usage and introduce a revolutionarily new paradigm. Through a convergence of scientific discourse and her artistic aspirations for word-reformation, Loy endorses the "radium of the word," which encapsulates the implosive, plastic potency inherent in lexical and syntactic constructs. These verbal components possess the ability to be disassembled and recombined in a creative manner, vividly echoed in Loy's design for educational game *Building Your Own Alphabet*. In this process, words relinquish their semantic meanings as a part of the referential function, and instead emphasise their formal existence and self-referentiality. Each word synecdochically becomes a microcosmic representation of the poem itself – a "singular, elemental aesthetic object" (Lewis, *Dynamic Form* 108).

²² For a critical discussion about the relationship between Stein and Duchamp, see Perloff, "A Rose Is a Rose Is a Rose Sélavy: Stein, Duchamp, and the 'Illegible' Portrait," in *Infrathin* 29-64.

Stein's exploration of the intrinsic linguisticity of poetic words left an indelible mark on Loy's verbally abstract style to distil concrete subjects into near nonexistence, leaving only the interplay of syntax and lexis. A prose portrait of "Gertrude Stein" is etched within the pages of "Profiles and Interviews" in *The Last Lunar Baedeker*. Here, Loy asserts that Stein, through her keen study of the dynamic contours of language, has "shaped her words to the pattern of a mobile emotion [and] actually bent the tender and with medium and egg-light and not really so much, reconstructed the signal luminous, the form, the semi-honesty of the oval eye" (Loy, *LaLB* 292). This "oval eye," emblematic of poetic vision, functions as a conduit through which the Steinian readymade word transposes itself into an artistic material, captivating our attention to the visible, tactile magnificence of the signifier itself. Based on this shared conceptualisation of verbal materiality, both Loy and Stein venture into linguistic experiments with an alternative grammar or narrative that dances within the exchange of form and meaning. This reciprocity creates a fluid dialogue that evolves between the two elemental forces. Their mutual objective lies in redesigning the presentation of language and storytelling, achieved through the stylistic extraction of the "radium of the word" – an integral essence that pulses within material constructs. As visionary alchemists, they distil an elixir of literary expression that transmutes the raw materials of tradition into the gold of innovation, turning the mundane into the extraordinary, the archaic into the present, and the conventional into the avant-garde.

Stein's modernist portrayals of humans and objects in her early works, such as *The Making of Americans* and *Tender Buttons*, unchain Loy from traditional linear structures to an autonomously material form that increasingly gravitates towards abstraction. In a cyclical fashion, Loy's free-verse depiction of Stein in turn mirrors Stein's own technique, as seen in her *Three Lives* or *Matisse Picasso and Gertrude Stein*. Stein's fictions prompt an introspective examination of form, construction, and representation through iterative acts of verbal description and accumulative processes of narration.²³ According to Loy, Stein "has prodigiously dismantled the raw materials of style, and radically swept clean the literary arena, making new performance possible" (Loy, *SE* 233).²⁴ In 1927, when introducing Stein to a Paris salon at a lecture run by Natalie Barney, Loy paid tribute to the Steinian experimentation with language's innate value, noting that "Gertrude Stein is not a writer in any of the currently accepted senses of the word" and she "does not use words to present a subject, but uses a fluid subject to float her words on" (233). Stein and Loy shatter the moulds of obsolete literary composition and reshuffle the raw materials of presenting words in a

²³ On Stein's poetic invention of sentence and its composition, see Marjorie Perloff, "Gertrude Stein's Differential Syntax," in *21st-Century Modernism: The "New" Poetics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002) 44-76; also, her "Poetry as Word-System: The Art of Gertrude Stein," in *The Poetics of Indeterminacy: Rimbaud to Cage* (Evanston, IL: Northwest University Press, 1999) 67-108.

²⁴ For Loy's artistic and theoretical shift from Futurism to Dada, from the alliance with Duchamp to the intimacy with Stein, see Januzzi 578-612.

performative way. They breathe new life into language and forge a constructive plasticity that reverberates through their poetic legacies.



Fig. 4-7 Mina Loy, *James Joyce* (1922). Sketch. *Vanity Fair*, March 1922, p. 65.

The word as a readymade is framed with a distinct focus on its corporeal or material nature, drawing energy from its textual politics of plasticity, fluidity, and performativity as bodily destruction and creation. In addition to Stein, Loy aligns her poetic style with another daring experimentalist, James Joyce. Like Stein, Joyce dedicated his life to seeking alternate means of representing and expressing physical and psychological realities. These three literary modernists share a common emphasis on linguistic play and rhetorical innovation as a primary task in their revolution of language, to fight against the conformity with the conventional causes of literary and historical lineage.²⁵ Their creative orbits intersected in the early 1920s within the vibrant intellectual and artistic circle of Paris. They fostered connections with notable figures such as Wyndham Lewis, Margaret C. Anderson, Sylvia Beach, and Robert McAlmon, nurturing an environment of intermedial exchange (C. Burke, *BM* 1). At that moment, amidst the widespread discourse surrounding the censorship of Joyce's serialised *Ulysses* in *The Little Review*, Loy penned

²⁵ Despite being uninterested in painting, Joyce was reasonably aware of the technical values of modern art and concerned about the avant-garde movements, as evidenced from one of his conversations with Frank Budgen in 1918, when Joyce asked whether the chapter "Cyclops" read futuristically. See Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses and Other Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).

the poem “Apology of Genius.” This verse, ignited by the fervent debate, calls for a collaborative convergence of mediums and disciplines to confront the suppression of expression. Her impassioned appeal rallies against the potential stifling of radical voices by those who attempt to curtail artistic growth, invoking the image of a “delicate crop / of criminal mystic immortelles [who] stands to the censor’s scythe” (Loy, *LoLB* 78).²⁶ Apart from their mutual social networks and publications of poems and prose in platforms like *The Little Review* and other little magazines, Loy and Joyce first met in a Parisian café in 1921. This significant encounter was facilitated by Djuna Barnes, who invited and introduced Loy to Joyce during an interview in Paris. They touched upon the censorship trial in America, Joyce’s cultural celebrity, and the forthcoming release of *Ulysses* by Shakespeare & Company (Parmar 148).²⁷ During the course of this conversation, Loy took the fortuitous moment to sketch a pen-and-ink portrayal of the illustrious Irish author (fig. 4-7). This visual representation of her modernist contemporary soon found its way into the page of the 1922 issue of *Vanity Fair*.

Within the similar timeframe, although the exact order of issuing remains unclear, Loy composed a dedicatory poem titled “Joyce’s Ulysses” following the publication of the first edition of Joyce’s *Ulysses* in February 1922.²⁸ In this evocative portrait-poem, the poet-painter sets out not only visually but also verbally to portray Joyce as an exemplary genius. The title itself is meticulously typographed, creating an intriguing ambiguity that allows it to be interpreted as “Joyce Is Ulysses.” This witty wordplay serves as a testament to Loy’s linguistic sensitivity within a succinct phrase. Just as his fiction exemplifies, Joyce’s adept utilisation of language as a readymade contains a heightened level of stylistic experiments, which manifests through his “increased experimentation, integration of obscure or archaic words, and linguistic punning and playfulness” (Prescott 123). These elements collectively contribute to the rich fabric of Joyce’s narrative variability and inclusiveness. In light of this observation, Joyce appears to be one of the “most gentle of geniuses” (C. Burke, *BM* 310). His legacy extends beyond his contemporaries, as he cements his place as an immortal architect of literary modernism:

The Normal Monster
sings in the Green Sahara

The voice and offal
of the image of God

²⁶ See Sandeep Parmar, “Not an Apology: Mina Loy’s Geniuses,” *The Wolf* (July 2008).

²⁷ For the full interview, see Djuna Barnes, “James Joyce; A Portrait of the Man Who Is, at Present, One of the More Significant Figures in Literature,” *Vanity Fair*, vol. 18, no. 2 (1922) 65+104.

²⁸ For more information on the interaction of Loy and Joyce, see Prescott, “Master of Meteoric Idiom: ‘Joyce’s Ulysses’” 117-33. In this chapter, the author also conducts a meticulous, sharp-witted iconographical analysis of Loy’s visual portrait of Joyce (121).

make Celtic noises
in these lyrical hells

Hurricanes
of reasoned musics
reap the uncensored earth

The loquent consciousness
of living things
pours in torrential languages

The elderly colloquists
the Spirit and the Flesh
are out of tongue – – – (Loy, *L&LB* 88)

Within the complex tapestry of modern Irish society, rife with enigmas and uncertainties, a paradoxical image is illustrated here – a land where the “Normal Monster” resounds in the midst of the “Green Sahara.” This oxymoronic depiction captures Ireland as a source of simultaneous beauty and chaos, life and death, and vitality and desolation. Rooted in a fusion of religio-artistic sensibilities, Joyce embarks on an innovative expedition, endowing distinctive voices with eloquence (“loquent”) and these uttered words as a revolutionary discourse of “colloquists.” This creative endeavour intends to subvert orthodox “Celtic noises” and their oppressive censorship policies deep-rooted in what he terms “lyrical hells.” Joyce’s poetic tempests, aptly described as “Hurricanes / of reasoned musics,” grapple with the profound loss of language, interconnection, and communication. This estrangement from the historically patriarchal past, steeped in the “voice and offal / of the image of God,” evokes a strong sense of dislocation and alienation.

In a bold effort to refashion the poetic word and language itself, the writer envisions an imaginary Ireland where the metaphorical “Green Sahara” could be transformed into a balanced ecology. This equilibrium harmoniously balances Irish nationalism and Catholicism, tradition (“elderly”) and contemporaneity (“sings” in the present tense), and the dichotomy of “Flesh” and “Spirit.” For Loy, central to this vision is the Joycean use of “torrential” languages, teeming with the “loquent consciousness / of living things.” This experimental technique of wording, particularly evident in his stream-of-consciousness used in *Ulysses* (as the poem title reverently pays homage to), deeply resonates with Loy. They desire to change the order of arranging and presenting words in non-traditional ways so as to “reap the uncensored earth.” It signifies their quest for untamed authenticity, originality, and the unearthing of new perspectives, unencumbered by the censorships or restrictions imposed by societal norms or aesthetic conventions. Echoing Joyce’s aspiration to reshape the plastic essence of verbal expression, it inspires her to recognise the transformable potential of language and integrate a series of formal, material, and stylistic mutation into her own poetic repertoire.

In the poem, Loy, as a tailor-artist, weaves a hybrid textile intermingling different cultural, artistic, and medial resources and influences – a device reminiscent of Joyce’s radical approach to modernist narrative. This Joycean strategy merges the antiquated with the contemporary, unites the ethereal “Spirit” with the tangible “Flesh”, and harmoniously blends the distinct threads of Irish and British traditions embodied by both “elderly colloquists” and the revolutionist voice they inspire.²⁹ For Joyce and Loy, their multilingualism and polyvocality of dictions and styles features the mythic intertextuality presented in *Ulysses* and the intricate web of allusions wove into this artist-portrait poem. Their linguistic amalgamation bridges the chasm between the mythological and the mundane, the archaic and the modern, and the traditional and the original. In a fantastic metaphor, Joyce and Loy can be likened to:

Phœnix
of Irish fires
lighten the Occident

with Ireland’s wings
flap pandemoniums
of Olympian prose
and satirise
the imperial Rose
of Gaelic perfumes
– England
the sadistic mother
embraces Erin – (88-89)

In parallel with her “Anglo-Mongrels and The Rose” (*LaLB* 121-30), Loy’s incorporation or reappropriation of archaic vocabulary moves beyond prescribed definitions and ushes a fresh and artistically fertile space. This lexical departure from fixed meanings liberates her modes of expression from the historical imposition of English colonialism upon Ireland – a traumatic narration dominated by the symbol of the “imperial Rose” or the connotations of a “sadistic mother.” Loy and Joyce expand further, unfurling like the wings of a phoenix borne from the fires of Irish heritage (“Irish fires”). In this transcendent realm, twentieth-century artists shift their gaze from the confines of “Gaelic perfumes” towards a more essential and authentic “Erin.” As the symbolic “Phœnix” ascends to celestial heights, these modernists flee to a celestial or heavenly place where experimentation and imagination are boundless, unburdened by the gravitational pull of ancestral legacies and their pervasive influence. Through their intermedial mixture of the verbal,

²⁹ Eugene Jolas is the first one to have used the phrase “the revolution of language” to describe Joycean language, considering it a withdrawal from the authorial or historical authority to an independent and self-sufficient space in the text itself. See his “The Revolution of Language and James Joyce,” in *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*, edited by Samuel Beckett et al (London: Faber & Faber, 1936) 77-92.

vocal, and visual, Loy and Joyce endeavour to present the reader-viewer with an unceasing chain of diverse narratives. Individuals thus can beckon on a spiritual journey of self-discovery and traverse the depths of their existential multifariousness, inviting the navigation and reinvention of national, racial, and sexual identities.³⁰

This excessive stylisation of text, similar to rectified or corrected readymades, brings the “consciousness / of living things” back into life. Through the materialisation of “torrential languages” and the re-presentation of an adaptable form, Loy breaks the frame of grammatical and syntactical silence and resurrects the vital dynamism within the written word. Influencing her artistic strategy, Joyce’s final chapter “Penelope” exhibits a gendered language or narrative, visually manifesting in an illustrative and typographically visible manner. Placing a deliberate emphasis on the visuality, palpability, and materiality of objects, they opt to visualise the printed text by way of a telegraphic performance of its physical link with the human eye. This is then achieved through an idiosyncratic use of overall structure, varying font sizes, and page layout, effectively transmuting the textual canvas into an intermedial site for painterly expression.³¹ The blending of verbal and visual representations directs our attention to a materialist approach for a deeper understanding and interpretation of characterisations along with their innate sexual and ideological tensions. On their literary fronts, Loy and Joyce are:

Master
of meteoric idiom
present

The word made flesh
and feeding upon itself
with erudite fangs
The sanguine
introspection of the womb

Don Juan
of Judea
upon a pilgrimage
to the Libido (89)

With consummate skills, they infuse the printed word with a fleshy, visceral essence, enhanced by an oral touch (“erudite fangs”) of esoteric sophistication. These two Masters of “torrential languages” and virtuosos of words materialised (“word made flesh”) attempt to sculpt their characteristic narratives and discourses that find sustenance within their own fabrics (“feeding

³⁰ “Verbivocovisual” is a coinage invented in Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*. See Perloff, *Infrathin* 103.

³¹ About Joycean language, also see Katherine Mullin, “James Joyce and the Languages of Modernism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel*, edited by Morag Shiach (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 99-111.

upon itself”).³² Their transformative acts of crafting stories across the border of languages, cultures, and mediums position them as exemplars of the “rejector – recreator” who “flashes the giant reflector / on the sub rosa” (90) – the covert and concealed, in ways that are innovative and unparalleled. With a visionary stance, they illuminate hidden earths and cast a brilliant light on the enigmatic and clandestine aspects of existence. United by a shared pursuit of comprehending the attention and tension within the readymade quality of the word, Loy and Joyce play with its linguistic materiality to map a modernist landscape of undefinable aesthetics. It is marked by disruption and recreation, where one’s consciousness interacts with perception. In an epochal juncture of transformation and evolution, they offer radically new dimensions to the intertwining between language, vision, and human experience.

Hence, the linguistic innovation witnessed in Loy’s Steinian and Joycean constructs, referred to as the “meteoric idiom,” unfurls a panorama of multiple and dynamic narratives for the readerly interpretation. In Peter Nicholls’ term, their “lexicophilia” involves a lexical obsession with using unusual, arcane vocabularies sourced from professional fields as varied as science and religion; this lexicon-driven or “lexicophilic” impulse is inclined to introduce novel “forms of modernism” (263) as alternatives. Employing words as readymade, Loy’s verbal portraits go beyond bare poetic profiles of modernist luminaries. More significantly, these stylistic experiments, based on a materialist orientation, enable the poet-painter and the portrayed subjects of her verses to invent an individual articulation and reconstruction of artistic form, language, and reading or spectatorship. It is intricately twisted with an array of medial and formal nuances that grant itself a multidimensional character. From Loy’s intermedial portraiture, the audience are offered with new vantage points of redressing the ambivalent complexities of one’s collective identities. Through her refashioned lens, she demonstrates the challenging realities entrenched within the sphere of sexual, historical, and cultural modernity, stimulating a more intense engagement and re-evaluation of these multifaceted dimensions.

Painterly Abstraction as Aesthetic Archetype

Rooted in a discernibly formalist revolution of language and the poetic word, Mina Loy’s approach diverges from minimalist or primitivist treatment of representation. Instead, her unwavering commitment to avant-gardism, fashion, and manifestic design, as previously discussed, propels her towards the aesthetic creation of a self-contained and autonomous abstract form. In this context,

³² The Joycean narrative also reveals an apparent tendency of crossing different artistic genres and uniting all the media of art into modernist collaboration. See Sam Slote, Introduction: Endlessly Interartistic Portraits, in *James Joyce and the Arts*, edited by Emma-Louise Silva et al. (Leiden: Brill Rodopi, 2020) 1-4.

it is crucial to note, as Ellen Keck Stauder highlights in her comparative analysis of Loy's and Ezra Pound's conceptual arts, that their shared notion of abstraction does not align with being "anti-material, impersonal, or produced by the spirit of still contemplation" (208).³³ For Loy and her modernist mentor Pound, the abstractness of an artwork does not entail the impersonality or detachment from materiality, or does it imply a formal rigidity characterised by "rocklike solidarity" or "cold purity" (Lewis 99), which often accompanies a traditional understanding of pure form as a unified and organised work passively being contemplated. Being abstract does not conform with simplified inclinations that freeze a work of art in a static, completed state. On the contrary, their conception of abstraction transcends mere simplification or purification but rather realises a conceptually and psychologically dynamic network of creating, observing, and reflecting. This interplay unfolds among multiple participants – the representation-bearer, the poet-artist, and the reader-spectator – each with different perspectives and in an exchange of ideas. The subtle interaction underscores the richness of the abstract experience that is not a solitary act but a cooperative and ever-evolving dialogue with internal and external aspects. It indicates a notional movement rather than a physical moment, revealing the abstruse nature of the verbal-visual representation and its creative, perceptual, and interpretative process.

Expanding upon the existing research that categorises Loy's abstraction as Dadaist, visionary, or plastic with erotic potency (Hayden 66; Januzzi 585; Lewis, *Dynamic Form* 17), this section intends to explore the constructivist process that both emanates from and gives life to the abstract form. Loy's poetic abstraction, far from being a tangible product, refers to a reflective space wherein the complex relationships between the concrete and the abstract, the natural and the artificial, and the objective and the subjective can be carefully reconsidered. It seeks to uncover the active mechanisms underlying the artistic production as a meditative or contemplative arena where the constructive dynamics of existence and creation converge. From a constructivist perspective, the potential of painterly abstraction is not restricted to the creation of a singular, purified form; rather, it provides a powerful platform through which one can capture the very essence of the creative process of artmaking itself. Within this formative space, Loy recasts conventional languages, materials, and representational paradigms open for alterable modes of expression and identification.

Charles Altieri stands as a pioneering figure who emphasises the generative nature of abstraction, coining the term of "constructivist abstraction" to encapsulate this concept. As stated in his *Painterly Abstraction in Modernist American Poetry* (1989), this notion centres on foregrounding

³³ On the relationship between Loy's abstraction and Futurism, also see Stauder, "The Irreducible Surplus of Abstraction: Mina Loy on Brancusi and the Futurists," in Shreiber and Tuma 357-78.

constructive activities within a text's syntactic framework and creating an "allegorical space" where "formal properties take on extraformal content" (57). Altieri restates the viewpoint of Wallace Stevens in *The Necessary Angel* regarding the interrelation between imagination and reality. Both examine how a perceptive mind can illuminate formal, material, and physical properties as integral components of the artistically creative process (13-14).³⁴ Abstractness, in its avant-garde stance, functions as a means of liberating the personal instinct and intellect to probe into elemental and essential emerges. Its reliance on the action of forming or constituting refigures our cognitive and perceptual encounters, enhancing our ways of seeing, feeling, and understanding. To counter the allure of impressionist aesthetics and its optical values, Altieri, in his *Modernist Poetry and the Limitations of Materialist Theory: The Importance of Constructivist Values* (2021), reaffirms the ability of modernist artistry to harness "the formative powers of mind" (1) that could establish meaningful connections with the tangible world through their transformative agency to shape and bestow sensory, cognizant attributes upon their creations.³⁵

The modernists insisted that impressionism was fundamentally "retinal" and, more important, not sufficiently concerned with how art can exercise the formative powers of mind in order to explore new aspects of sensuousness. So in this book, I read a variety of texts that I call "Constructivist" Modernist works for how they imagine exemplary uses for these form-giving powers as means of relating to the actual world. At stake is the possibility that this constructivist work can bring about distinctive ways of valuing our experiences – in poetry and by means of poetry. (1)

Instead of the retinal-oriented poetics of Impressionism, Altieri redirects our attention to the intrinsic relationship between modernist artefacts and the "formative powers of mind in order to new aspects of sensuousness," shedding light on fresh dimensions of sensuousness. Drawing from Hegelian philosophy, particularly the concept of "inner sensuousness" (2), Altieri proposes the idea of "Modernist Constructivism" which focuses on a "tight correlation between expressing the powers of mind and the capacity to develop concrete sensuous forms embodying specific structures for those powers" (7). In this sense, the rigid confines of absolute formality dissolve, giving way to a dynamically conceptual space. Here, the productive continuum of the perceiving eye and the cognizing agency collaborates to engender new territories of expressive potency. Approached speculatively and analytically, constructivist abstraction beckons us to apprehend the completeness of art or a perceptible entity in different affective, narrative, and critical frameworks. In doing so, it delineates a specific lens through which to unravel the intricacies of Loy's philosophically abstract language, form, and arrangement of words "in [her] poetry and by means

³⁴ To further understand Stevens' poetic abstraction, see Glen MacLeod, *Wallace Stevens and Modern Art: From the Armory Show to Abstract Expressionism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

³⁵ Altieri's definition of "constructivist" works is taken from Robert Hass, *A Little Book on Form: An Exploration into the Formal Imagination of Poetry* (New York: Ecco, 2017).

of [her] poetry.” All these elements are saturated with her radical sensitivity to the sociocultural and political problematics of modern time.³⁶

From a vantage point of intermediality, underlining the constructiveness of abstraction frees artworks from the limit of an intensive formal concentration that seeks to heighten the generic outline of a physical being. This conceptual liberation transcends the mode of “formal dynamism” (Lewis, *Dynamic Form* 17) and evolves into a constructivist dynamic that embodies an archetype of intermedial modernism. As evidenced in Loy’s ekphrases, the abstract form surpasses being merely “plastic, mortal, protean” (17); it assumes a performative and interpretative role for both the reader and viewer concurrently. Rather than existing as a form of “containment” (Stauder 210), abstraction becomes a space of diffusion and dissemination across textual and contextual boundaries. Considering this, the constructivist perspective on understanding the abstract dismantles the hegemonic “authority of those thematic expectations, psychological identifications, and interpretative logics that have bound, or ‘interpellated,’ an audience within the specific ideological involvements organised by Postrenaissance representational art” (Altieri, *Painterly Abstraction* 57). It deviates from a photographic or sculptural replication and instead, Loy’s ekphrases in constructivist abstraction evoke a strong desire to shift towards active movements and a cycle of (re-)constructions. This kinetic reorientation adds a constructivist spirit to the formally “maximalist abstraction” (Lewis, *Dynamic Form* 107) of interpreting her abstruse poems. Loy’s evocative reconfigurations of Constantin Brancusi’s and Wyndham Lewis’ artworks through her painterly and sculptural ekphrases delve deeply into the material reflexivity of poetic words and their structures. Both conceptually and aesthetically, they open new spaces for reconstructing language, consciousness, and phenomenological knowledge that links one’s cognitive process with a transformative presentation of verbal and visual imageries.

In accordance with the constructivist principle, Loy’s ekphrastic portrayal of Constantin Brancusi’s *Golden Bird* (fig. 4-8) in her poem “Brancusi’s Golden Bird” does not aim to “record” or “replicate in words the conceptual and aesthetic qualities [of] the cagey silence of their creator” (Lazevnick 192-93). Instead, this sculptural ekphrasis should be regarded as a reproduction or post-creation of the constructive process involved in both making and observing the artwork (Heffernan 3). This point of view departs from earlier interpretations that define ekphrasis merely as an adaptative genre of transliteration or transcription.³⁷ Rather than attempting an intermedial imitation or translation, the poet-painter makes the visual form itself the subject matter, which

³⁶ About modernist women’s ekphrastic tradition, see William May, “Verbal and Visual Art in Twentieth-Century British Women’s Poetry,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century British and Irish Women’s Poetry*, edited by Jane Dowson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 42-61.

³⁷ To discover more about how the ekphrasis queers the modernist female writing about sex and sexuality, see Brian Glavey, *The Wallflower Avant-Garde: Modernism, Sexuality, and Queer Ekphrasis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

then encourages her poetic vision to re-envision and remake the sculpture in precise terms. Loy's main task lies in demystifying the sculptural opaqueness and indirectness of Brancusi's abstract form. She achieves this by reflecting the formative process and a multitude of interpretative and sensuous contingencies that it entails.³⁸ To better explain her modernist fusion of "kinetics" and "aesthetics" (Prescott 85), it is key to reconsider Loy's ekphrastic structure as a mediation between the represented object and the spectatorial subject, to rekindle the consciousness and imaginative capacities that spotlights the significance of the creation and contemplation of art through the eyes and the mind. Notably, she treats abstract form not as a simple copying instrument for mimicking the sculptural body, but a creative arena for re-creating and reimagining the artistic experience behind *Golden Bird* in a poetic rendition. As an exemplar of modernist sculptures, Brancusi's birds defy the prevailing trends and conventions of that historical era. The avian series mark a departure towards distinctive hybridised materials, direct carving styles, and simplified sculpturing techniques that culminate in an abstract form.³⁹ Pre-iconographically, *Golden Bird* radiates elegance with its streamlined contour or shadow of the bird in gold, holding the head high and puffing out the chest, with unidentifiable wings subtly integrated into the refined shape.



³⁸ Altieri uses the Cubist form of abstraction as an example to demonstrate how its formal transformation requires the audience to destabilise the object in conceptual model and recreate imaginatively in the subjective mind. See his "How Modernist Transformations of the Object Affect Its Presentations of Subjectivity," in *Modernist Poetry* 28-46.

³⁹ Also, for a comparative study on the sculptural form/aesthetics of Brancusi and Pound, see Lucy Jeffery, "Ezra Pound and Constantin Brancusi: Sculptural Form and the Struggle to 'make it cohere,'" *Word & Image*, vol. 36, no. 3 (2020) 237-47.

Fig. 4-8 Constantin Brancusi, *Golden Bird* (1919-20). Bronze, stone, and wood, 217.8 by 29.9 by 29.9 cm. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.

In Loy's essay "Phenomenon in American Art," she extols the disembodiment of this sculpture, celebrating it as the "purest abstraction I have ever seen" where a "metallic mould of static soaring whose reflection of boughs within Parisian skies beyond her windows gave to solidarity a hallucinatory transparency" (Loy, *LaLB* 300). The typographical arrangement of her ekphrasis, "Brancusi's Golden Bird," mimics the slender, gracefully shaped body of the golden bird, which stands atop a geometric wooden base. Nevertheless, the formal intention of the poetic structure here is not to physically duplicate the perceptible object, as is usually the case in conventional pattern poetry such as George Herbert's "The Altar" or "East Wings." In a different fashion, Loy does not represent the tangible attributes of the thing but engages in the generative action of making the abstract shape as an aesthetic investigation. She employs the poetic form as a kind of "toy," a reflexive, constructivist abstraction that could:

become the aesthetic archetype
As if
some patient peasant God
had rubbed and rubbed
the Alpha and Omega
of Form
into a lump of metal

A naked orientation
unwinged unplumed
– the ultimate rhythm
has lopped the extremities
of crest and claw
from
the nucleus of flight (*LaLB* 79)

Viewed as an "aesthetic archetype" embodying the essence of the "ultimate rhythm," Loy conceives of Brancusi's *Golden Bird* as a primary, elemental "Form." This sculpture thematically and stylistically encapsulates the heightened process of composition, evident in its description of a delicate crafting procedure ("rubbed and rubbed") of a hands-on artisanal work. The mechanism of sculpting and creating, either in plastic or discursive domains, hinges upon an artistic blueprint that melds one's visual perception with auditory sensation. In Loy's ekphrastic depiction, Brancusi's *Golden Bird* takes on a more naked, primal, and self-referential character, stripped down to its essential and existential core. It is portrayed as a "naked orientation / unwinged unplumed" that "has lopped the extremities / of crest and claw / from / the nucleus of flight." This "ultimate

rhythm” reverberates through the poem’s structure, from enjambments, line breaks, alliterations, syntactical parallels, internal fragments, and the juxtaposition of abstract and concrete descriptors across the free stanzas. Grounded on their sensual qualities and intellectual complexities (Prescott 91), these rhetorical elements collectively forge a sculptural arrangement of words, abstract yet creatively structured, bridging the gap between observation and reflection. Through intermedial exchanges of ideas and craftsmanship in Brancusi’s studio (fig. 4-9), Loy’s verbal and Brancusi’s plastic representations reshape “the Alpha and Omega / of Form,” transforming raw materials (“a lump of metal”) from lexical and metal resources into a new expressive order.⁴⁰ In a refashionable manner distinct from widespread currents, these two elemental artforms reconfigure the formation of blank verse and representational realism within their respective disciplines of poetic and sculptural arts. Moreover, they redefine the relation between the act of making and that of viewing – historically separable and impenetrable realms embodied by the “patient peasant God” and the public, emblematic of the creator and the reader-viewer. This transformation instigates a self-reflective transition from the artist to the audience, and fosters a collaborative environment for rumination, interpretation, and reimagination.



Fig. 4-9 Constantin Brancusi, *Brancusi, Tristan Tzara, Berenice Abbott, Mina Loy, Jane Heap et Margaret Anderson dans l'atelier* (1921-22). Photo, 12.7 by 18 cm. Centre Pompidou, Paris.

Through a careful examination of the polished bronze surface and the ekphrastic reconstruction of the sculpted and versed avian subjects, Brancusi’s and Loy’s artistries visualise the process of artmaking as a dynamic cooperation with multisensory, kinetic, and psychic

⁴⁰ In fact, Brancusi made many photographs in his studio, including this group photo with Loy and other European avant-gardes by setting up a delayed exposure on his camera. For his photos, see the Brancusi number of *The Little Review*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1921).

dimensions. Beyond a pure replication of physical representations, their abstract treatment of form is achieved by means of the convergence of sight and thought, object and subject, and the tangible and immaterial. It can be understood as:

The absolute act
of art
conformed
to continent sculpture
– bare as the brow of Osiris –
this breast of revelation (Loy, *LoLB* 79)

Through an “absolute,” elemental gesture that deprives sculptural and linguistic forms of superfluous details and realistic adornments, this modernist work of art does not diminish but orchestrates a performative embodiment, or at least, a corporeal space for revelation, disorientation, and reconfiguration. For Brancusi, art “gives birth to ideas [and] it does not represent them;” within the apparent abstraction of the sculptural form, the sculptor urges us to perceive something profound beneath the surface to uncover the intrinsic “essence of the things” (133). This self-referential abstraction, materialised through sculpted and malleable words in a versatile form, triggers a delayed or reproduced moment and place of visible formation. Its purpose is to strip the object down to its quintessence rather than to mimic external realities. Loy, attuned to Brancusi’s reflective use of gleaming metals, creates a link between the enigmatic facets of artform and the constructive process of composing or designing it.⁴¹ The metallic sheen of the golden bird directly acts as an optical and mental reflection, mirroring the interactive engagement between the inner and the outer, time and space, and the subjective and the objective.

In this fashion, her ekphrasis clearly reconstructs the action of experiential observation and the complex process of identification from the midst of:

an incandescent curve
licked by chromatic flames
in labyrinths of reflections

This gong
of polished hyperaesthesia
shrills with brass
as the aggressive light
strikes
its significance (79-80)

⁴¹ In another Brancusi’s aphorism, he points out the significance of the artishood to be realized in the making of art, by saying that “It is not the things that are difficult to make, but to put ourselves in [a] condition to make them” (130).

Drawing from those “chromatic flames” of mirrorlike “reflections,” the poet-painter adeptly accentuates the “hyperaesthesia,” or an intensified sensory experience of both kinetics and aesthetics. Though this evocation, a constructive movement of creation and appreciation unfolds to strike artistic and philosophical implications or “significances” behind. Loy’s idea of the glistening “reflection” exceeds surface-level interactions, associated with the audience’s proactive contemplation of the represented work itself. This reflexive nature extends beyond the “maximalist abstraction” and its inborn “formal surplus” (Lewis, *Dynamic Form* 113), yielding a twofold effect that transmutes static materiality into dialogic transparency. At last, the poem concludes by asserting that the “immaculate / conception / of the inaudible bird / occurs / in gorgeous reticence...” (Loy, *LoLB* 80).



Fig. 4-10 Mina Loy, *Constantin Brancusi* (1924). Drawing. *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, edited by Conover, Manchester: Carcanet, 1985.

Again, the conclusion of this art poem resonates with Loy’s lyrical essay titled “Brancusi and the Ocean,” wherein she succinctly states that the “interpretation of Brancusi” should include “the analysis of the elemental” (*SE* 221). In a similar vein, the abstract form spotlighted here crystallises the heart of art that distillates not only its material attributes but also its conceptual essence:

An art engendered beyond the formidable naked subjectivity –

Here is no abstraction coerced to the domain of form –
Perhaps form arrested at its very inception –
a certain *élan* of primary embodiment –
has revealed to us the intriguing comparison of elemental form –
evolved by the forces of nature –
and an elemental form whose evolution is submitted to the process of the intellect – (*SE* 221)

Brancusi's and Loy's golden birds, either in an originally plastic or ekphrastically verbal structure, place a unique emphasis on the abstract or "elemental form" in a self-reflexive practice of discovery, meditation, and realisation. Their formal abstraction is designed to capture the certain "*élan* of primary embodiment" and engage the cognitive "process of the intellect." It is not solely about showcasing a "supreme example of a form characterised above all by the energy of making, an object that possesses form rather than referring to a form outside itself" (Stauder 212). Loy deems Brancusi (fig. 4-10) as "one of the few moderns – whose art has survived its own impetus – its cosmic reticence" (Loy, *SE* 222) in the reflective form and materiality of his abstraction.⁴² Beyond being a statement of formal or material referentiality, both the poetic and sculptural birds bring about a transfiguration of temporal detachment into a spatially tactile manifestation of an imaginary reflection. Similar to the mirror stage where outside surroundings and inner psyches intersect, this self-reflexive space of abstraction appears through an ongoing movement – overlapping and interacting between the mirrored and the mirroring.

The apparent distance and lack of direct contact between authorship and readership or spectatorship can then find reconciliation through these artists' essential structural elements and deliberate compositional strategies. They are etched onto the shining metallic surface of this sculpted artwork and creatively designed in the lineation of poetic words on the page. To establish this innovative dynamic of the temporal and the spatial, a highly formal mode of their self-reflexive and referential approach operates as a conceptual platform, instead of doing a mere physical reproduction. In Loy's words, the true abstraction is not "coerced" or constrained to a predetermined form or style but originates from the vital energy of its initial formative moment. An "elemental form" unfolds as an evolving process of negotiating the intuitive ("nature") or intelligent ("intellect") forces. It exudes a self-awareness that not only remakes modernist artwork as a representational alternative, but also reflects hidden identities and shifting roles of modernist artists. More significantly, Loy and Brancusi refashion the presentation of an art object in constructivist abstraction as a mediation between the author and the spectator, the collective and the individual, and the material and the transcendental worlds.

⁴² On Loy and Brancusi's friendly contact and close association during the period of 1920s, see Prescott, "Kinetics and Aesthetics: 'Brancusi's Golden Bird'" 85-96; Lewis, "Photography's 'Incandescent Curves' and Erotic Formalism," in *Dynamic Form* 112-18.



Fig. 4-11 Wyndham Lewis, *The Starry Sky* (1917). Drawing. *The Little Review*, vol. 4, no. 7, November 1917, p. 29.

In another ekphrasis “‘The Starry Sky’ of Wyndham Lewis” inspired by Wyndham Lewis’ painting of the same name, Loy performs similar artistic feats of dexterity and abstruseness.⁴³ Lewis initially published this work, also known as *Two Women*, in the 1917 edition of *The Little Review*. Just as Lewis addresses to undermine existing normalities and conventions in pictorial art through his Cubist approach, Loy intermedially undertakes a parallel effort in her written interpretation. Her intention is to appropriate and re-present the formal or material aspect of creation as an alternative mode of recreation. This ekphrasis then becomes a means to invigorate the actual and imaginary perspectives of both readers and beholders by offering a fresh prism through which to perceive and anticipate modern art. Loy’s poetic version of *The Starry Sky* disrupts traditional principles of representationalism by infusing her abstract writing with an analytical Cubist sensibility. In an iconoclastic manner, Lewis’ *The Starry Sky* (fig. 4-11) deconstructs the realistic composition of human figures into faceted, angular polyhedrons within a stark environment on the plane. This visual disjunction between the architectural figures and their sterile surroundings suggests a reconsideration of the human form in an increasingly urbanised context.⁴⁴ The geometric solidarity depicted in the portrayal of modern women provides a transfigured way to contemplate and reassess the human body within a mechanical shape. Loy’s poetic characterisation mirrors this avant-garde experimentation, questioning the fundamental notions of bodily representation and its prevalent theories of beauty as rigid, unchanging, and

⁴³ To find more about the association between Loy and Lewis, see David Trotter, “Starry Sky: Wyndham Lewis and Mina Loy” 110-32.

⁴⁴ For a careful reading of Lewis’ painting *Starry Sky* in relation to his Vorticism and abstract art, see Richard Rock, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) 29-30.

inviolable. In her verbal reconfiguration of these artworks, Loy draws inspirations between Lewis' abstracted, rock-like creatures and Brancusi's reflecting golden bird, both as radical and impersonal outlets for exploring the complex dynamics of human existence. She probes into the concealed disconformity between external and interior sides of humanity, within the backdrop of the modern urban milieu that pulsates a rhythmic energy.

Based on his illustration of Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens: Alcibiades* (fig. 4-12), which commences with a conversation between a poet and a painter, Lewis alongside his Vorticist followers, subscribe to the rejuvenating, transformative potential of intermedial modernism.⁴⁵ Vorticism facilitates a cross-pollination of various arts and mediums, aiming for an aesthetic confluence marked by simultaneity, adaptability, and perplexing performance of multiple viewpoints and conceptual schemata.⁴⁶ Examined through Loy's ekphrastic lens, it is evident that Lewis embodies the artisthood:

who raised
these rocks of human mist

pyramidal survivors
in the cyclorama of space

In the austere theatre of the Infinite
the ghosts of the stars
perform the "Presence"

Their celibate shadows
fall
upon the aged radiance
of suns and moons (Loy, *LoLB* 91)

Rather than presenting a naturalistic portrait of two women set against a starry sky, the painter conducts a metamorphosis of their fleshy, softly-contoured bodies into geometric configurations and abstract patterns. This duo, comprised of what Loy describes "rocks of human mist," is elevated to a mythical stature as "pyramidal survivors" positioned within the expansive vastness of space ("in the cyclorama of space"). This non-human departure from figural likeness evokes a cosmic dance or a theatrical spectacle occurring amidst the celestial bodies, woven into the vast fabric of the universe. The corporeal plasticity and atmospheric abstractness of the depicted figures undergo a sharp reduction into abstraction of forms and compositions, almost as if two "ghosts of the stars" are traversing the starkly "austere theatre of the Infinite." For both Lewis and Loy,

⁴⁵ On Lewis' *Timon of Athens* and Vorticist abstraction, see Paul Edwards, "Wyndham Lewis's *Timon of Athens* Portfolio: The Emergence of Vorticist Abstraction," *Apollo*, vol. CXLVIII, no. 440 (1998) 34-40.

⁴⁶ For more on Vorticism, see William C. Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972); Richard Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

the focal point resides in the pictorial and linguistic expressions of this sense of “Presence” – the designed presentation of their formative components, including different facets such as lines and shadows on canvas as well as the meticulous selection of diction and lineation on the printed page. In their modernist endeavours, they empower the abstract form as an aesthetic archetype, a vehicle through which they can articulate novel significances different from the “aged radiance / of suns and moons” within an unfettered realm of Infiniteness.



Fig. 4-12 Wyndham Lewis, *Timon of Athens: Alcibiades* (1912). Process engraving, 29.5 by 28 cm. Private collection.

Breaking pre-existed representational paradigms that range from classical mimesis, romantic expressionism, to religious hermeneutics, modernist artists are summoned to embrace the faculties of the “antennæ / of the intellect” and the penetrating “rays / that pierce / the nocturnal heart” (91). Loy’s invocation of “antennæ,” synecdochic of the sensory organs of insects, builds up a metaphorical link to our intuitive and instinctual senses to access the physical world that envelops us. This perceptual vision shows her motivation to abstract the represented object and elicit a reconstructive process of seeing and making. It twists the presentation of artform to appropriate the readerly-spectatorial expectations with a heightened self-reflection.⁴⁷ Alternatively, Loy and Lewis present us with new compositional strategies and inventive methods of rendering

⁴⁷ On how this formal and mental idea of self-consciousness is essential to “Constructive Modernism,” see Altieri, “Why This Emphasis on Self-Consciousness Might Matter for Contemporary Thinking about the Mind,” in *Modernist Poetry* 218-34.

and encountering the subject matter. As a further step, Loy in this poem advocates for a more revolutionary and dynamic agenda than the limited practices of Impressionism or even the innovations of Neo-Impressionism, like Pointillism:

The airy eyes of angels
the sublime
experiment in pointillism
faded away (Loy, *LōLB* 91)

In parallel with Brancusi, these avant-gardists champion for a radical departure, similar to the ideals of Futurism or Dadaism, aimed at redirecting attention away from the conventionalist concepts of nature and sentiment. Their artistic commitment undertakes a “sublime / experiment” that inquire into newly discovered textures, materialities, and techniques, sculpturally arranging and reorganising poetic words and their internal spaces as readymades into a plastically abstract yet evocative structure. Furthermore, they strive to be:

Enviably immigrants
into the pure dimension
immune serene
devourers of the morning stars of Job (92)

Brancusi’s sculptures, Lewis’ paintings, and Loy’s verbal compositions delve into the “pure,” “immune,” and “serene” dimensions of representation, emphasising the constructive essence of self-expressive creativity in an abstract way. Artistically living as “enviable immigrants,” they choose to depart the barren, oppressive sphere of the past and venture into a foreign yet vibrant aesthetic landscape. Their creative engagement with the abstraction renegotiates the external and the internal, finiteness and infinity, signifying a stylistic shift from the superficial to the visceral, from the represented object to the meditative subject. Guided by Loy’s *Lamar Baedeker* towards uncharted celestial terrains, the abstract form of art is now re-evaluated as a constructivist process of inherent contemplation and illumination, a radiant expression that “bloom[s] with light” (91).

From this perspective, their rhetoric of constructivism conceives of the artform as a visible and adaptable embodiment of both body and identity at the same time, phenomenologically connecting art together with its self-reflective, reflexive nature. The formal and material reflectivity or reflexivity enacts and conveys those repressed, distorted, and constrained realities at that epochal moment. In her essay “The Metaphysical Pattern in Aesthetics,” Loy points out that the “essential factor in a work of art” is embedded in a transcendental pattern “interposed between the artist’s creation and the observer in the mode of a screen” (*SE* 263). In essence, this indicates

a progression towards the “presentation of the purely metaphysical structure of an aesthetic creation” – in other words, an abstract form that functions as an intermediary “screen,” one of the “formative metaphysique[s] to within their spatiality, volume, and motor idiosyncrasies of technique, however compactly incorporated in objective reproduction” (264). Loy’s idiosyncratic poetics of ekphrasis does not merely describe or depict a diverse array of artists and their artworks; instead, she transforms and recreates the modernist mode of representing and envisaging the physical body and its inscribed identification through an active process of “crystallization influenced by the artist’s perception of phenomenal dynamics” (264). By embracing the constructivist spirit of reflection, performance, and reinterpretation, Loy’s ekphrastic abstraction reconceptualises visible language and retrospective imagination within the symbiotic act of reading-viewing, seamlessly integrated into a dynamic whole.

Chapter 5

“Little painted poem”: Modernist Experiments in Cummings’ “Poempictures”

He scrutinized such poems, thinking into every intimation, and his feelings seemed to float in the white space around the lines. There were marks on the page and there was the page. The white was vital to the soul of the poem.

– Don DeLillo, *Cosmopolis* (66)

Pure Drawing is the material visibility of the invisible.

– Alain Badiou, “Drawing” (45)

If I have included visibility in my list of values to be saved, it is to give warning of the danger we run in losing a basic human faculty: the power of bringing visions into focus with our eyes shut, of bringing forth forms and colours from the lines of black letters on a white page, and in fact of *thinking* in terms of images.

– Italo Calvino, “Visibility,” *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* (92)

Deeming himself a modernist poet-painter, E. E. Cummings created more than two thousand paintings over the course of his career, in various mediums ranging from oils, inks, watercolours, pastels, to charcoals. He exhibited his artworks at different venues from 1919 to 1955, including the Kokoon Art Club in Cleveland, the Rochester Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester, the 1020 Art Centre in Chicago, as well as the American British Art Gallery, the Painter’s and Sculptor’s Gallery, and the annual exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in New York.¹ By examining the drawings and paintings found in his notebooks, sketchbooks, and even simple ink or pencil scratch on pages, we can identify certain defining characteristics of Cummings’ intermedial prosody. Thematically, his work is often influenced by classical and romantic legacies, focusing on subjects or motifs of love, nature (e.g., the moon, sky, sea, flowers and trees), and the combination of these two elements through the celebration of one’s perception and emotion. Formally, he employs a nonrepresentational method, deconstructing and recomposing black lines, white spaces, and the structural arrangement in between. William Carlos Williams, once in his essay “Lower Case Cummings,” describes how this poet-painter seeks to keenly observe or “see, see, see” through his lowercased “i-eye” duality, and “make the words speak of what he saw...and felt” with “infinite tenderness, with FEELING” (102). With the imagetext seen, heard, smelt, and felt, Cummings allows us to forge a fresh connection with the natural world, where “fingers make early flowers of / all things” (*CP* 14) and “each brave eye shall sprout a tree” (19).

According to Milton A. Cohen’s argument in the new Norton Critical Edition of *E. E. Cummings: Selected Works* (2020), it is crucial for the audience to adopt a reader-viewer perspective,

¹ More information about his publications and exhibitions can be found in the chronological survey of Cummings, see “E. E. Cummings: A Chronology” in *E. E. Cummings Selected Works* and “Chronology” in *Words into Pictures*.

approaching the “poetic page with a painter’s eye [which] is crucial to understanding his spatial placements, where letters and punctuation can function as black marks on a white page, and bunches of letters, words, and lines can form planes, tiny ideograms, and implied lines of force across that page” (Introduction xvi). In addition to this intermedial approach, we must also realise the aesthetic and conceptual motivations of this prosodic intermediality, which arise from the convergence of letters and punctuation, texture and materiality, and rhetorical and painterly sensibilities. Despite the spontaneous and ephemeral subject matter, Cummings’ poetry, much like his painting, relies heavily on well-planned, exuberant designs of printed “black” marks and spaces on the “white” page or canvas. In a letter to his editor at Harcourt Brace, Charles A. Pearce, in 1937, Cummings specifically requested meticulous typesetting for his “poempicture,” by which he desired that each “poempicture should remain intact” and this “combination of typesize and papersize as will allow every picture to breathe its particular life(no ‘runover’ lines) in its own private world” (qtd. in Norman 197). Evidently, as illustrated by Cummings’ pencil draft on a grid paper with self-numbering (fig. 5-1), his deliberate execution of calculated verbal and visual artefacts positions the reader as an observer and a participant, inviting them to experience movement, spontaneity, and representationality simultaneously through the coexistence of analytical thinking (intellection) and actual feeling (intuition).



Fig. 5-1 E. E. Cummings, *Untitled (Couple Dancing with Grid)* (1920s). Graphite pencil on paper, 23 by 12.7 cm. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

While it is commonly accepted that Cummings experienced a stylistic conversion throughout his life, transitioning from an innovative avant-garde poet in his early years to the less successful naturalistic, sensualist painter with repetitious subjects in everyday routine during his later career, I hold a different opinion.² In my view, Cummings did not have a singular or determined preference for being abstract (in his abstractions and experimental poems) or representational (in his sketches and sonnets), and he never intended to “shift” (Kidder, “Author of Pictures” 503) or undergo a complete change in terms of themes or techniques as a poet-painter. Instead, he is purposefully and strategically flexible over various, sometimes incompatible, artforms or modes of expression. He characterises his painting style in the following terms:

apparently I've found my style in painting
 – it's NOT
 painstakingly washed flat surfaces sans brushstrokes
 fine camel's hair delineation-by-outline
 building up a careful sum out of parts
 it's chunking ahead with a big brush held loosely
 & loaded with paint.
 Out of the crisscrossings, “mistakes”, etc.
 a picture Builds itself...³

Although recognisable, his experiments with bold colour, rapid brushstrokes, and complex compositions are not meant to embody, but rather to exploit the possibilities of literary and pictorial embodiment. The autonomy and self-sufficiency of his “picture” that “Builds itself” are often reflected in his poem-pictures, which can be loose or abstract in one moment and “painstakingly” naturalistic in the next. The process of being or creating the subtle differences – or Marjorie Perloff’s *infrathin* – signifies a strong sense of diversity and indeterminacy embedded in one’s creative narration, articulation, and self-expression (*Infrathin* 6). In doing so, Cummings aims to challenge conventional forms of word-understanding, invigorate the human apparatus for world-feeling, and transcend the enduring dualities of male and female, human and nonhuman animal, thought and perception, the public and the private, and the poetic and the painterly. He seeks to find alternative “ways in which the opposites complement one another” (Webster, “E. E. Cummings” 502) in order to move from fragmentation towards an organic whole.

Therefore, from intermedial identities to artistries, this chapter focuses specifically on Cummings’ modernist (micro-)experiments, exploring a diverse range of his verbal-visual artworks from a prism of micropoetics. Cummings refers to his hybrid creations on the page as

² On Cummings’ rejection of abstraction in 1920s and his later commitment to representational work of art, see Cohen, “Disparate Twins” 84-90 and Kidder, “Twin Obsessions” 343-54.

³ E. E. Cummings, “Notes,” box 55, MS Am 1823.7 (55), E. E. Cummings Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

“poempictures,” by stating that “not all my poems are to be read aloud – some...are to be seen & not heard” (Cummings, *SL* 267). Unlike his works in oils and watercolours, how does Cummings’ fascination with line-drawing in pencil or ink sketches aid him in both witnessing and imagining his daily life through visionary and observational imagery? In his still life poems and paintings, what intermedial techniques does Cummings employ to decompose and reconstruct tangible objects, noted for their simplicity, expressiveness, and playful forms? Furthermore, how do Cummings’ scenic writings and landscapes interact with each other, ultimately creating iconic, ecological, and multifaceted identities that co-exist in the real world? By discussing Cummings’ early abstractions and later representational works, such as portraiture and landscapes, we can gain a deeper understanding of the idiosyncratic, eccentric facets of his poempictures: “with a few exceptions, my poems are essentially pictures” (qtd. in Heusser, *I Am My Writing* 266). Sharing common values with a “Zen monk” (Friedman, *(Re)Valuing Cummings* 173) who believes strongly in the benevolent connection between the individual and the universal, Cummings, as a poet-painter, dedicated himself to transforming linguistic structures and graphic patterns – as halves of one towards a sense of wholeness – into various expressive forms of memory and experience.⁴ The modernist vision of his intermedial prosody is to celebrate motion, vitality, and self-transcendence (being or “IS”) of one’s multiple selves through radical experimentation with both poetic language and visual artform.

Sketched Pages: The Gestural Narrative of Line-Drawing

The Houghton Library houses a vast collection of E. E. Cummings’ drawings in various materials and subjects. These include landscapes depicted in watercolour, ink sketches of burlesque performers, pencil portraits of his wife Marion Morehouse, abstract caricatures of nonhuman animals and circuses in charcoal, as well as scene sketches of skylines, gravestones, nights in Paris, and the White Mountains of New Hampshire in crayon. Different from his oil paintings on well-framed canvases, Cummings’ drawings often appear on toned papers or more casually on the empty spaces of his letters, postcards, diaries, cancelled checks, hotel receipts, page proofs, or poetry drafts, whether in their entirety or as small fractions. One of the archive boxes at Houghton, titled EEC Additional Papers (MS Am 1892.8), contains fifty-one notebooks and sketchbooks filled with piles of drawings compiled in scrapbooks, notepapers, clippings, and travel journals.⁵

⁴ Regarding the idea of the Zen-monk, I owe this to Gillian Huang-Tiller with whom I discussed during the E. E. Cumming Society panel “Cummings’ Contact(s): Vision, Eco-Vitalism, and the Actual World” of the American Literature Association in July 2021.

⁵ E. E. Cummings, “Sketchbook,” box 124, folders 2-52, MS Am 1823.7 (55), E. E. Cummings Additional Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Among these are early art exercises dating back to 1905, featuring pencil drawings of lotus leaves and morning glories, which Cummings created during his childhood. Others appear to be more mature sketches and professional notes, illustrating Cummings' growth as a draughtsman as he familiarised himself with varying techniques (such as handling texture, value, light and shadow), tones (including hatching or stippling), proportions (utilising lines and volumes), perspectives (referring to the eye), and other fundamental aspects of drawing. He touches on a wide range of styles and categories, spanning from nonrepresentational portraits of human bodies to photographically realistic illustrations of animal skeletons for anatomical studies. These portfolios of pictures underscore Cummings' rich, extensive repository of line-drawings and sketches, showcasing his protean individuality and creative idiosyncrasies unbound by any medial, generic, or social boundaries – much like the ostensibly spatial language and open form found in his concrete poetry. Both Cummingsesque arts of re-drawing the graphological line and the lineation of verbal-visual narratives solicit for a “discursive” reading, in contrast to the old-fashioned “lineal” reading (Cureton 263), allowing for a dramatic exploration of tension, vacillation, and discordance.

According to Susan Cheever, Cummings devoted more time to “drawing” than to “writing” while he was imprisoned at Dépôt de Triage, La Ferté-Macé in 1917. Even before that, during his time in Pairs, he would sketch almost “everything: soldiers, children, a woman carrying a baguette, horses” (53). J. Alison Rosenblitt further suggests that Cummings penned pages of notes about the urban environment in Paris at that time, and “pushed himself to observe synesthetically, to put into practice his desire to translate across artistic genres or across art and nature” (109).⁶ The poet-painter's daily notes and sketches serve not only as artistic practice or discipline but also as a formal documentation of observation and experience, capturing the transience of individual moments. They reconcile the conflict between permanence and transcendence in daily life by intertwining the “immediacy and ephemerality of the utterance with the permanent materiality [and intermediality] of the artefact” (Bradford 18). Cummings' prolonged creation is consistently synaesthetic or intermedial that embraces a miscellany of different mediums, artforms, and sensations to entice the reader-viewer to simultaneously see and hear.⁷ Michael Webster interprets one of Cummings' letters to his editor about the typesetting of his poetry that “Consequently, line-drawings-on-the-poem page strike me (much as I love to write by drawings) as redundant” (qtd. in Webster, “Singing is silence” 202), which explains why line-drawings “are superfluous ornaments

⁶ As narrated by Rosenblitt, apart from pages of notes on “the streets, parks, and monuments of the city,” Cummings “responded to Paris as much in drawing as in words”: sketching on the “Boulevard des Italiens, at restaurants, at shows,” portraying “waiters, beggars, soldiers, prostitutes, widows, the war wounded on crutches, a boy selling the French newspaper where they got their morning news, *La Liberté*,” and drawing “boat workers down by the Seine and their boats and cranes [and] caricatured puppets of the Grand Guignol and the acrobatic performers at the Olympia” (BL 109).

⁷ A few snippets of conversation that he heard either in cafes or on the streets are recorded in his notebooks.

to his poems” (“Singing is silence” 202). However, in my opinion, Cummings’ reluctance to publish his “line-drawings-on-the-poempage” precisely evinces his fair stance on drawing as an autonomous, independent artform.⁸ It is not merely decorative or complementary but serves as an intermedially transformative mode used by Cummings to reflect upon and reengage with our physical surroundings. For Cummings, drawing is a self-expressive act that associates the initial visual impression subsequently with interpretative discoveries of the particular object, emphasising the linkage between perceptual senses and cognitive schemas as a continuum. Instead of being a single flash, the art of drawing offers us an imaginative and constructive process to reorganise visible imagery and our discursive information in mind. The draughtsman’s goal is not to record past events but to revisit and reconstruct the reminiscent narrative of our actual feelings and experiences in a refashionable manner.



Fig. 5-2 E. E. Cummings, *Unspecified* (n.d.). Drawing. Box 1, MS Am 1892.14 (1), E. E. Cummings Drawings, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

For instance, Cummings created dozens of pen-and-ink drawings during his Parisian period, many of which are collected in the “Paris File” and “Paris-Night-Life” at the Houghton Library.⁹ These quick sketches depict naked or dressed females, hugged couples, and males chatting, drinking, or smoking at local cafés and restaurants (fig. 5-2). All in a monochromatic mode, Cummings combines representational imagery of modern figures and the settings they are positioned with a typically abstract style. His line-drawings, whether in a sketchbook or on a strip of paper, feature bold, gestural lines, and simplistic, rough shapes of the portrayed. The dynamic

⁸ E. E. Cummings, “Notes,” MS Am 1892.7 (219), E. E. Cummings Additional Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

⁹ E. E. Cummings, *Unspecified* (n.d.), box 1, MS Am 1892.14 (25), E. E. Cummings Drawings, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

especially during the turbulence of postwar society.¹⁰ His caustic vision of the world is dissolved in his deeply benevolent concern for nature and its perceptual, emotional, and reflective charge.

In a letter to his mother, Cummings once expressed the belief that the “artist keeps his eyes, ear & above all his NOSE wide open, he watches while others merely execute orders he does things. By things I do not mean wearing gold bars or pulling wires or swallowing rot-in-general or nonsense-in-particular. I mean the sustaining of his invisible acquaintance with that life which, taken from his eyes, makes itself a house in his very-brain-itself” (qtd. in Cheever 64). For him, this intermedial entanglement with the seen world means more than superficial actions or conforming to societal expectations but involves the “sustaining” of the perceptible and the conceivable. As a modernist poet-painter, Cummings regards the intermediation of poetry-painting as a means to incubate an alternative reality and engage with cultural politics. He insists on the importance of integrating the optical (“eyes”), auditory (“ear &”), and olfactory (“NOSE”) organs to achieve an organic and holistic wholeness. By visualising life in a painterly sense, one could psychologically reimagine the otherwise hidden and “invisible acquaintance with that life.” In one of his poems, Cummings reinforces this link by stating that “this man’s heart // is true to his earth” (CP 676). He connects two pairs of parentheses within a radically fragmentary structure full of enjambments, which represents fragments of lived experiences, highlighting an intrinsic interrelationship between the sensing and the sensed:¹¹

...(by
look
feel taste smell
& sound
of a silence who
guess
ex-
actly
what life
will do)...(676)

The experimental use of punctuation marks here reconsiders the formal, paratextual mode that is also part of constitution of poetic meanings in a multimodal fashion. By breaking grammatical conventions in his lineation, Cummings’ first parenthesis crossing several lines and stanzas

¹⁰ For more about the political attitudes of Cummings from his early stage to the late years, see Milton A. Cohen, “From Bad Boy to Curmudgeon: Cummings’ Political Evolution,” in Flajšar and Vernyik 68-89; also, his “The Political Cummings: Iconoclast or Solipsist?,” *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 6 (1997) 70-80.

¹¹ On Cummings’ use of parenthesis, see Roi Tartakovsky, “E. E. Cummings’ Parentheses: Punctuation as Poetic Device,” *Temporal Paradoxes in Fiction and Stylistics in American Literatures*, special issue of *Style*, vol. 43, no. 2 (2009) 215-47.

demonstrates how our five senses – looking, feeling, tasting, smelling, and hearing – can guide us in perceiving and anticipating the unfolding of actual realities, to “guess,” feel, or imagine “ex- / actly / what life will do.” In another instance:

as much as
how(first
the arri
-v-

in

-g)a snowflake twi-
sts
,on
its way to now

-here (676)

He uses brackets to depict the movement of a falling snowflake through collaged words, split letters, and random spacings. This poetic form of “collage” gives the reader-viewer an “extremely fragmented visual-verbal surface that must be ‘played’ and partially reconstructed in order to be ‘read’” or observed (Webster, “Floating particles of paper” 52). Underneath the fractured surface, the lexical and spatial fragmentation evokes a dynamic, kinetic actuality rather than a static one, challenging the linear structure and inviting our multidimensional interpretation. Cummings’ poetic line embodies a duality: it is discernible as a “measure of speech” and a “more tactile agency of creation, the thing on the page that unfolds left-to-right” (Bradford 24) based on the instinctive energy of drawing and its irresistible creativity. This lineation, as one of the essential elements of his poempictures, accommodates concrete specifics in an abstract yet accessible form, metaphorically making itself a “house.” The artistic corporation between the eyes and the “very-brain-itself,” with its diverse routes of signification, enables the physical and material manifestation of observations and memories as a sophisticated dialogue within oneself.

The essence of this sophistication lies in the nature of drawing and its ability to remember, manifest, and reimagine alternatives through its unique form and gesture.¹² Jean-Luc Nancy, in the opening chapter of his book *The Pleasure in Drawing* (2013), defines the art of line-drawing as an “opening of form” based on two fundamental aspects:

Drawing is the opening of form. This can be thought in two ways: opening in the sense of a beginning, departure, origin, dispatch, impetus, or sketching out, and opening in the sense of an availability or

¹² On the art of drawing and its philosophical underpinnings, see Michael Taussig, “What Do Drawings Want?,” *Culture, Theory and Critique*, vol. 50, no. 2-3 (2009) 263-74; John Berger, *Berger on Drawing*, edited by Jim Savage (London: Occasional Press, 2007).

inherent capacity. According to the first sense, drawing evokes more the gesture of drawing than the traced figure. According to the second, it indicates the figure's essential incompleteness, a nonclosure or non-totalising of form. In one way or another, the word *drawing* retains a dynamic, energetic, and incipient value that does not exist in words like *painting*, *film*, or *cinema*. By contrast, words like *music*, *dance*, and *poetry*, or words like *speech* and *song*, come closer to preserving a dynamic or potential within any actual or static value. (*Pleasure of Drawing* 1)

Nancy's viewpoint sets drawing apart from other artistic mediums like painting or film/cinema. He conceives of drawing as an opening gesture of form with a "dynamic, energetic, and incipient value," and stresses on its formal action of "movement" and "becoming" (1) rather than a traced, totalised figure. Hence, drawing is not a "given, available, formed form" but a spontaneous emergence or "birth of form" (3). Its desire stays away from a formal expectation of anything finalised in a complete mould, but rather, turns towards a performative or generative process of formality. The gesture of drawing is concerned with the creation, alteration, and metamorphosis of form. According to Nancy, drawing can be deemed as a "formative force [*forme formatrice*]" or the "*form in its force*" which "constitutes the element, moment, or dimension not of formalised but formative, ostensive, and dynamic thought across all artistic field" (12) – from the musical, choreographic, chromatic, to poetic.¹³ This formative force, akin to Cummings' concept of "IS" and the dynamics of becoming, equates the formal design and its cultural subtext with a notion of "designatable" performativity. It merges with the "movement, gesture, and expansion of the mark [*trait*]" and the "sensual pleasure [*jouissance*] of this unfolding" (22).

To achieve this textual or pictorial performance, the general form of drawing relies on the basic element of line (or lineation in poetic texts) as an enabling tool to operate dramatically on the paper. Characterised by fluidity and relationality, the line of contour and hatching deviates from a static projection and instead generates an emancipatory energy through its vibrantly mobile trace of experiencing and designating:

The *line* is not a poor resource for designating as its origin this point of contact between a thought and a gesture, between a sensibility and an activity, this indivisible and mobile point where a form and with it a manner are born – all the maneuverability and joint manipulations of what is *put into action* [*mise en œuvre*], in other words, bringing into appearance what is not hidden or given but invents itself in its gesture. For the line is the point itself – this non-point of birth, its self-origin stripped away [*dérobée*] – in the process of dividing space, dividing it by disposing and forming it, informing it by hollowing it out and affecting it, opening new possibilities for other spacings, in other words, for displacements and proximities, envelopments and avoidances, for folds, curves, departures, and returns. (101)

¹³ As alternative to metaphor or comparison, Nancy in one of endnotes again emphasises his idea of "contagion" between any artistic fields or registers in an intermedial sense, e.g., the interplay between *drawing* and *timbre*: "Colour, model, brilliance, note, touch, leap, figure, and rhythm are some of the terms from which this contagion or general communication of the arts draws, essential in that this contagion also designates the constitutive impossibility of providing a single, unitary, and univocal determination of what 'art' means" (110).

Nancy, in a chapter entitled “The Line’s Desire,” delves into the philosophical exploration of the line’s role and its embodiment of a “lineal self” whose “entire body will have preceded the gesture and an entire thrust (impulse, pressure) mobilised the body” (102). The nature of line, as the “non-point of birth,” continuously divides and reconfigures the space in an ongoing process from distinguishing, reforming, to opening a new revelation in the formal design and the act of drawing itself. In this vein, the desire of the line is the dissection of the lineal self, which, beyond its actual existence, unpacks the tension in-between the traced contour and the extending identity, the sketch and its embodiment, and the realm of senses and sensibilities. In the context of twentieth-century avant-gardism, the line is no longer a mere compositional feature and evolves into a performative entity, interacting with clusters of signs and images on the typeset page or canvas. Modern painters, such as Wassily Kandinsky, recognises the force of formation as the origin of all lines, André Masson treats the drawn line not as an enclosure of empty space but a spatial trace of extension, and Pablo Picasso emphasises the metaphorical emission of line-drawing to create rather than imitate.¹⁴

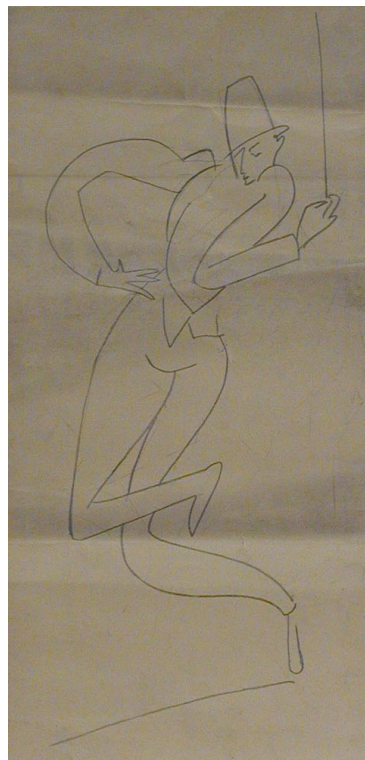


Fig. 5-3 E. E. Cummings, *Untitled (Male Dancer)* (n.d.). Graphite on paper, 40 by 19.4 cm. Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, Rochester.

¹⁴ See Wassily Kandinsky, “Line,” in *Point and Line to Plane*, trans. Howard Dearstyne and Hilla Rebay, ed. Rebay (New York: Dover, 1979) 55-112; André Masson, *Le Plaisir de peindre* (Nice: La Diane française, 1950); Pablo Picasso, *Picasso on Art: A Selection of Views*, ed. Dore Ashton (New York: Da Capo Press, 1988). The English translations of these quotations can be found in Nancy’s “Sketchbook” between each section of the text in *The Pleasure in Drawing*.

Under this light, Cummings' unique approach to lineation in both his figures and poetic words grasps the gist of a kinaesthetic, constructivist narrative of line and its dynamic formation. He replaces the traditional idea of "linearism" or linearisation of writing/drawing with a "constellation of object relations" (K. Harris 192) and a refashioning of textual or pictorial spatiality.¹⁵ Read/viewed from his mischievous acrobatics of language and artform, Cummings skilfully bridges the gap between the syntactic and the graphic through his playful manipulation of irregular lines, ambiguous marks, unconventional spacings, and designed forms borrowed from various artistic mediums. In *Is 5* (1926), the poet-painter draws attention to his intermedial profession of painting and versing, who is able to "compose curves / and yellows, angles or silences / to a less erring end":

myself is sculptor of
 your body's idiom:
 the musician of your wrists;
 the poet who is afraid
 only to mistranslate

a rhythm in your hair,
 (your fingertips
 the way you move)
 the

painter of your voice –
 beyond these elements (Cummings, *CP* 292)

By employing a Cubo-Fauvist palette, his lines ("curves"), colours ("yellows"), angles and silent spaces are composed together to sculpt the idiomatic texture, musical rhythm, and visual form of the mortal body. Cummings presents himself as the "sculptor of / your body's idiom," "the musician of your wrist" – an artist who fears only mistranslation. He hints at the materialisation of poetic language as a formative process of portraying and embodying, which has the power to recreate the addressee's corporeality through his sculptural or material imagining of the verbal-visual-sonic complex.¹⁶ Cummings incorporates non-poetic elements into his open form, such as the cadences of ordinary speech, enjambed lines, and erratic stanza lengths throughout the poem. Instead of mistranslating or misrepresenting, his experimental portrayal of the human figure delineates the rhythm in hair, the movement of fingertips, and the artistic layout of voice from "your lips" (292) in a synaesthetic manner. Similarly, in his abstract line-drawings (fig. 5-3),

¹⁵ Besides, Cummings' anti-linearism could be identified from an iconographic analysis of his lowercased-i. He transforms the definite, capital "I" as a vertical line into a cut-off, dotted "i" with a visually imaginative space in between.

¹⁶ On the materialisation of language, see Bowen Wang, "The Materialisation of 'torrential languages' within the Avant-Garde: Mina Loy, James Joyce, and Aesthetic Modernism," *Prague Journal of English Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2022) 67-88.

Cummings prefers to sketch the essence of moving characters rather than static ones, the subject directly observed in the day-to-day activities of their modern lives. Taking inspiration from the pace of urban experience, his fluid strokes and spontaneous use of lines and curves desire to capture the immediacy of the depicted gesture and preserve such fleeting moments. With “these elements” at his disposal, the poet-painter can “create one least smile” of the transitory beauty of temporality by drawing a poempicture that brings “life to me the distinct country of your / eyes, gifted with green twilight” (292).

Cummings’ distinct utilisation of line and space finds itself an alternate way to disrupt literary and artistic complacency about the representational linearity in a realistic sense that prevailed in previous generations. It deviates from the given pattern of lofty imageries of classicism and hyper-rhetoric schemes of academicism. In comparison to these preceding years, his typographic peculiarities – accommodating vocabularies and punctuation marks throughout the page as if drawing lines and spaces on the canvas – entered into a new stage since 1910s. This marked the beginning of a burgeoning culture of equivocal and cross-fertilised experimentation with (micro-)forms and microscopic poetics. In his assertion that “Progress is a conformable disease” (Cummings, *CP* 554), Cummings suggests that one must first recognise the perilous nature of progressivism that adheres to a linear or linearist stance in order to challenge the scenario of modernity and its stylistic conformity. His whimsical arrangement of words and images, sophisticated and unconventional, becomes a structural metaphor for the re-presentation of modern society. His meticulous attention to formal details could be found in a series of “plays with the bigness of his littleness” on a micro level (554). In doing so, the poet-painter directs his frustration towards the established formal and social norms of the past and advocates for an activist passion to recreate a “world of made [...] not a world of born” through his approach of “curving” (554) and other verbal-visual subtleties. When commenting on Jean Cocteau and his line-drawings, Cummings titles him as a graphic artist, French critic, novelist, and poet who, in Cocteau’s own words, “unties writing and ties it up again differently” with surprising originality (Cummings, *AM* 106).¹⁷ Making an analogy between modernist writing and a necktie, both Cocteau and Cummings move away from concerns of what to represent and instead focus on how to present their contemporaries with a diverse array of “strokes” (111-12), which simultaneously mean the physical gesture of moving the body and the act of drawing a line or a mark. These inventive “strokes,” exemplified by Cocteau’s caricature or graphic *rime riche* of Picasso and Igor Stravinsky, deny categorisation and expose the “dangerous futility of classification” (112) from a pluralistic perspective. Abounding with lexical or depictive ambiguities, they thus stress the self-

¹⁷ The essay was first published in *Vanity Fair* (September 1925) 46+94.

expressive virtuosity of an intermedial artishood and the hermeneutic possibilities of *infrathin* meanings in-between different mediums; as Marjorie Perloff aptly states, “Every letter stroke, every space, matters” (*Infrathin* 26).

As performative and expressional, Cummings’ written and pictorial use of line connects graphic form with corporeal body, presentation with embodiment, and one’s perceptive responses with cognitive experiences of the developing physique. Fond of circuses, burlesques, and performance shows of comedians and striptease artists, he frequently depicts faces, bodies, and especially gestures or actions as typical subjects in his verbal-visual sketches. These popular forms inspire him to delve into the “formal sophistication, political potential, and grotesque subversions of popular culture in general and the circus in particular, conceptualising performative spaces like the big top as at once serious and comic – dark and light” (Carruth 459). In the pages of *The Dial* from 1920 to 1927, twenty-two of Cummings’ line-drawings capture male and female performers snapshot in their “performative spaces” and gestures, characterised by vitality, movement, and liveliness, all executed in an economical style (Kidder, “Author of pictures” 474).¹⁸ Rushworth M. Kidder offers a gender critique of Cummings’ *Dial* drawings, noting that his graphic representations of male actors showcase vibrant actions (pointing up what they can “do”) while many of the female actresses are portrayed extending their arms and legs (presenting what they “have”) as a commodity on display (477). However, Cummings’ stylistic lines should not be interpreted as reinforcing gendered opposites, which do nothing creative but perpetuate the historical contrast between “the straight-lined angularity of the males and the softer curves of the females, between the former’s motion and the latter’s stance, between the self-containment and the openness of their forms” (477). Cummings constantly aims for a unifying balance of yin-yang as discussed in chapter 3, including the two sexual roles depicted in these drawings. He employs curves and straight lines not as a means to “preserve the distinction between genders” (488) but as formal textures that highlight the flexible, natural body in contrast to the constrained, artificial clothing. The human body and the garment should be distinguished from each other through the formal variation of line in its different shapes or modalities. Furthermore, the straight-lined suits worn by men and the soft-curved, slim dresses worn by women imply a sexist appreciation of gendered bodies and their cultural value under the heterosexual male gaze. In different registers, these line-drawings reiterate Cummings’ fundamental concern with the natural-born flesh and the socially stipulated costume, separating the essential body’s organicity from the obsolete forms that are clothed and embedded within sociocultural rules, conventions, and ideologies. He tries to make

¹⁸ Also, Cummings likes to sketch his friends since the Harvard years who were also the editors of *The Dial* during the 1920s, James Sibley Watson, Gilbert Seldes, Scofield Thayer. See Cummings’ artworks collected at Rochester’s Memorial Art Gallery.

inflammatory statements about self-aware sexual “rebellion against the body politic of the New England genteel culture in the 1910s and 20s” (Huang-Tiller, “A(r)mor amoris” 115). He achieves this by radically experimenting with the poetic or pictorial formality like untying the necktie and retwisting it to transcend the biased limits and expectations in before.

Cummings’ pursuit of artistic freedom, rooted in close and sensitive observations, disputes the public scrutiny of appearances and clothing. Like Mina Loy’s fashion design, he strives to provide a glimpse into the transcendence or metamorphosis of body-form through the physical texture and materiality that he seeks to sketch on the page. Judith Butler points out a similar motivation behind lined gestures in Franz Kafka’s line-drawings, emphasising its connection to “bodily motion”:

The point of departure is the body, for this skipping is a human movement but it transforms into a fantastical power of evacuating the body and vanishing that never quite shakes the pain and shame from which it emerges. Still, some manner of joy can be found in the sketches [...] in which lines travel in the direction of pure motion that recalls a bodily movement that it exceeds, even abandons as the elemental contours of swift motion take form. The lightness of the figure sustains a relation to an active human body, its lunge forward or race, implied by the backward extension of the arm lines. But these remain gestural, as fleeting and aloft, defying gravity and losing bounded contour at the same time. (289)

This passage explores the dynamic interplay between bodily movement, artistic representation, and the transformative physicality of the human body. The gestural lines in Cummings’ drawings, like some of Kafka’s, “travel in the direction of pure motion” beyond the physical movement of the body. Their gestural narrative, “fleeting and aloft” across the printed paper, extends a fluid physicality in volume, size, and unbounded contour, which defies normal gravity and blurs the boundaries of fixed form. The clear, smooth line of Cummings’ drawing still differs itself from Kafka’s carefully drafted fabric of bodily life. Whereas the latter aims at extreme abstraction for a disembodiment of one’s physical or actual nothingness, Cummings chooses not to evacuate the body but rather abstracts it into lineal or curved forms that encapsulate the “pure motion” or “bodily movement” of the portrayed figure.¹⁹ His artworks embody a delicate balance between the bodily engagement and the transcendence of physical limitations, conveying a sense of liberation and playfulness. The dual performance of both the human and the artform simultaneously carries the embodiment of a new energy that is devoid of stasis and fixity, embracing flexibility in its motions and stretches.

¹⁹ In this new discovery of Kafka’s line-drawings, alongside Butler’s essay, there is one explicating the complicated relationship between Kafka’s writing (text) and drawing (image) – quite different from Cummings’ intermedial poetics of poempicture, see Andreas Kilcher, “Kafka’s Drawing and Writing,” in *Franz Kafka: The Drawings*, edited by Kilcher and Schmidt 211-76.



Fig. 5-4 E. E. Cummings, *Untitled (Man and Woman Dancing)* (1920s). Graphite pencil on paper, 28.1 by 21.7 cm. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Specifically, one of Cummings' full-length portraits (fig. 5-4) of a man and woman dancing together, depicted without shading or background, keeps their figural bodies and swift gestures in the foreground, where they are sketched in a rough, simplistic style that resolves the physical volume into a kinetic existence. Without ornamental details, the pencil-lined contour abstracts the pair of figures and reduces the couple to a dynamic substance with just a few fast lines and strokes empowered by the fleeting moment and bodily experience as a whole. For Cummings, both as a poet and a draughtsman, the dramatic textuality of written or drawn lines reveals the corporeal nature of signs and their perceptual relationship to the inner mind, as:

into a truly
curving form
enters my
soul

feels all small
facts dissolved
by the lewd guess
of fabulous immensity (Cummings, *CP* 419)

As visible in his poempicture, Cummings' fragmentary lineation of poetic language is composed of twisted syntax and separate phrases. Like the Kafkaesque narrative in his novels, the formal

fragments here reflects the fragility and mortality of corporeal reality. Nevertheless, Cummings sees the “curving form” in which the “soul” resides as a potent site for spiritual growth, serving as a constructive image of “fabulous immensity” encoded in its embodied existence. He metaphorically compares this mighty “form” to a ship sailing at night, with the “spirit” as both the “passenger” and the “pilot” (419) within. The psychic, emotive, and physical movement, represented by changeable nerves, makes up one’s individual attitudes and imaginations of the outside world. This interplay between bodily and inward experiences becomes a central theme in Cummings’ intermedial navigation between artform, perception, and existence.

Cummings is fascinated with the modern activity of dance, a rhythmic move in a quick and lively way paralleling the gestures of his own hand as he types or draws on the machine or sketchbook. In the correspondence with his mother in 1920 when he began to publish his line-drawings on *The Dial*, he commented on his “rendition of the drawings (from pencil to thin complicated final ink state)” as a “slow and troublesome, but extraordinarily interesting, thing” (Cummings, *SL* 70). As shown from this letter, Cummings values his art of drawing – and his graphic writing as well – for its dynamic nature, considering it a formal and stylistic performance or interpretation in the “rendition” of verbal-visual-sonic complexes. Dancing and its dramatic attribute, in his view, extends beyond on-stage performers to include nonhuman animals, natural beings, objects, and even bodily substances: “this little dancer with the tightened eyes” (Cummings, *CP* 118); *Dancing Elephants* drawn on paper; darkness and beauty of stars / was on my mouth petals danced / against my eyes (47); “(yes the mountains are dancing together)” (665); “Now the all saucers / but cups if begin to spoons dance every-” (288); “do blood and flesh which danced and grinned” (1048).²⁰ The dances depicted in his poetic works encompass a wide range of entities, from the creaturely to the celestial, environmental, and material. Their dancing bodies, whether physical or metaphorical, are based on one’s perceptual and imaginative sensitivity to the vibrant dynamics of lived experience in actuality. Cummings always seeks to celebrate the unstructured and vigorously active character of transient urban life through his experimentalist treatment of lines and spaces. Similar to the non-representational form and expressive mode of modern dance, his line-drawn dancer (fig. 5-5) abandons the gravity and symmetry of an objective body and instead displays a grotesque gesture in motion: with one arm raised, waist twisted, hip wiggled, and the left knee bent on the ground. Put even in a flat, disproportional shape, Cummings disembodies the dancing figure from the naturalistic imitation, in order to reveal an immediate presentation of the internal expression through her suggestive action. As an innovative practice in the temporal-

²⁰ E. E. Cummings, *Untitled (Dancing Elephants)* (n.d.). Graphite on paper, 20.3 by 12.7 cm. Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, Rochester.

spatial narrative of modernity, his pencil sketch captures the earthy choreography of facial expressions and steps, thereby spotlighting the fluid corporeality and gestural movement in a transcendental sense. His modernist refashioning of the line, as a compositional and existential material, expresses the vibrant energy and dynamic essence of dance, proposing an alternative perspective on the representation and embodiment of the physical body and its hidden performativity.²¹



Fig. 5-5 E. E. Cummings, *Untitled (Woman Dancing)* (1920s). Graphite pencil on paper, 28.1 by 21.7 cm. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

In the poem “six,” collected in Cummings’ *50 Poems* (1940), the poet-painter presents us a lively scene swarmed with three males and three females dancing at a local bar or nightclub. The first half of the poem is shown below:

six
are in a room’s dark around)
five
(are all dancesing singdance all are
three

²¹ On the reciprocal link between modernist literature and dance, see Susan Jones, *Literature, Modernism, and Dance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), especially the chapter “From Dance to Movement: Eurhythmics, Expressionism, and Literature” 70-91.

with faces made of cloud dancing and
 three
 singing with voices made of earth and

 six are in a room's dark around)

 five
 (six are in a room's)
 one

 is red

 and(six are in)
 four are

 white

 (three singdance six dancesing three
 all around around all (Cummings, *CP* 507)

Typically, in a Cummingsesque collocation of poetic lineation and spacing, this poem picture is divided into sixteen sections composed of one to four lines each with varying lengths and enjambments. The portrayed figures who “dancesing singdance” appear to be detached from a realistic depiction of its domestic setting of the room, except for the surrounding darkness and gloominess. Similar to his line-drawn portraiture, Cummings foregrounds their movements and how we observe them from different angles of view by disembodiment the depicted individuals into pure numerical or geometric symbols or simple syntax, precisely echoing with the abstract lineal form on his canvas.²² Both the poem and the drawing exhibit an economy of expression, spontaneous composition, and a suppression of non-essential elements. Rather than describing the “faces” and “voices” of the singers or dancers in detail, Cummings concretises them as “cloud” and “earth,” drawing from his imaginative recollection of natural beings based on a personal connection with the external world. The verbal dramatist’s choreographic combination of words and spaces treats each line as a set of moves in the spotlight round the stage, casting from one figure to another (from “six,” “five,” to “three” dancing and “three” singing). Besides, Cummings adopts a cinematic approach, emblematic of his observational and experiential eyes, shooting the panorama of the scene as one enters “a room’s dark around,” and then zooming in on a close-up of one person who is “red” and four others “white.” This shift from linear to Cubist spatial narrative transforms the representational linearity of his multisensory experiences – optical, auditory, and tactile – into a constellation of broken stanzas, disconnected lines, and isolated lexis

²² Alex Goody also analyses Mina Loy’s writing of the gendered self in dance, which is articulated as “neither essentially natural nor fundamentally automatic but as a movement and line of force that emerges from the productive interface of the embodied becoming-subject and spectacular leisure technologies of the modern city” (147). See her “Dancing Bodies,” in *Modernist Poetry, Gender and Leisure Technologies: Machine Amusements* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019) 147-92.

in bits.²³ These visible movements throughout the varied lineations stage a formal performance of linguistic materials that underlines the embodiment of physicality or corporeality in the nature of language itself.

The intermedial choreography of poetic words, figural actions, and diverse ways of seeing turns our attention to a vibrating, ever-shifting nature of physical activity, specifically dancing in this instance, achieved in his modernist experimentation with visual design and textual layout. By linking tangible objects with abstract forms, even in the juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated images, he crafts his artistic expression:

clouds singing three and
and three dancing earths

three menandwomen three

and all around all and
all around five all
around five around)

five flowers five

(six are in a room's dark)
all five are one

flowers five flowers and all one is fire (Cummings, *CP* 507)

In the last half of this poem-picture, Cummings' stylistic construction of language seems more conceptual and repetitive with unusual variations, in a Steinian fashion that breaks up and recombines monosyllabic nouns, numerals, and prepositional phrases. The recurring idiom of "all around" or two constitutive words in separate areas ("all" and "around") is repeated throughout the stanzas. It not only denotes the crowded room with "menandwomen" moving around, but also refers to Cummings' aesthetics of "seeing around" or "knowing around."²⁴ This kinaesthetic method is rooted in the modern performance of burlesk/burlesque where "'opposites' occur *together*" and the dramatic movement in its dynamic and multidirectional spirit then allows us to "(so to speak) know around a thing, character, or situation" (Cummings, *AM* 138).²⁵ The art of

²³ Cohen regards this dynamic use of "spacing and shaping of lines" as Cummings' "most dramatic device for achieving motion" with an alterable narrative moving "in several directions within the context of the conventional left to right, top to bottom progression" (*PoetandPainter* 187). Pictorially, these sensual lines have three effects as he summarises, which, in my words, is to be fluid (multidirectional), tangible (analogous to the plane/cube of modern paintings), as well as musically rhythmic (harmonic). See his "Lines," in *PoetandPainter* 187-94.

²⁴ In his chapter specifically working on this idea of "'See Around' Form," namely to see the whole object, Cohen discusses Cummings' seeing-around aesthetics in his use of colours and grammars, themes and motifs, poetic and visual structures, and filmic and theatrical modes (*PoetandPainter* 117-50).

²⁵ See the full article "You Aren't Mad, Am I?: Being Certain Observations anent the Extremely Modern Art of 'Burlesk,'" (Cummings, *AM* 137-43). It was initially printed on *Vanity Fair* (December 1925) 73+92, with his line-drawings of clothed Jewish male comedians and naked female dancers of burlesque.

burlesque, for Cummings, is basically “nothing more nor less than a series of observations” (137). The essence of his performative lines and spaces lies in his attempt to deconstruct the physical solidity of graphic, linguistic, or bodily forms and to revolve or move around them, challenging the limitations of the two-dimensional page and the restricted point of view both in our eyes and mind. Some lines in the poem constructed in a symmetric structure, e.g., “three men and women three,” “and all around all and,” “five flowers five,” present a textual burlesque – featured with elaborate repetitions and indeterminacies – of verbal composition, spatial narrative, and non-linear modes of seeing and thinking. The interplay of line and space, body and form, materiality and performativity, set up the stage of intermediality in Cummings’ poem-pictures. His drawing of painterly lines and poetic lineation, conceptually speaking, works as a “mightily form[al]” design of bodily, medial, and sociocultural movements inextricable from the human life. Through its (trans)formative act, Cummings’ pleasure of line-drawings, as suggested in Nancy’s closing remark, “opens onto this infinitude” (*Pleasure of Drawing* 105).

Vital Materiality and Cummings’ Still Lifes

In neither his paintings nor poems, still life or the poetic narrative about interior or everyday objects is a major part of E. E. Cummings’ *oeuvre*. Traditionally speaking, still life tends to describe the static or even deadly thing on display, such as flowers or foodstuffs put on a table in contrast with the manufactured textures and colours of household utensils. The genre is often seen as an artistic representation of inanimate, motionless matters disassociated from the natural environment. It was defined as a low art of “*riparographia* [low painting]” or “*rhopography*” in the previous centuries, namely, an artistic mode about “those things which lack importance, the unassuming material base of life” (Blanchard 276; Bryson 61). These usual motifs, presented still as a miniature of the quotidian life, appear to be domesticised and further detached from the outdoor realm where they originated. Murray Krieger, in his essay “*Ekphrasis* and the Still Movement of Poetry; or *Laokoön* Revisited” (1967), even explains that “the ‘still’ of the genre called still life painting unhappily means only ‘stilled,’ inanimate, even in a sense dead” (267). As focusing on the stilled interiority of both representational and physical spheres, they were thought to lose the organic shrine and become an artificial product of the anthropocene activities, with negative connotations of *nature morte* (“dead nature”) referring to the silent, the morbid, and the putrescent.²⁶

²⁶ For an archaeological study on the historical development of still life from antiquity to the contemporary, see Sybille Elbert-Schifferer, *Still Life: A History*, trans. Russell Stockman (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999); Margit Rowell, *Objects of Desire: The Modern Still Life* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1997); Charles Sterling, *Still Life Painting from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century*, trans. James Emmons (New York: Harper & Row, 1981).

In this regard, Cummings' openness to nature and its living species (e.g., violets in full bloom, a flock of penguins, and dancing actresses in a burlesque club as common imageries shown in his poems and paintings) seems to divert his attention from the immobile and lifeless presentation of still life to his figure drawings and visionary landscapes. However, the poet-painter's idiosyncratic experiments with the mode of re-presenting the quotidian in both objective and subjective manners allow him to perceive and transform these ordinary entities dynamically, thereby revealing the narrative or expressive potential of inner motion hidden beneath superficial stillness. His spatial design, visible form, and typewriter language invites the audience to approach the material and cognitive spaces around them in a more bodily and palpable way.

While still life typically depicts inanimate objects, Cummings verbal-visual representations showcase the depicted or described in relation to the compositional backdrop, where they are not stagnant or lifeless but become performative on the stage of printed page or canvas. Through complex spatial languages and reference frames, Cummings extricates the reader-viewer from the linear configuration of things and then induces them to "move in it, and feel the spaces around us in a more visceral way" (Olsen, "I-Space" 124).²⁷ Although staged in an intimately private realm, his anti-realistic still lifes of articles for daily use not only enable the seeing of familiar things from a variety of different angles in line with our moving gaze, but also more actively, self-decipheres its fluid substance in interaction with the physical, emotional, and imaginary contexts. In his poetic expressions, because of the "Space being(don't forget to remember)Curved" and "of Course life being just a Reflex," we are offered altered ways of getting access to the physical surroundings with "at a least crooking / of Whose compassionate digit" (Cumming, *CP* 317). Cummings requires us to foster an eccentric vision as an intervening gesture to avoid being passively entangled with the new world, where the "Space" has become "Curved" and "life" reflexive. What we shall do is to deform and reorganise the "compassionate digit," the represented form and the way of re-presenting it.

In an intermedial manner, Cummings summons us to "enjoy the very distinct pictures of that remarkable process given to you by the poet's manipulating of those words" (*SL* 190). He treats the poetic language as an active medium with its deformed and reconfigured properties for a new artistic expression by manipulating the formal arrangement of letters, imageries, and spaces around them. Similarly, observed from Cummings' still-life painting (fig. 5-6) set in a hotel or domestic bedroom, the poet-painter applies his theory of space into another medium depicting the interior objects. The illusion of three-dimensional spatiality is dismantled by the flat, twisted

²⁷ Olsen provides a detailed analysis of Cummings' representation of various spaces from a linguistic approach: the techniques, versions, grammars of space, spatial frames of reference, and finally the poetic language of space ("I-Space" 111-23).

lines and shapes depicting the matter of table and household objects on it: a vessel, a kettle, a washbasin, a water glass with a spoon, a bottle of wine, and a suitcase. The flattened interior and its roughly crooked wallpaper and floorboard force us into a “Curved” or “crooking” space. Throughout the sketch, fast and spontaneous brushworks are employed to convey the restless and unstable tone of the invisible narrator.



Fig. 5-6 E. E. Cummings, *Untitled* (n.d.). Charcoal on paper. Private collection.

In *Modernism and Still Life* (2020), Claudia Tobin makes a comprehensive defense of still life against the devaluing tradition that treats it as a reticent narrative of the domestic ordinariness. She dissents from its conventional notion as a mundane representation of daily matters and elevates it to a form of art that reinstates the transformative nature oscillating between the “still” and the “life.” In her words, the hybrid composite of “animate inanimate” or “vibrating stillness” (11-12) is embedded in every medium or artform, ranging from the graphic, choreographic, sculptural, poetic, to the fictional.²⁸ Tobin firstly deconstructs the paradoxical nature of still life, a semantic pair of two polarities of “stillness” and “liveness,” and transforms it into an “unsettling and mysterious ‘doubleness’” that traverses the long-existing borders of “stillness and movement, nature and culture, morbid and vital, private and public, human and inhuman” (3) as well as the verbal narration and visual depiction of the everyday life.²⁹ The duality here is able to empower

²⁸ The genre of still life itself and its concentration on material objects, internal movements, and self-conscious presentations opened up a new way for modern art since the early twentieth century, e.g., Neo-Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, Surrealism, De Stijl, Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism and so on.

²⁹ On the genre of still life and its multiple interpretations across different media and artforms, especially between literature and visual art, see Guy Davenport, *Objects on a Table: Harmonious Disarray in Art and Literature* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1998); *The Object as Subject: Studies in the Interpretation of Still Life*, ed. Anne W. Lowenthal (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

our bodily experience, knowledge, and perception of physical objects in an emancipatory sense. Based on Tim Armstrong's "dialectic of *attention* and *distraction*" (90), this modernist dialectic of stasis and motion then reconciles the tension between the "uncanny animation of the object and its implications for the human subject" by an elastic form of attention that "challenges the limits of sense experience and the fixity matter" (Tobin 11).

Inscribed in the Futurist spirit (*Futurismo*) to celebrate speed and movement, modernist experimentation with still life gives specific attention to the elasticity and performativity of material form and fluid structure of how to behold and mediate it differently. In particular, Tobin's "performative attentiveness which circulates around, among and through compositions of objects" (13) exactly echoes Cummings' formal mode of seeing-around that connects the "Before" (front) and the "Behind" (back) of a structure (qtd. in Cohen 118). The "seeing-around" or "knowing-around" aesthetics enables the artist not only to see "the object's three-dimensional wholeness" (117) but also to look at the daily matter from a dynamic, constructivist perspective. As Milton A. Cohen claims in his *Poet and Painter* (1987), the Cummingsesque notion of "seeing-around" becomes the "shorthand for sensing three-dimensional form on a two-dimensional surface" based on a "perceptual illusion" that the sensation of solidity and wholeness in three dimensions "requires a union of the visible front and the apprehensible 'Behind'" (119).³⁰ It can bridge the gap between the materiality of things ("the visible front") and the immaterial experience of receiving them ("the apprehensible 'Behind'") through observation, meditation, and imagination. For Cummings, seeing around the whole object in terms of its colours and words, forms and structures is beneficial to create a formative and constructive way of perceiving, understanding, and engaging with the natural world – from multi-dimensional perspectives entrenched in both his poetry and painting.

With sensual and mental awareness, though standing domestically in "a middle of a room" (Cummings, *CP* 339), one would then be able to touch the substantial essence of the thing and envision the wider horizon on which it relates to the exterior world. The heightened sensitivity of this existential state of being (as a verb) allows for a physical and emotional understanding of the immediate object:

sniffing a Paper rose
smiling to self

"somewhere it is Spring and sometimes
people are in real:imagine
somewhere real flowers,but
I can't imagine real flowers for if I

³⁰ For more about this key principle of "seeing around" in relation to Cummings' use of colours and words, themes and motifs, poetic structure, and techniques in film and theatre, see Cohen, "Seeing Around? Form," in *Poet and Painter* 117-50.

could,they would somehow
not Be real” (339)

As stated in this early poem collected in *W [ViVa]* (1931), Cummings’ “Paper rose” and “real flowers” here serve as an interreferential pair that revolves around the topics of the natural and the artificial, the actual and the unreal, and the perceptual (“sniffing”) and the conceivable (“imagin[ing]”). The poem focuses on the reciprocal exchange between one’s perception and cognition to fully comprehend and even further engage with the reality in a self-creative manner of “seeing-around” or “knowing-around.” By putting on a one-man play, he equalises the primacy of being in touch with the material or conceptual body and knowledge of the rose as a self-reflexive navigation of the experiencing “self” on a sensory and emotional level. The speaker’s monologue addresses the enabling role of still-life matter to connect the inside with the outside, object with subject, and reality with imagination – emblematic as the symbolic objects in Wallace Stevens’ “The Man with the Blue Guitar”:

a moon swims out of a cloud
a clock strikes midnight
a finger pulls a trigger
a bird flies into a mirror (339)

The perceivable form of the depicted thing itself spurs our free associations from its visible presence to an imaginary, configurative extension, transcending the limitations of physical contact and generating a swarm of interpretative possibilities. In *Modernism and Still Life*, Tobin terms this subjective process of activating interactions between seeable object (the corporeal) and inmost subject (the figurative) as the “vibrational aesthetics” (17) of a still-life spirit. She lays stress on the vibratory receptivity to the dynamics of modern (still) life as a renewed genre and/or mode of being heightened by its modernist “re-animation(s)” (4) of one’s emotions, sensations, and multimodal receptions.

If Tobin’s vibrational aesthetics of attention or “attentiveness” (15) re-connects the triangle relationship among the artist, the object (in both real and representational sense), and the reader-viewer, Bonnie Costello in *Planets on Tables: Poetry, Still Life, and the Turning World* (2008) makes a broader and deeper association between the artwork and the socio-political context that it inevitably refers to. Costello conceives of still life as a pause or liminal space, actively operating against the backdrop as its dramatic setting. She compares it to the “foyer” (21), a slippery passage that bridges the gap and connects the journey between objective and subjective spheres, and allows for a referential connection to a heterogeneous, ever-changing, and perishable world. The

theatrical metaphor indicates a dramatic function of still life as a dynamic “pause in a transitive reality” or “lively threshold” (11-12) entering the irreducible, shifting actuality of the human life. In this sense, both verbal and visual modes of still life, in her viewpoint, perform as a storyteller:

[...] less of mastery and appropriation than of imaginative and emotional connection to a world from which they are apart but also a part; a world heterogeneous, dynamic, and perishable.

Still Life concerns both objects and subjects – the social, personal, political meanings inherent in material culture; the desire to enhance, frame, and hold the sensuous life; and the simultaneous desire to transfigure the material, to locate a metaphysical or unconscious meaning. Of course the object itself had changed, particularly the object in art. (Costello, *Planets on Tables* 8-9)

As a visceral reaction, still lifes also long for an articulation of their unvoiced narrative that embodies the personal, social, and political implications “inherent in material culture.” More specifically, at a local level, modernist still lifes work inside a domestic and meditative setting where they can provide a reconciliation of the particularities of the ephemeral, in order to break up the grand universality of public violence and disturbances.³¹ They are a solvent for the hostile reality and its disillusioned modernity as an artistic reunification of the disjointed objects into an organic, radiant wholeness. As an alternative, modernist representation of still life is no longer a formal reflection or stimulation of the physical domain but rather an evocation of it: “while still life is the art of domestic detritus, these small gatherings evoke a larger, changing world” (14).

In this respect, Cummings’ still lifes, which often contextualise the depicted objects in a recognisably interior space, can be seen and understood as a synecdoche of one’s personal contact with and immediate reaction to the real world. For instance, his vase of fresh flowers in a dimmed gallery (fig. 5-7) represents and illustrates a vivid picture of individual’s experience of encountering and appreciating natural/artificial beauty, as well as different orders and containments of art that permeate our daily lives. The oil on canvas itself exercises our creative agency of interlinking and transposing between the private and the public, the unreal and the actual, the imaginative and the sensorial, and aesthetic urges (art) and societal realities (politics). As suggested from this work of still life, Costello’s definition of still life as an “aesthetic arrangement of domestic objects” (xvi) should be extended to a creative re-arrangement or reordering of our physical and affective lives. With expressive or symbolic impulses as a trace of desire, the “foyer” and its transitional spirit disclose an inward compulsion to engage with the external reality through the estranged but liminal or permeable action – in a foyer – of seeing and contemplating.

³¹ In the endnote, Costello claims that still life is a “major genre of modernism” in artistic quest for the formality and materiality of the thing or quotidian object: its “relative neutrality of subject, as compared with portrait and narrative, made it an ideal space for investigating formal and perceptual themes” (*Planets on Tables* 183).



Fig. 5-7 E. E. Cummings, *Still Life of a Vase of White Flowers in a Gallery* (n.d.).
Oil on canvas, 29.2 by 29.2 cm. Thomaston Place Auction Galleries,
Thomaston, ME.

Aside from Tobin’s mobile point of view or Costello’s contextual reading of still life, Cummings’ still life poetries and paintings further enliven the quotidian object and matter of everyday life by an intermedial vitalisation of the material substance in a state of being and dancing on the page or canvas. In a self-proclaiming foreword to *is 5* (1926), he retains his fondness of the technical “precision” to create movement, within a gesture or scene of liveliness in the open air, for this “[i]neluctable preoccupation with The Verb gives a poet one priceless advantage” (Cumming, *CP* 221). To capture the rhythmical tempos of modern life, he works in idiosyncratic manners to document and reimagine the electrifying images of one’s lively experience as a both bodily and psychic contact with the actual world. Under this light, the poet-painter does not eschew the genre of still life in either verbal or visual representation, but rather experiments with his schematic word and image to uncover the potential “motion for movement, tempo for rhythm, mere liveliness for life” (*AM* 213) instead of adhering to the materialist ideas of stillness or detachment. Therefore, this formal dynamic calls for a more kinetic approach to interpreting his still lifes, which contrasts with Roger Shattuck’s view of the Simultaneist mode of stillness and its immobile attunement (351) in his brief analysis of Cummings’ works.

Distinct from an aesthetics of still relativity, in *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010), Jane Bennett’s vital materialism or “*vital materiality*” underscores the inherent “vitality of matter and the lively powers of material formations” (vii) with their ability to affect and be affected

in the meantime as active agents.³² This could serve as a political correlative with Cummings' aesthetic energy or performance of things and languages to revive and intensify an intrinsic movement or vibration of matters. The material and formal vitality challenges the dominant understanding of still life as a mimetic representation mirroring the physical reality and, instead, invites a re-evaluation of the represented objects and their forms and materials that make up our living and envisioning world. According to this, the reader-viewer should concentrate on the sensuous enchantment and affective exchange with the quotidian reality in Cummings' art, which celebrates the vibrancy and complexity of everyday life and embraces mobility and superfluidity growing in all things.³³

In his own words, Cummings resurrects the subjective animation of seeing and feeling the objects of still life as a crucial part of the true art, demonstrative of a vitalistic sense of "spiritual values [...] which make life living for sensitive people" (*AM* 213). Also read from his autobiographical novel, *The Enormous Room*, the writer explains these "spiritual values" of the material thing in detail:

There are certain things in which one is unable to believe for the simple reason that he never ceases to feel them. Things of this sort – things which are always inside of us and in fact are us and which consequently will not be pushed off or away where we can begin thinking about them – are no longer things; they, and the us which they are, equals A Verb; an IS. (Cummings, *ER* 168)

Cummings' kinetic philosophy of becoming/being encapsulated in this equation of "A Verb; an IS" not only applies to human beings but also nonhuman objects, which means, either the abstract or concrete thing could be metamorphosed into a formative state of our feeling and thinking about it. It is deeply ingrained in us through certain experiences and sensations that cannot be separated and even becomes a nostalgic part of our self-growth, discovery, and transformation. This unifying ontology of a subject-object whole then transmutes the still life and its fixed objectivity into a constantly evolving process of seeing and re-imagining. As such, Cummings' modernist vitalism rejects the mechanistic or rationalist view of nature that deems living organisms as bare machines, and encompasses the nature of life-force driven by the inner power of material and bodily sensibility.³⁴

³² Additionally, Bill Brown raises up the turn of thing in his theory of new materialism, which discusses a formative and transformative relationship between object matters and human subjects. See his *Other Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019) and *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

³³ Bennett emphasises the access to enchanted materialism through three deliberate strategies: one is to "give greater expression to the sense of play, another to hone sensory receptivity to the marvelous specificity of things," also with one to "enhance the enchantment effect is to resist the story of the disenchantment of modernity" (4). See her *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

³⁴ Vitalism equips modernist literature and art with an alternative paradigm of reconceptualising nature, emotion, instinct, spontaneity, and motion as a more intuitive understanding of the physical world, free from the constraints of scientific thinking.

To discharge the essence of liveliness from immobile stillness, Cummings makes a metaphorical statement in the poem about “silence” in *95 Poems* (1958):

silence

.is
a
looking

bird:the

turn
ing;edge,of
life

(inquiry before snow (Cumming, *CP* 712)

In a sense of metamorphosis, Cummings transfigures the abstract notion of “silence” (the speechlessness of still lifes) into a phenomenological action of “looking,” which is epitomised by a “bird” soaring and stretching its wings beyond the “turn / ing;edge,of / life.” His use of metaphor in “silence” serves to re-animate the stillness of quotidian objects by converting the abstract physicality which is mute and unvoiced into a kinaesthetic experience. By making this comparison, the poet-painter imbues the nature of still life with movement, agency, and liveliness. In a symmetrical pattern of 1-3-1-3-1, the simplified form, broken line, split word and enjambment deconstruct the conventional structure of arranging parts into a whole and reorient the audience to entangle with the mundane in a radically new way. Based on this eclectic integration of stillness and animation, Cummings offers us an alternative paradigm to confront the quotidian matter of life by unsettling the habitual point of view and actively responding to the immaterial “inquir[ies]” inside.

His intermedial vision invests the frozen transience of approaching the ephemeral thing with an animate agency of human “lower-case i/eye” (Webster, “small eye poet” 106) to probe into their subtle and complex temporospatial implications beyond the pre-existed pictorial or poetic frame. In place of the problematic niche of stolidness and immutability, his visceral poetics aims to ignite the light of “material vibrancy” (Bennett xiii) by directly or indirectly exhibiting the vital nature of nonhuman subjects which is also shifting, transfiguring, and self-becoming from time to time. Its formal vitality highlights the lively and dynamic qualities of matter and objective entities, as opposed to the stereotypical notions of material objectivity and immutability. Again, the poet-painter chooses the middle to transcend binary pairs and their hierarchical ideologies in the past – namely, the movable and the stable, the temporal and the spatial, as well as the verbal

and the visual – by finding “ways in which the opposites complement one another” (Webster, “E. Cummings” 502). As a vital and mutating entity, Cummings’ still lifes sustain his constant interest in audacious forms of the represented and revolutionary attentions to deconstruct and re-interpret itself as an expressive agent, thereby reinforcing the web of active connections transcendentally in between.

Upon arriving in France in May 1917, Cummings spent an inspiring month with William Slater Brown (addressed in letters as “W. S. B.”) around the area of Montmartre, Paris. They acquired many Fauvist and Cubist photogravures and prints of Henri Matisse’s and Paul Cézanne’s artworks, particularly in the famed Père Tanguy Bijoux. In his Harvard years, the young artist travelled to Boston with his friend S. Foster Damon and visited the continental avant-garde exhibition of the 1913 Amory Show, among which there were fourteen paintings by Matisse and eight pieces by Cézanne (Cheever 34-35; Kennedy 78). J. Alison Rosenblitt, in her latest biography of Cummings, points out that his encounter in Paris – though not in person during their lives – with “Cézanne was transformative,” both of whom were obsessed with the pictorial “achievement of three-dimensionality” and “roundness” (*BL* 109) exposed through a series of personally invented techniques.³⁵ Cummings’ admiration for Cézanne played a significant role in shaping his own artistic and literary style as a kind of “Parisian aesthetics” (Fallon 48) among all avant-garde art movements of the early twentieth century.³⁶ His critical commentaries contain extensive references to Cézanne as the Post-Impressionist heir of “Manet and Monet” (Cummings, *AM* 3), particularly with his emphasis on form and structure, in “The New Art,” “The Adult, the Artist and the Circus,” “Why I Like America,” and so forth. In discussing the agitated contemporaneity of Gaston Lachaise’s sculptures in an essay “Gaston Lachaise,” Cummings associates the sculptor’s loathing of insincerity with Cézanne’s “famous hate of contemporary facility and superficiality,” which, provocative as its most showy signature, drives him into “a recreation of nature which was at once new and fundamental” (14). Differing from Constantin Brancusi’s or Ezra Pound’s economic form through eliminations of the unessential, what Cézanne and Lachaise sought for is an autonomous, vital form that “completely expresses itself, form that perfectly tactilises the beholder, as in the case of an electric machine which, being grasped, will not let the hand let go” (14). The self-sufficiency of their modernist experiments presents the art and/or object itself fully and intimately as a tactile experience for the beholder.

³⁵ In our email correspondence, Gillian Huang-Tiller confirms that “Reading Milton Cohen’s book *Poet and Painter* and learning that the major visual art influence on Cummings was Cézanne (Kennedy 115; Cohen 43).” For her discussion on Cummings and Cézanne, see Huang-Tiller, “‘Baby-Talk’ or Artistic Precision” 88-90.

³⁶ Apart from Cummings, Cézanne’s artistic practices and aesthetics of still life has influenced a few modernist writers, such as Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, Wallace Stevens, Katherine Mansfield, and so on. See Benedict Leca, ed., *The World is an Apple: The Still Lifes of Paul Cézanne* (London: Giles, 2014).

Cummings' intermedial artworks, with its unconventional syntax and layout on the page or canvas, embodies this aesthetic tenet to solicit the reader-viewer to interact with the form, style, and materiality of object matter in a visceral way. Cézanne's still life famous for its "gripping gigantic / muscles" (*CP* 69), in Cummings words, not only navigate us to "taste or smell or hear or see or otherwise to touch it" but also "to mis- or disbelieve and to dis- or misunderstand 'Nature'":

But painting had its Cézanne, whose incredulous and otherwise energetic intelligence resented the doctrine that walking in the wake of some one who is smoking a cigar is vastly superior to smoking the cigar yourself, and by whom the academies, and their important fattish remarks about facts by means of colours, were significantly undermined with minute sculptural shocks of chromatic truth. [...] and he disbelieved and misunderstood it at the age of faith and hope so violently and so carefully as to present us with a significant conjugation of the verb which is just as inherently intense as, from the plastic standpoint, declensions and nouns are inherently flabby. Precisely in this sense Cézanne became truly naïf – not by superficially contemplating and admiring the art of primitive peoples, but by carefully misbelieving and violently misunderstanding a secondhand world. (*AM* 19)

Cézanne ingeniously copes with the colour and shape of given objects to evoke the "minute sculptural shocks of chromatic [and material] truth" with his "energetic intelligence." To achieve so, he shifts our perspectives and prolongs our observations from a revolutionarily new and "truly naïf" viewpoint to question the realist use of "colours" on "facts." The "minute sculptural shocks of chromatic truth," referring to his methodical approach to painting, combines a meticulous attention to small, nuance details with a deep understanding of colour and light. This unique method experiments with contrastive hues and layered strokes to create a three-dimensional space on the canvas, whose sense of solidity comes from depth, volume, and texture of the depicted object. Cummings deems Cézanne as a pioneer who undermined the academicist traditions of art by employing avant-garde techniques to produce a new model of perceiving nature. Instead of a naturalist or perspectival lens to seeing and depicting things, he chooses to "carefully" misbelieve and "violently" misunderstand the "secondhand" world in the Platonic sense, by destroying and recreating a malleable "Nature" that defies the bodily rigidity and spiritual inactivity of human being. As "declensions and nouns are inherently flabby" that lack the vitality of referring to a lived experience, Cummings' "verb" and its "significant conjugation" unveil the potentiality in both still-life painting and poetry to vitalise the matter of life and the access to reality from a "plastic," processive, and animate standpoint.

One of Cummings' notes says, "art is The Verb Cold – [translated] – The Bulge" (qtd. in Rosenblitt, *BL* 109), which means, art can translate vitality into a bulge by freezing the verb. We could find his credo of intermedial prosody to re-enact the sort of energetic intuition and intelligence as a productive unity: as Rosenblitt summarises, "Vitality, aliveness, movement, and

chaos are all comprised in the verb” (BL 109). The capital, underlined form of “Verb” equips the ephemerality of still life with a vibrating dynamic and condenses it into a perceivable “Bulge” eager to be seen and known around. Its round presentation enables the audience to simultaneously see, feel, and imagine what is visible/shown/forefront and what is invisible/hidden/behind. Cézanne’s formal and representative exposure to roundness or fullness achieves the actual bulge of object by transgressing the flatness and superficiality of the visual planes. From a linguistic perspective, the “Verb” tends to be inherently dynamic, as it describes a group of actions and processes that are constantly in motion. At this point, the poet tries to inject a vitalistic sense of energy into his poetic language, in the same way that the painter accentuates the conjugated verbality or verbal dynamics through his misbeliefs and misunderstanding of a reconstructed “secondhand” world. In another note, he re-stresses the therapeutic function of “ART TO RESTORE THIS WHOLENESS *INTEGRALITY*” of “eye-things(subject)me(verb,reflexive).”³⁷ Cummings and Cézanne, both consider the estrangement of form and attention to it as disenchantment or re-enactment of one’s being and experiencing – in the case of what Michael Webster calls “magic iconism” (Webster, “Magic Iconism” 113). The iconic magic, or visionary experimentalism of eye/i-ness, transfigures our perception and aesthetic presupposition so that we can perceive the “Natural” world in a fresh and different way.³⁸ They share a common desire to overturn mono-dimensional modes of seeing and experiencing the perceptible world, and to reconfigure new artforms that lead to a more dynamic and vital comprehension of realities.

In his vitalisation of moving stillness with a precarious vigour, Wassily Kandinsky once praised Cézanne as the one who “raised still life to such a point that it ceased to be inanimate” (Kandinsky 17). Similarly, Roger Fry also points out Cézanne’s re-arrangement of apples or other quotidian things presented on the canvas as the key to his vibrational aesthetics: “In spite of the austerity of the forms, all is vibration and movement” (Fry 51). His formal encounter with the object matter reconciles and negotiates the polarity between stillness and movement, inducing an uncanny response to still life that renews our sensual, attentive, and contemplative experience as a continuum. For example, Cézanne’s *Still Life with Apples* (fig. 5-8) presents us a *tableau vivant* of domestic objects, a living picture of a green vase, a blue ginger pot, a black rum bottle, a floral-patterned jar of sugar or tea, and a white plate filled with apples. Its peculiar uses of lines and shapes, colours and shadows reveal a fleeting moment of the crowded table, juxtaposing the oblique layout of the food containers above the dark arabesque cloth overlapped by the pure light-

³⁷ E. E. Cummings, “Notes,” MS Am 1823.7 (111), E. E. Cummings Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

³⁸ On how Cummings transfuse exteriority into interiority in an “osmotic” view of boundaries, see Etienne Terblanche, “The Osmotic Mandala: On the Nature of Boundaries in E. E. Cummings’ Poetry,” *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 10 (2001) 9-22.

coloured one with sinuous curves of the straw straps dancing in the air. His modulation of formal elements stimulates our imagination and interpretation of pictorial uncanniness or the “hallucinatory indeterminacy of scale and bodily address” (C. Armstrong 48) of these everyday matters at a figurative level. Typical of Cézanne, this work of *Apples*, combining physical movement with spiritual unstableness, hugely disrupts the pre-existed order and harmony of still lifes. It reflects a longing to capture the vibrancy and unpredictability of the nature that can be fully apprehended through an entanglement between the human subject and nonhuman object.



Fig. 5-8 Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Apples* (1893-94). Oil on canvas, 65.4 by 81.6 cm. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA.

The geometric and chromatic performance of shakiness and instability becomes the provoking “Bulge” of this still-life in oil, which invites us to join in the arrangement of the tabletop and resonate with the vibrational landscape of brushstrokes, hues, and textures cannily merging with each other. They become materialist metaphors and figurative descriptions (Alsdorf 322) for Cummings’ modernist experiments with a pictorial manifestation. When getting his first sight of the real *Still Life* of Cézanne, T. J. Clark notes down in his journal this problematic of disquiet or “inquiétude” – Pablo Picasso’s word for what he admires most in Cézanne’s paintings (qtd. in Clark 75). The pictorial array here is “disturbed and unstable” yet “composed and crystalline at the same time,” and both “the orderliness and the disturbance can strike us as features of seeing *and* features of manufacture – inventions, impositions, flashes of grim wit” (75). His “inquiétude” connotes an unsettling sense of motion and dynamic tension, resisting what is stagnant in real or psychic presentation of the mundane. As a challenge to representational art, Cézanne’s use of distorted lines, unstable compositions, and bold colour combinations relinquishes the authority of

orderliness that previously dominated the form and sense of beauty. Based on Bridget Alsdorf's concept of "Cézanne's still-life-as-landscape" (315), the conflict between his designed surface and fluent subject poses a transgressive gesture to shape, encode, and reconfigure the built-up landscape as a theatrical scenery filled with objects.



Fig. 5-9 E. E. Cummings, *Still Life with Pumpkins* (n.d.). Oil on canvasboard, 40.6 by 30.5 cm. Ken Lopez, Hadley, MA.

Similarly, Cummings' still life paintings, taking *Still Life with Pumpkins* (fig. 5-9) in oil for instance, also estrange the presentative harmony of the horizontal balance of objects and their setting: two pumpkins and a rotten melon seem to roll off the table, and the shadowy fabric further complicates their strange motion and placement. It reinforces the intriguing unsteadiness of the canvas with ambiguous colours and brushes in a Fauvist undertone so that the spectator is asked to see the still matter around – from different angles, sides, and instinctive patterns. To a certain extent, the "seeing around" aesthetics of Cummings resonates with D. H. Lawrence's comments on Cézanne's "appleyness": "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 of the front [...] But intuition needs all-roundedness, and instinct needs insideness" (340).³⁹ He draws our attention to Cézanne's apples in a both perceivable and imaginable sense by reinforcing a revolutionary model of recognising the vital presence of his object within its "form

³⁹ Also, Lawrence in another essay "Art and Morality" analyses the interplay of instability, movement, and vibration or vitality in Cézanne's still lifes: "Let Cézanne's apples go rolling off the table for ever. They live by their own laws, in their own ambiente" (168). See D. H. Lawrence, "Art and Morality," in *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays*, edited by Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 161-68.

and substance and *thereness*” (322). Cézanne’s still life is regarded to show a “painting’s ability to crop, compress, and abstract a slice of interior space, de-contextualising domestic objects from their practical uses” (Alsdorf 214). On the contrary, here lies one of Cummings’ differences from Cézanne: compared with the oil works of the latter, the poet-painter reinforces a close and inseparable relation between the depicted thing and its background, or more accurately, its living environment that adds an expressive voice to the unutterable thingness. Both are interwoven together to create a narrative rendition of the nonhuman. The storytelling of their proximity thus heightens the dramatic tension between vegetables under the candlelight and an armchair in the living room, as a “linkage” between the sign and the external world (Terblanche, “Iconicity and Naming” 190) – symptomatic of that between the “planets on tables” and the “turning world.”

Either verbally or visually, the vital presence of Cummings’ still life interrogates and retrieves the uneasy elision between the still and the mobile – the object seemingly attached to the table and the interpretative or suggestive meanings signified to the off-screen narration. The poet-painter detaches his depicted thing from their literal or pictorial space and presses them into a self-referential awareness that is in a collage of intuitive, affective, and narrative responses to the unrepresented. Some of Cummings’ still lifes in a collaged and assemblage manner witness a conversion from impersonal, physical collection of objects into personal, subjective reservoir of senses and consciousnesses. As elucidated by Marjorie Perloff in “The Invention of Collage” in modernist artworks, the collage is a creative process of gathering and reorganising our daily matters in a negotiable manner: “Indeed, to collage elements from impersonal, external sources – the newspaper, magazines, television, billboards – is to understand, as it were, in a technological age, consciousness itself becomes a process graft or citation, a process by means of which we make the public world our own” (77).

One of his posthumously published poems in *Etcetera* (1983) edited by Richard S. Kennedy, “this cigarette is extremely long,” is a rare poem in which the speaker sits on one side of the dining table and obsessively describes this artificial, inorganic tobacco product in his hand. Cummings does not attempt to describe or illustrate the given object photographed through a naturalist or realistic lens, but rather he collages together a series of seemingly disparate images and ideas out of this single “cigarette.” It could be read or seen as an evocative still life, which suggests a chain of psychic or “spiritual intensity” (Gorringer 149), far beyond its earthly function as an inanimate commodity to be consumed. Moreover, this still life of cigarette also grapples with deeper existential questions about materials and memories, the touchable and the intangible, and corporeal contact and mental activity. Cummings starts from a clear, direct description of the item:

this cigarette is extremely long,
 i get them by the indigo box of 10.
 And then, you were sitting across from me:
 and my blood silkily telling i was, how wrong!
 (i thinking to have remembered how
 you were beautiful) this cigarette, when
 inhaled, produces a mystery
 like scented angels joking in a sharp soft row
 (i buy 10 of them in an indigo box.)
 Wrists. Elbows, Shoulders. Fingers.
 the minute amorous stirs
 of flesh invisibly visible (this
 cigarette, exhaled in musical shocks
 of kiss-coloured silence) by Christ kiss me. One kiss (Cummings, *CP* 955)

Written as one from “Reflections” in 1918, this sonnet, in a loose rhyme scheme and free-verse structure, contextualises the fixed depiction of an “extremely long” cigarette bought from the “indigo box of 10” into an illusionary collection of one’s mysterious, sensual pleasure with someone he admired before. The irregular use of enjambments and spaces borders the entire poetic layout with unexpected break-ups and uneven breaths in a viscid dream of desire and sensuality.⁴⁰ Iconically, the parentheses here functions not only as the “lens of an eye” (Terblanche, *Poetry and Ecology* 184) but also the organic membrane of one’s heart or mind to produce mental images of the portrayed thing. Beyond its superficial features, the “cigarette, when / inhaled,” receives a prolonged attention to the smoker’s physical and emotional sensations during the old days he spent with his beloved: imagining that she was sitting in front of “me,” the smoking “i” recollects their lost memories that “how / you were beautiful” and fantasises the sexual desire and longingness amplified by the “amorous stirs / of flesh invisibly visible.” Repeating the “indigo box” emphasises the speaker’s fascination with this pack of cigarettes and its association with the sense of intimacy he yearns for. In a formally collaged manner sticking different fragments from present and past tenses, physical and psychological spheres, its material and descriptive language of cigarettes enacts a way of reminiscing and re-imagining from parts to a sense of wholeness. At the moment, the multisensory experience of smoking is synaesthetically transferred to a bodily haptic stimulation from “Wrists,” “Elbows,” “Shoulders,” to “Fingers.” Its corporeal touch of “flesh” further implies an associative perceptiveness between the perceptual and the imaginary, present and past, the “musical” and the “coloured,” and still-life object and human subject within a hallucinatory exchange.

Also, Cummings’ poetic still life evokes a web of associations in the natural, intuitive experience with, exploring both the inside and the outside and interweaving the denoted “language”

⁴⁰ On a comparative study of Cummings’, Williams’, and Giovanni’s usage of enjambment, see Lee Clark Mitchell, “Enjambment: Cummings, Williams, Giovanni” 97-120.

with its connotative “surroundings” (Terblanche, “Iconicity and Naming” 189) to enter a rejuvenated state of being. He directs us to the affordance of an object or an environment which embraces a swarm of possibilities to perform actions and articulate expressions through a collection of stimuli. More than a Cubist juxtaposition of lexicons and typographic spacings, his still-life poetry stages the vibrating materiality and enacts a movement of the chosen object in a textual theatre on paper, compressed and intensified in a novel aesthetic form and spatial design:⁴¹

insu nli gh t

o
verand
o
vering

A

onc
eup
ona
tim

e ne wsp aper (Cummings, *CP* 796)

It is not Cummings’ “collage-poems” but a transcendental collage-format of his poetic work that present the reader-viewer with an “extremely fragmented visual-verbal surface that must be ‘played’ and partially reconstructed in order to be ‘read’” (Webster, “Floating” 52) and viewed from multiple angles and perspectives. The radical design of (re-)presenting a still life prioritises the perceptual and visceral experience with the object matter to recreate the very moment when this Cummingsesque “actual, alive world appears” (63). In a scene on the veranda or balcony, the ephemerality of a concrete “ne wsp aper” is dissolved by the visual spatialisation of our lively experiences of reading, seeing, and knowing at that very moment: it illustrates the turning attention (alphabetically symbolised by the various initials “o”) through the unprinted columns of different types, the shining “su nli gh t” across the invisible window (framed by the black letters and incomplete words), as well as the triviality and immediacy of everyday news unmemorable with the passage of time (embodied by the porous blocks of empty spaces). In the “a-syntactic nature of collage” (Webster, “Floating” 62), Cummings’ pictorial structure compels his reader-viewer to delve into a reconstructive wholeness of the still life and its actual surroundings – occupied with a series of denotive and allusive information that needs one’s cognitive processing. The dynamic act

⁴¹ From a semantic perspective, Martin Heusser critically investigates the interplay between Cummings’ ostentation of visual/spatial form-making and the vicissitudes of poetic-linguistic meaning-making (“Semantics of Structure: 159).

of “o / verand / o / vering” of pages and consciousnesses is characteristic of his gestural quality of language that emphatically alludes to the kinetic, moving actuality. The poet-painter brings the trivial, faded subject of daily newspaper back to life by transforming the dated stories of “onc / eup / ona / tim // e” into a nostalgic moment of memory, contemplation, and particular inwardness, evoking what Cummings cherishes as “now-and-here.”⁴²

His experiential narrative of “now-and-here” – echoing with Lawrence’s “*thereness*” – as a state of mind, which heightens an absorbing concentration on the quotidian life fully and without distraction, can be found from one of his floral poems in *95 Poems* (1958). Structurally, it appears to give us a collage form of various flowers in full blossom:

in time of daffodils(who know
the goal of living is to grow)
forgetting why,remember how

in time of lilacs who proclaim
the aim of waking is to dream,
remember so(forgetting seem)

in time of roses(who amaze
our now and here with paradise)
forgetting if,remember yes (Cummings, *CP* 688)

In a still-life depiction of daffodils, lilacs, and roses, Cummings shows us a curious disorientation, diverging the attention from botanic surfaces to the inner vibration of their natural growth and blossoming. The “goal of living” is “to grow” and the “aim of waking” is “to dream, with a selected focus on the competence of actual perception (“remember how,” “so” and “yes”) rather than logical reasoning (“forgetting why,” “seem” or “of”). In a mundane motif and iterative structure of three-line stanzas, it didactically teaches us to keep catching sight of the uncertain world and “seek” for the first-hand knowledge “in time of all sweet things beyond / whatever mind may comprehend” (688). What truly matters is “our now and here with paradise,” a transcendental (un-)reality beyond the limits of time and space. For the poet-painter, to encounter these immobile baskets of flowers is not purely to appreciate their formalistic beauty and liveliness, but more deeply in a visceral reception, to sympathise and reverberate with the living sounds and noises of the naturally inward as a precarious yet productive energy of matter.

In a similar fashion, Cummings’ *Floral Still Life* (fig. 5-10) displays a bunch of hydrangeas in a glass mug, against an open-up backdrop of a half-folded curtain through which you can see

⁴² On Cummings’ coinage of “nowhere” or “now-and-here,” see Michael Webster, “E. E. Cummings: The New Nature Poetry and the Old,” *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 9 (2000) 109-24.

the opposite building. The painterly camera of observation is zoomed out to make the still object in conjunction with the sensual and emotional references to the exterior. The imbalanced colours and rapid brushstrokes in a flat presentation reveals the floral still life as a “foyer” between vital materiality and its transformative mediation in the simultaneously inside and outside dynamism. This mobilisation of stillness, moreover, develops a visceral point of view as a response to the genre of still life from “the ‘excess’ of sensuous pleasure to a sense of disquiet and recoil” (Tobin 8). It appears in another vase poem published in *The Dial* during 1919-1920: in both ekphrastic and creative ways of depicting and imagining the pattern of this vase, Cummings transforms the silent presence that “This is the vase” into a symbolically dynamic space where “Here // is the crisp and the only and the very sudden garden in / which the littles princes strut,taller than / flowers” and “Here are a million alwaysmoving ladies” (CP 968). Instead of being inanimate/*morte* and fixed at an ossified gesture, they are “tenderly smiling and smiling forever” and “always moving,and moving slenderly” (968). Building on an illusion of movement and bodily vibrancy, the still-life vase is transfigured into “a billion / warriors with furious and supple / faces like white nouns” and “With / bodies like smiling and gigantic verbs” (968). The rhythmic motion of coloured nouns and materialised verbs signifies a suggestive nature of object and its subjectivity to articulate, express, and conceive.

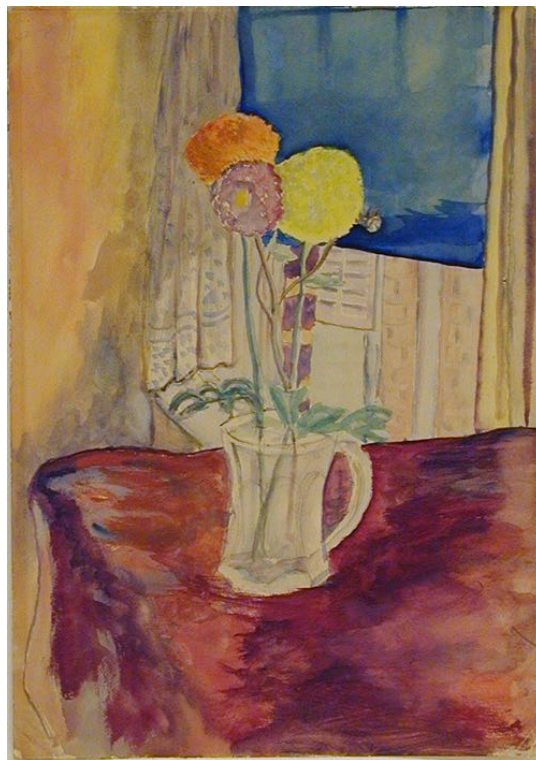


Fig. 5-10 E. E. Cummings, *Floral Still Life* (1958). Watercolour on paper, 35.6 by 25.4 cm. Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, Rochester.

Additionally, as the poem continues:

If we turn the
vase, slowly the little and
keen princess will come slender
-ly out of a million ladies. The
bright and erect princes suddenly will strut
in the garden. the soldiers
who are supple and who
are furious will become,
not only and crisply,
Gigantic and Smiling.
They will step from the
vase:
tearless,
together.
taller than Tomorrow (Cummings, *CP* 968)

Different from John Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Cummings' turning vase is vitalised by the material, gestural, and imaginal energies of intermedial prosody to dissolve the temporality and mortality of art and life. His modernist re-presentation of still life reconciles the conflicting tension between "permanence and transcendence in language by interweaving the immediacy and ephemerality of the utterance with the permanent materiality of the artefact" (Bradford, "Brotherhood of Visual Poetics" 18). The timeless, permanent beauty is no longer inscribed in the decorative surface of either the historical urn or the modern vase but the boundless power of imagination and contemplation, which unchains the stable figures (from "little and / keen princess," "a million ladies," "bright and erect princes," to "soldiers") frozen in time and celebrates their vivacious actions of "tenderly smiling" and "moving slenderly." As the speaker says that "If we turn the / vase" by our mobilising attention and meditation, a "million" multiplicities will come out of "the little and / keen" oneness, consonant with the patterned movement and theatricality of the princess, ladies, princes, soldiers, and "bright and erect" princes unfurling in the garden. Arranging and re-ordering different objects as patterned on the surface of this vase becomes an inventive act of art-making or forming, through which line or lineation operates in a "dual role as a measure of speech and a more tactile agency of creation, the thing on the page that unfolds left-to-right as the [observation and] imagination and the hand of the poet cooperate" (Bradford, "Brotherhood" 24). The attributes of being "Gigantic and Smiling" enfranchise the Cummingsesque language from a literalist, intellectual understanding to conquer the world to a palpable intimacy or closeness to things that surround us.

As a cognitive "step" from the vase, these wordplays and formal innovations in rhymes, line-breaks, and spacings across the stanza unsettles the obsolete poetic structure and opens up an

internally dynamic space for us to perceive and reconfigure the textual still life and its compositional movement. Hence, based on Cummings' vital materialisation of word and image, the visual fertility and ambivalence of the verbal vitality ascribed to the quotidian object enables us to propose a revisionary genre of still life: it does not deal with the generic stasis or motionlessness but rather "its malleability and its compatibility with narrative" (Lewis, "Still Life in Motion" 426) concurrently inwards and outwards. As claimed in Richard Bradford's *Graphic Poetics: Poetry as Visual Art* (2011), Cummings' still lifes, again, foregrounds the "graphic materiality of language not merely as an iconoclastic gesture, but to show how silent visual language can signify independently of its acoustic-counterpart, and crucially he does not allow the device to obscure the living, though often silent, presence of the poet[-painter]" (137).

Scenography in Landscaping

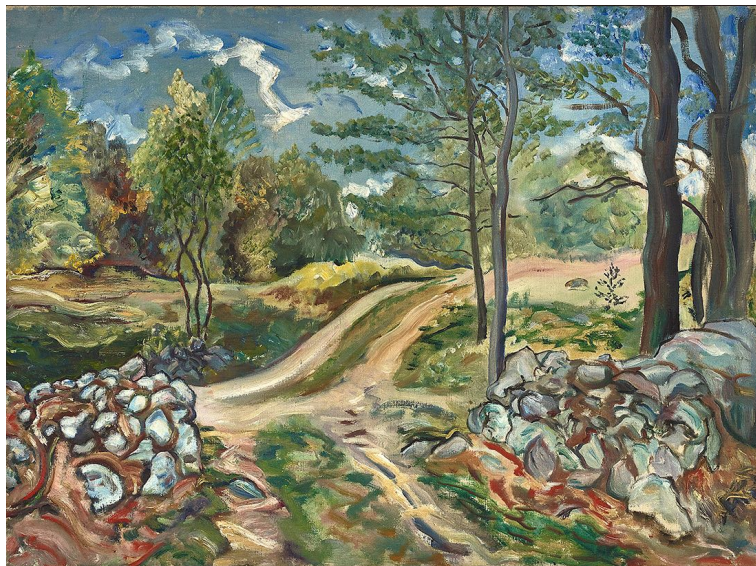


Fig. 5-11 E. E. Cummings, *Mountain Road* (1947). Oil on canvas, 78.7 cm by 104.1 cm. Private collection.

E. E. Cummings spent the majority of his summers at Joy Farm, a family farmstead nestled among the White Mountains in New Hampshire, both during his childhood and later in life. The captivating vistas of Silver Lake, Mount Chocorua, the shoreline, pine forests, hayfields, and woodlands became the primary subjects of his artistic endeavours (fig. 5-11). These landscapes serve as inspirations for the poet-painter's intermedial creations, crossing various genres and artforms. With each passing summer, Cummings not only engaged with the physicality of the wilderness but also cherished the retrospective beauty of "company, and of solitude, and of the

gorgeousness of the un-Forbidden Forests of Norton’s Wood and Joy Farm” (Rosenblitt, *BL* 14).⁴³ He undertook a series of elemental studies, capturing the perceptual essence of the surroundings in spontaneous on-the-spot sketches. At other times, he meticulously designed his layouts on the page, experimenting with every brushstroke, letter, and the spatial arrangement of typographic lines and chromatic shapes. He paid close attention to what he refers to as the “chaos” (qtd. in Rosenblitt, *BL* 10), a concept represented by the severe imposition and displacement of formal order within nature. Intermedially, Cummings’ “textual” and pictorial “identification heightens the [reader-viewer’s] sensitivity” and imaginativeness to the “life-forms in the natural world” (Moe, “Poetry” 147); through his refashioning of artforms, the poet-painter encourages audiences to connect with and appreciate the vibrant natural forms with a modernist ecological vision.

In his poetic depiction of *alfresco* or outdoor scenery, Cummings employs many recognisable painterly techniques to traverse the linear monotony of the textual stage, showcasing a visual performance of language. One such example can be found in his *50 Poems* (1940), where he presents us with a verbal collage of natural landscapes from an expansive, panoramic perspective:

in sunset

or thrushes toward dusk among whippoorwills or
tree field rock hollyhock forest brook chickadee
mountain. Mountain)
whycoloured worlds of because do

not stand against yes which is built by
forever & sunsmell
(sometimes a wonder
of wild roses (Cumming, *CP* 512)

Cummings’ fragmented phrases and disrupted syntax here create an intensive collage effect, reminiscent of cinematic images incessantly projected onto our retinas. These topographical objects, such as “tree field rock hollyhock forest brook chickadee,” are not “passively set in a painterly scene” (Olsen, “I-Space” 114), but rather active agents that reshape natural forms as an alternative representation of space to the beholder. Through the manipulation of his poetic language, Cummings’ scenic particularities provides a tactile, physical structure for perceiving and understanding the visible world. He navigates the audiences’ eyes by evoking vivid images and sensations through moments and places, from the nearby to the distant, from flora to fauna, and from the static to the energetic. His sentimental and synaesthetic imagination of the “sunsmell”

⁴³ On Cummings’ summer life around Joy Farm, see Rosenblitt, “Cambridge 1894-1911,” in *BL* 7-30.

imbues the “worlds” with a pluralistic spirit by means of an impressionistic depiction and nostalgic evocation of rural life. This is encapsulated in the “wonder / of wild roses” with a northern wind blowing “over / the barn” (Cummings, *CP* 512). Moreover, in another poem, this collage of vantage points allows the reader-viewer to “open your heart” (586) and identify with different times and histories – in the past or the future as an evolutionary process. Cummings’ landscape becomes a “treasure of tiniest world,” where there is the coexistence of “mountains / rivery forests / towerful towns(queen // poet king float / sprout heroes of moonstar / flutter to and / swim blossoms of person)” (586). Its dexterous adoption of neologism and ungrammatical syntax disassembles stagnant scenes in nature, culture, or the human psyche, charging them with transgressive and generative impetus.



Fig. 5-12 E. E. Cummings, *Unspecified* (n.d.). Crayon on paper. Box 2, MS Am 1892.14 (3), E. E. Cummings Drawings, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

The subtleties of sensory and emotional experiences in front of the vast expanses of “mountain. Mountain)” – as a recurrent theme in his *oeuvre* – are further unveiled through a closer examination of several landscapes from the *Mt. Chocorua* series at Houghton Library. It is evident that Cummings planned to capture the ephemeral and fleeting effects of climatic conditions and sunlight on his landscapes from different viewpoints and at different times of a day. His artistic techniques and materials, to represent the changing character of natural and meteorological phenomena, vary significantly. These include employing spontaneous brushworks in ink (a fluid action focusing on the intuitive responsiveness of feeling), or making Fauvistically expressive hues in watercolours (a bold one on the affective intensity of the subject matter), and

even creating unfinished, pure sketches of the atmospheric state.⁴⁴ Consider, for instance, in his untitled sketch of Mount Chocorua in crayon (fig. 5-12), where Cummings incorporates a group of crosshatchings by adopting a textured and layered approach to destructing and recreating the depth and complexity of the rolling mountains. Rather than simply mimicking the physical features of mountainous landscape, he injects subtle variations in light/shadow and hold/motion, which render the depicted an ever-evolving and shifting flux under the spectator's gaze. The use of swift, coarse strokes creates a vital texture and evocative representation of the mountscape, with a multitude of crayoned lines differing in their thickness and length. They build up a dynamic connection between the individual's mood and the ambiance of the captured natural scene.

Cummings' intermedial prosody of word and image consistently bespeaks an immediate, lively voice to the sensual and psychological reconstruction of the perceived object as a mode of self-experiencing and self-imagining. As clarified in Etienne Terblanche's *E. E. Cummings: Poetry and Ecology* (2012), the poet-painter's landscape is an ecological representation of our "mindscape," active places referred to as "eco-logos" or "poetic ecology" (197+12) where our immaterial engagement with the earthly world takes places. This correlation ties environmental space and existence to human thought and experience, portraying nature as an ongoing process of living. In Cummings' literary expressions when describing a snowy day, he explores the interplay between our physical and mental perception, using the phrase "eyes eyes" (*CP* 715) to symbolise the dual nature of spectatorship and imagination. It is through this duality that we witness and envision the "one with won // der" arising between "earth and sky" to merge the inert ("silence") and the active ("falling"), creating a cognitive unity through a perpetual ("alw / ays") state of attentive observation ("looking") and speculative contemplation ("wonderings") about the natural world ("snowflakes") that envelops us (715). He again intertwines the constant visual inspection and discursive reflection on our living environment, emphasising the interaction between our sensory reactions and intellectual participations, which fosters a deep sense of ecological consciousness and appreciation for the intricate beauty of the earth.

At this stage, Cummings' landscape paintings and poems strive to transcend the boundaries between selfhood and naturalness, and discover the coexisting experience of "self-within-nature" in a way that radiates with their robust growth and dynamic mutuality from the inside outward.⁴⁵ In addition to his notebooks documenting farm animals and companion species,

⁴⁴ For the ink drawing, E. E. Cummings, *Untitled* (n.d.), box 1, MS Am 1892.14 (1), E. E. Cummings Drawings, Houghton Library, Harvard University; for the watercolour, see E. E. Cummings, *Landscape-Mt. Chocorua* (1938-47), box 1, MS Am 1892.18 (1), E. E. Cummings Additional Drawings, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

⁴⁵ My notion of "self-within-nature" conceptualises what Webster claims that "Cummings merges the visual and verbal eye and 'I' to depict the (e)mergence and realisation of a multiple self at one with the natural, actual world, whether ambient air, sun, the eye of a bird, or the self of a lover" ("small eye poet" 106).

which works as a zoological diary of taxonomy, his landscapes also features an elevated sense of aliveness, transcendence, and creative self-expression. Formalistically, they are characterised by an anthropomorphic dance of verbal-visual-sonic signs that animate the lines and spaces on the paper. Cummings’ “attentiveness toward animal” and nature captures the gestures, physicality, and “bodily movements of these creatures” (Moe, *Zoopoetics* 60), infusing the textual and pictorial world with a sense of liveliness through intermedial *poiesis* (making) or craftsmanship.⁴⁶ Not only nonhuman animals but also natural beings begin to move rhythmically to the seasonal music, particularly in the month of April when spring arrives:

– it’s april(yes,april;my darling)it’s spring!
 yes the pretty birds frolic as spry as can fly
 yes the little fish gambol as glad as can be
 (yes the mountains are dancing together) (Cummings, *CP* 665)

In his landscape poem, starting from the moment “when faces called flowers float out of the ground” (665), Cummings celebrates the advent of “spring” not as a fixed period of abundance and generosity on the calendar but as a sprightly ritual of growing and transformative renewal for all living things on earth. The poem follows a cyclical structure, repeating the same pattern of poetic lines, imageries, and punctuation marks in three stanzas. Like a hymn to nature, the mirrored symmetry signifies the organic interconnectedness between beasts and plants, existence and action, intrinsic movement and atmospheric vibrancy. It is scribed in a dialectical order, expressing the idea that “breathing is wishing and wishing is having” and “having is giving and giving is living” (665).⁴⁷ As the hymnody unfolds, the “pretty birds” and the “little fish” (665) engage in a dance of their own, while the heartfelt sky and the mindful sea become personified, collectively participating in the celebration of spring’s coming:

– it’s spring(all our night becomes day)o,it’s spring!
 all the pretty birds dive to the heart of the sky
 all the little fish climb through the mind of the sea
 (all the mountains are dancing;are dancing) (665)

This verse mobilises the sublime landform of the earth’s surface in a harmonious tone. Seen from imagery of birds soaring through the sky and fish traversing the depths of the sea to the mountains

⁴⁶ On Cummings’ writings of nature and animals, see David Turpin, *Electric Fur, Exhilarated Birds: Nature and Animals in E. E. Cummings and Mina Loy* (2016), PhD dissertation.

⁴⁷ The similar symmetric pattern reappears in another sky poem, where the first sentence of each stanza makes a claim in the same syntactic structure to reinforce the interrelation among the nature, the mind, and the present: “skies may be blue;yes,” “hearts may be true;yes,” and “nows may be new;yes” (Cummings, *CP* 1029).

dancing in waves, Cummings transfigures the scenic forms in stillness into a crowd of performing characters and thus illuminates the vibrant, reviving energies of the natural world.

Within the discussions of Cummings' typewriter language and experimental artistry, his landscape poetry and painting can be deemed as a scenography of word or image, a compositional re-presentation of textual and graphic elements both on and off the page. It becomes a theatrical scenery that copes with nonhuman subjects, shown by the intelligent and instinctive dance of nature. In his agitative essay "The Agony of the Artist (with a Capital A)" subtitled "Variations upon the Justly Celebrated Old Greek Theme: Know Yourself," the writer classifies three types of artists in America and distinguishes the true "Artist (with a capital A)" from the "ultrasuccessful [commercial] type and the academic type" (Cummings, *AM* 205).⁴⁸ The non-commercial, anti-fashionable poet-painter, according to Cummings, should first undergo training at an Art school to learn the proper skills of painting a landscape correctly based on the "eternal laws of value and perspective" (206); under the influence of influential figures like Mr. Z (who was a pupil of great artists Y, and Y of X, W, and V), the Artist improves artistic techniques "amazingly" so as to inherit a "subjective distance of five miles [with] two or three of my expert brushstrokes" (207) in the depiction of Mt. Monadnock; ultimately, they are encouraged to develop an idiosyncratically personal hook "instead of being driven to the wall by foreign competitors" (208) or local ancestors. Cummings' motto, "It is Art because it is *alive*" (208), reveals his belief that the art of making a landscape is not to replicate its physical appearance but to reproduce the inherent vitality and the performative qualities of the diverse life-forms that inhabit it, against the rigid, hierarchal understanding of the biological world. These ubiquitous forces inspire the poet-painter to intimately entangle with the landscape, both linguistically and pictorially, and to situate his feelings and emotional responses within the nature. Shown in Cummings' view of contemporaneity ("with *today*") and his typographic experimentalism (about unlearning), the "agony" of the authentic Artist as a radical self-expression, grows from his "own personal struggle to discover, to appreciate and finally to express himself" (208).

Cummings' landscapes are distinguished from the sublimity of topographical arts by their emphases on spatial forms, exploratory colours, agitated brushworks, and other technically intermedial effects. These painterly elements heighten the expressionist and creative intensity of the scenery, and encapsulates the key concept of experimental modernism into a fluid treatment and dramatic evocation of the ineffable atmosphere. In the catalogue of his solo exhibition at the American British Art Centre in March 1944, Cummings highlights the mysterious nature of art

⁴⁸ The essay was originally published in *Vanity Fair* (April 1927) 68+98.

and its close association with the “immeasurable” or infinite qualities of human beings and the natural world:

Art is a mystery.

A mystery is something immeasurable.

In so far as every child and woman and man may be immeasurable, art is the mystery of every man and woman and child. In so far as a human being is an artist, skies and mountains and oceans and thunderbolts and butterflies are immeasurable; and art is every mystery of nature. Nothing measurable can be alive; nothing which is not alive can be art; nothing which cannot be art is true: and everything untrue doesn't matter a very good God damn... (Cummings, *AM* 342-43)

The shared mystery of “every child and woman and man,” “nature,” and “Art” lies in its power of immeasurability. This inherently explorative and self-expressive agency of art-making conflates different spheres of humankind and their living ecology, the speakable and the silent, and activities and endurance, as a charged interaction between the subjective and objective realities. The landscape of “skies and mountains and oceans and thunderbolts and butterflies” should be seen, felt, and then made to be immeasurable and alive. Through his inventive artistries, the poet-painter delves into the elusive and indeterminate aspects of nature and human experiences. Cummings' landscapes, whether on the page or canvas, become performative sites or scenic spaces to tap into the “mystery” of corporeal and spiritual existence that are transcendently beyond any measurement or definition. They function as cross-medial modes of articulation for self-discovery, appreciation, and expression. Hence, in Cummings' scenographic design of printed and drawn marks, he develops a highly individual and peculiar style that conceives of the “self-within-nature” and makes it new and “*alive*” at the same time, deviating from traditional topographical art of picturing places, which hierarchises the ecological system between humans and the environment from an anthropocentric standpoint. Instead, the enchanted and transformative quality of his landscapes opens up possibilities for exploring the interconnectedness of all living beings and the immeasurable mysteries they originally hold.

In his genealogical study of landscape, *The Time of the Landscape: On the Origins of the Aesthetic Revolution* (2023), Jacques Rancière reconsiders the scenic aesthetics not as a “taste for a spectacle that delights the eyes or elevates the soul,” but as an “experience of a form of unity in sensible diversity capable of changing the configuration of modes of perception and objects of thought that had existed until then” (x). Instead of being an illustration to the real scenery, his perceptive and meditative dynamist understanding of landscape emphasises a developing integration of feeling and thought to bring diverse artforms and experiences together into an expressive whole.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Rancière's notion of “nature-as-artist” is fundamentally based on the formally porous borders between the way “nature plays with air, earth, and water, and the way the artist plays with light and shadow on a canvas” (*Time of the Landscape* 9).

For Rancière, nature “ceased to be a model that remains recognisable across the various forms in which it is imitated, and became a movement that runs through and animates the universe of the arts, a movement that comes from elsewhere and goes beyond that universe” (12). In this view, the art of landscape, alike the Cummingsesque idea of artistic aliveness, becomes a fluid, mobile presentation of nature, emblematising a rejuvenating movement rather than a fixed model for imitation among different mediums and artforms. It is a breathing source of sentimental and enlightened energies that can animate itself in the linguistic and graphic play of “light and shadow on the slopes and ridges of the landscape” (12). Rancière also reveals the compositional “movement” within the landscape, acting in both its physical and artistic meanings: “it starts with the play of natural elements, continues with the play of forms, and enlivens the mental powers so that they are in free play, as are also light and shadow when composing a setting of air, earth, and water” (9). Cummings’ landscape painting and poetry reflect this dynamic aesthetics, as they extend the interplay of art and nature in their ever-changing, immeasurable, and mysterious glory. His intermedial prosody of creating landscapes reinstates the transcendental interconnection of this representative regime, merging the verbal with the visual, the material with the immaterial, and seeing/reading with self-experiencing in an original way. W. J. T. Mitchell, in the preface to the second edition of *Landscape and Power* (or *Space, Place, and Landscape* as he wants to retitile it), similarly discusses landscape as “the first cognitive encounter with a place, and an apprehension of its spatial vector” (x) by means of its narrative, symbolic, and expressive features.⁵⁰ From my perspective, a picturesque tableau or landscape is not merely a space, or even as he adds, the view of a place, but an active aesthetic unfolding or reshaping of the sensible land and the mindset of viewing and imagining it.

Echoing with the vital materiality of still life, Bonnie Costello’s *Shifting Ground: Reinventing Landscape in Modern American Poetry* (2003) also examines the “vitality of landscape as a figurative and representational” (1) practice of configuring our apprehension of the natural world and our relation to it. She discloses how modernist poetic experimentation with new forms and tropes retells the story of “our material and imaginative entanglement with the earth, and our conflicting and evolving ideas of nature” (2). Twentieth-century artists, though some still adhered to natural romanticism or nomadism, began to move away from traditional static depictions of the earth and to renovate the landscape as a unity of mediated selves and surrounding others. Given that the scene is regarded as “a constructed world, a second nature” (3), the scenography of their formal designs serves as a reconstruction of one’s dwelling on this “shifting ground.” It aims to reassemble

⁵⁰ In the part of Introduction, Mitchell summarises two systematic approaches to the study of landscape: one is “contemplative” about its formal, iconographic, and historical analyses, while the other is “interpretative” to its semiotic, psychic, and ideological subtexts (*Landscape and Power* 1).

the materials and textures that orientate our perception, knowledge, and experience – open for an untrammelled wilderness.⁵¹ Of great significance, Costello proposes a view of landscape as a “verb-centred, not a noun-centred art – not an art of landscape but one of landscaping” (7), shifting the focus from the idea of a still landscape to the practice of landscaping itself. This fluidity and mobility inherent in landscape art spotlights the creative act of shaping, encoding, and reconfiguring nature as a whole from its fragmentary parts. Her argument aligns with Mitchell’s assertion in the opening line of his Introduction to change “ ‘landscape’ from a noun to a verb,” not as an object to be seen or read, but as a “process by which social and subjective identities are formed” (*Landscape and Power* 1). Both critics come to register a subjectively and conceptually proactive agency of landscaping, which does not seek to negate the self-sufficiency of nature but rather intends to negotiate a convergent, intervening relationship between human consciousness and the particularities of place.⁵² It becomes a resource that facilitates sliding observation and fecund imagination.

In his quest for presence and the immediacy of the “now-and-here,” Cummings’ reverently celebrates the “IS” or the essence of being through his ecstatic worship of the capital “Verb.” He presents the seeable world of trees, mountains, flowers, seas, and skies as a restlessly evolving sketch of being and becoming, existence and transformation, memorialised in the dynamic forces of settings, imagined scenes, and the structure of beholding.⁵³ Cummings demonstrates the etymology of the syllable “zoo” as deriving from “that most beautiful of all verbs” that signifies “I am alive” (*AM* 189). In doing so, he redefines its meaning as “not a collection of animals but *a number of ways of being alive*” (189).⁵⁴ His obsession with nonhuman animals and companion species dwells in their embodiment of “The Verb and creates openness” to ecological vitality (Moe, “Urban Ecology” 750), forging a profound connection between living organisms and their physical environment. Illustrated in the opening poem of *73 Poems* (1963), Cummings’ verbal sketch of farm animals is attuned to their bestial motions and vocalisations, transcribing what he sees and hears into a series of vital signs, wild rhymes, and a carnivalesque syntax:

bird sings birds sing
 gay-be-gay because today’s today)the
 romp cries i and the me purrs

⁵¹ Echoing with Rancière’s “nature-as-artist,” Costello points out the interartistic chiasm between Jackson Pollock and Charles Wright that “nature itself appears as an action painter, more involved in dynamic gestures of colour and shape than in stable patterns and infinite prospects” (*Shifting Grounds* 4-5).

⁵² Additionally, for about the critical discussions on the art of landscape, see John Berger, *Landscapes: John Berger on Art*, edited by Tom Overton (London: Verso, 2016); Anne Whiston Spirn, *The Language of Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Chris Fitter, *Poetry, Space, Landscape: Toward a New Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁵³ Cummings mentions this dynamist philosophy in *ER*: “they are, equals A Verb; an IS” (168).

⁵⁴ For the full article, see Cummings, “The Secret of the Zoo Exposed: Proving that Our Fear of Wild Animals is Done with the Aid of (Freudian) Mirrors,” *Vanity Fair* (March 1927) 66.

you and the gentle
who-horns says-does moo-woo
(the prance with the
three white its stimpstamps)

the grintgrunt wugglewigggle
champychumpchomps yes
the speckled strut begins to scretch and
scratch-scrutch

and scritch(while
the no-she-yes-he fluffies title
tattle did-he-does-she)& the

ree ray rye roh
rowster shouts

rawrOO (Cummings, *CP* 773)

The poet-painter sensitively portrays the vibrant atmosphere of farm life, where “the sun comes up-up-up in the opening // sky” (773). Cummings videos and tapes a great variety of sounds and actions of birds, horses, cows, pigs, hens, and roosters.⁵⁵ The enumerations of a plethora of creatures in one stanza animates the otherwise static tableaux and brings the narrative of an actual nature back to life. His repetition and alliteration in lines such as “stimpstamps) // grintgrunt wugglewigggle / champychumpchomps” creates a specific effect of cinematic liveliness, infusing the scene with playfulness and whimsy for the audience to identify with performers’ acts and voices in each scene. The rhythmic flow of reading and viewing is altered from line to line by Cummings’ acrobatics of spellings, punctuations, and line breaks. The poem’s orthographic distortion and replacement of alphabetic signs, especially in onomatopoeic words like “moo-woo,” “scretch and / scratch-scrutch // and scritch,” and the rooster’s cry of “ree ray rye roh,” further enhances our multisensory attachment to the personal experience of this spectacle. Cummings’ scenic tropes thus revitalise and breathe new life into the rural landscape, transforming it from a mere descriptive record into an immersive drama that reorganises the actions and configurations of “the all the / any merry every pretty each” (773).

By analogy to this, the concrete meaning of landscape for Cummings should be interpreted not as a physical assemblage of natural lives in a collective sense, but *a number of ways of being alive* and performative on the page and canvas. Previous research has examined his landscape poems

⁵⁵ On Cummings’ animal writings, see Florian Gargallo, “‘Unknown and Unknowable’: Animal Selves in the Bird Poems of E. E. Cummings,” *Philological Quarterly*, vol. 100, no. 2, 2021, pp. 209-30; Aaron M. Moe, “Autopoiesis and Cummings’ Cat,” *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2011) 110-20; also, his “‘What poem is this?’: E. E. Cummings’ Zoopoetics,” in *Zoopoetics* 59-88; Etienne Terblanche, “That ‘incredible unanimal/mankind’: Jacques Derrida, E. E. Cummings and a Grasshopper,” *Journal of Literature Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3-4 (2004) 218-47.

shapes, he demonstrates a keen understanding of the expansive and ethereal possibilities dyed in varying colours and shades. With careful attention to the expressive use of pigments, Cummings strategically distributes each subtle part, such as the orange hues of the afterglow, the mauve or purple veils of nightfall, and the delicately tinted pale blue steams. In a comparable manner, the poet-painter experiments with prismatic variations and nuances, translating the essence of the sketchpad onto the printed page as a colour study of chromatic words and painterly structures that exude their own vibrant qualities. Through the scenography of movable sets and illusionary environments, which mingle written languages, fluid layouts, and shifting spaces in between, Cummings captures the ever-changing and protean impulses of the firmament, represented by “the / sky”:

the
 sky
 was
 can dy lu
 minous
 edible
 spry
 pinks shy
 lemons
 greens coo l choc
 olate
 s.

 un der,
 a lo
 co
 mo
 tive s pout
 ing
 vi
 o
 lets (Cummings, *CP* 64)

This skyscape poem, designed in an abstract yet tangible form, exemplifies how the poet-painter deconstructs and restructures the visible, plastic materials of language and alphabetism in a creative fusion with the invisible, hermeneutic emptiness intermedially across each verbal-visual line. The unconventional orthography of letters, words, and syntactic structures recasts the realistic architecture of nature into an apparently non-representational shape. He explores the transformative changes in shades and tones, treating different properties of bodycolour as his subject matter. The “vibrant emptiness” of the Cummingsesque use of indention and spacing accommodates our “enormity” of being and situating in relation to the “dynamically generous earth” (Terblanche, “Reading Blank Space” 2). In tracing the dual movement of brushwork and

instinctual faculties of hand and mind, the poet-painter metaphorically compares the “sky” to “candy” that is “lu / minous,” “edible,” and “spry,” filled with a palette of “pinks,” “lemons,” “greens,” “cool,” “choc / olate / s,” and “vi / o / lets.” The complementary colours here, akin to transparent gouache on a watercolour landscape, form the architectural structure of the skyscape, with the entire poem taking the shape of a curl of smoke – liquefied by the exquisite contrast between shining, bright and luminescent, dark tones. Cummings’ skyscapes focus on the impressionistic atmosphere rather than topography, prioritising the dynamic changes of the sky as a Verb over its physical details in presence as a frozen noun. The fluid arrangement of jewel-like colours and the evanescent stream depicted over the train (“lo / co / mo / tive”) gives rise to a tranquil mood infused with an evocative view. It mediates in a constantly evolving entanglement of inside and outside, subject and object, and the discursive and the visible as an experiential whole.

Prior to this formal design published as “VI” of “Impressions” in *Tulips & Chimneys* (1922 Manuscript), there exists another version known as “X” of “Experiments, 1916-17.” This earlier version, characterised by a more spontaneous and loose approach, resembles a calligraphic trace with randomly brushed alphabets and spaces that invite a swarm of interpretative meanings:⁵⁶

the sky
 was can dy
 lu mi
 nous ed
 i
 ble
 spry pinks
 shy lem
 ons
 greens
 cool
 choco lates
 un der
 a lo
 co
 mo tive s pout
 ing
 vi
 o lets (Cummings, *CP* 937)

From his ecopoetic perspective, the formal boundary between typeset words and blank spaces is open and dynamic, “a membrane, not a barrier” that “skilfully allows the integrity of relations between being (big earth) and nothing (emptiness) to be restored for the little man [e. e. cummings himself], and for us” (Terblanche, “Reading” 3). More radically, this original script of “the sky”

⁵⁶ The original manuscript was made during the poet’s Harvard years 1911-1916.

experiments with the place or placement of word and space – not fixed in a linear gesture but fluid like the air waving in a loosely-defined structure. Cummings employs a painterly technique of charging, dropping pigments represented by separate vocabularies of colours (“pinks,” “lem / ons,” “greens,” “vi / o / lets”) directly onto the page and diffusing these bleeds of warm and cool hues across the canvas in a radiating direction, much like the cloudscape depicted in *Untitled* (fig. 5-14). The clouds, reminiscent of cumulonimbus formations, are enveloped in swathes of softly and diaphanously glowing sunlight that is invisible from the heavens. The varied application of flat, broad brushstrokes is contrasted with the charging, wet washes of colours, adding depth and texture to the picture. To a large extent, the scenography of Cummings’ colouristic arrangement not only evokes the changeability of clouds “s pout / ing” in the sky through their perpetual and gestural sign-making, but also stimulates the kinaesthetic movement of our sensory organs as we collect and reorganise these impressions in a more vague and unrestricted manner than the 1922 manuscript.

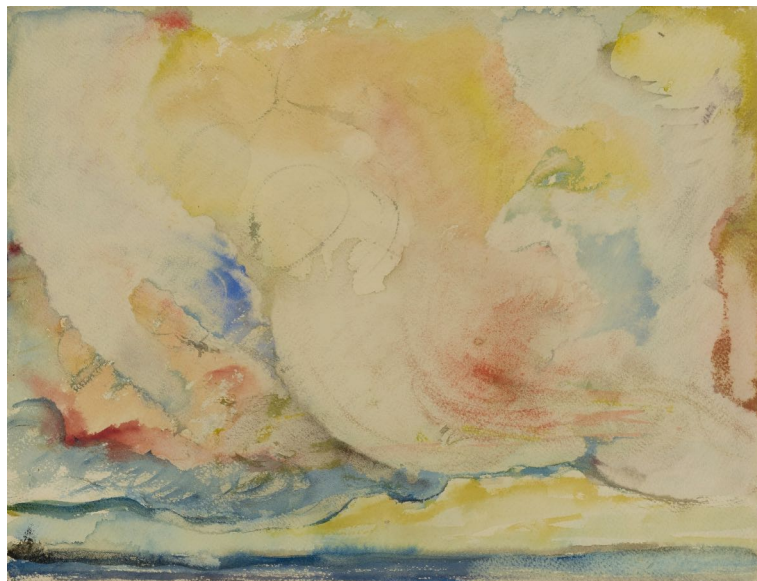


Fig. 5-14 E. E. Cummings, *Untitled* (n.d.). Watercolor on paper, 23.5 by 30.8 cm. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC.

Unlike impasto paintings with opaque gouaches, these two variant cloud studies by Cummings masterfully combine the dashes and sweeps of poetic lineation and vivid watercolours on a light-toned paper, expressive of the potential for drama and mystery as scenic narratives. In his works of landscape, Cummings emphasises the displacement and revelation of nature through art, seeking for a personal and embodied connection to the particular experiences of seeing, feeling, and imagining. His topographical artform goes beyond just rhetoric or metaphor and becomes a formative force that directly engages with the making or remaking of the material and cultural

realities in a natural world. With his rich colours and dramatic chiaroscuro (within the opposing areas of light and dark), Cummings presents the intangible world as an open stage, inciting the audience as the reader-viewer to establish perceptual intimacies or intuitive closeness to the surrounding landscapes, objects, dancing humans, and other beings discussed in previous sections. His bold use of bodycolour and choice of wording in his landscape art unsettles the conventional structure of composing word and image, offering an intermedial, non-literalist approach to our attachment with nature through scenographic landscaping of textual, graphic, and actual scenes.

Conclusion

What is important in a text is not what it means, but what it does and incites to do. What it does: the charge of affect it contains and transmits. What it incites to do: the metamorphoses of this potential energy into other things – other texts, but also paintings, photographs, film sequences, political actions, decisions, erotic inspirations, acts of insubordination, economic initiatives, etc.

– Jean-François Lyotard, *Driftworks* (9-10)

The ideal for a book would be to lay everything out on a plane of exteriority of this kind, on a single page, the same sheet: lived events, historical determinations, concepts, individuals, groups, social formations.

– Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (8)

At the intersection of modernist studies and intermedial studies, this dissertation has critically examined the concept of *intermedial modernism* and its notional significance in contextualising modernist *poet-painters*, focusing on the artworks of Mina Loy and E. E. Cummings. Transcending medial and cultural boundaries between word and image, Loy and Cummings expand the possibilities of (inter-)artistic expression, mediation, and representation. Their modernist experiments foster a nuanced and holistic understanding of the medially “mutual illumination” (Wagner 2) of icons and texts in hybrid artforms of “iconotext” beyond ekphrasis or illustration.¹ This study, with intermediality, transculturalism, and experimentation at its core, has offered a comparative approach to looking at modernist poet-painters’ intermedial identities, transcultural exchanges, and experimental artistries. Rather than viewing a poem or a painting solely as a means of reference or as a source of thematic or technical influence, it highlights the intricate relationship of verbal-visual-sonic (*verbivocovisual*) complexities in their formalist idiosyncrasies, through the proteanism and multifariousness of a poet-painter artishood.

The early twentieth century witnessed a growing tendency of avant-garde cosmopolitanism within an intermedial condition, where new modalities or medialities of “[w]ord and image are woven together to create a new reality” (W. Mitchell, *Image Science* 42). Modernist artists view the impending crisis of language and form alongside the emergence of “New Media” (S. Li 10), such as photography, cinema, and nonrepresentational art, as an opportunity for destruction and re-creation.² In *21st-Century Modernism: The “New” Poetics* (2002), Marjorie Perloff suggests that “the aesthetic of early modernism has provided the seeds of the materialist poetic which is increasingly our own – a poetic that seems much more attuned to the readymade, the ‘delays’ in glass and

¹ On the notion of “iconotext,” see Louvel, Liliane, *Poetics of the Iconotext*, edited by Karen Jacobs, translated by Laurence Petit (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

² T. S. Eliot regards this literary crisis as a “sudden mutation of form and content in literature,” appearing with a new course of writing that was “not destructive but re-creative” (16). See Eliot, “American Literature and the American Language,” *The Senanee Review*, vol. 74, no. 1 (1966) 1-20.

verbal enigmas of Marcel Duchamp, to the non-generic, non-representational texts of Gertrude Stein, and to the sound and visual poems, the poem-manifestos and artist's books of Velimir Khlebnikov than to the authenticity model – the ‘true voice of feeling’” (3) with its attention to these material and medial specificities. The intermedial incorporation of various materials or mediums could excite the affordances of form on display, prompting the artistic revolution that was better suited to engage with the technically and politically dynamic style, structure, and spatial design.³ Empowering the new formalist idea that “[v]arious forms overlap and intersect” (Levine 4), the essence of intermedial modernism thus asks for a cross-medial analysis to apprehend the symphonic operation of distinct forms performing on different scales from a concrete layout to a wordplay. With “modernism’s encounter with the visual arts” (Beasley 4), it transforms textual criticism into an intermedial reconsideration of the link between visual texture and verbal materiality.

As argued in Cara L. Lewis’ *Dynamic Form: How Intermediality Made Modernism* (2020), modernist intermediality largely changes our perspective on image-text, medial evocation, and contemplation of our reading-viewing experience in a rich, interconnected artistic landscape:

Modernist intermediality extends beyond biography and beyond ekphrasis, and visual and plastic media can make themselves felt without reference to preexisting, definable artworks. They do so, as this book demonstrates, in visual motifs, evocations of specific genres (such as the painted still life), and considerations of how we experience art (the sonic aspect of viewing a film in a theater, or the temporal dimension of viewing a sculpted object in the round). (3)

Based on these nonverbal mediums in visual and plastic materials, intermedial modernist “form’s mobility and malleability” (*Dynamic Form* 11) extends beyond the Lessingian category of image/text and simultaneously encompasses a wide range of literary and nonliterary artefacts. While Lewis tends to substitute the Barthesian notion of *text* with her concept of *medium*, thereby medialisating verbal and visual representations under the umbrella term of media aesthetics, it is reasonable to explore the modernist reconfiguration of artform and language, taking into account the convergence of poetical and other pictorial mediums.⁴ In the discussion of his metaphysical theory of impersonality, T. S. Eliot once claims that “the poet has, not a ‘personality’ to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways” (“Tradition” 56) In this medium-specific

³ On the first use of “revolution of language,” see Eugene Jolas, “The Revolution of Language and James Joyce,” in *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*, edited by Samuel Beckett et al. (London: Faber & Faber, 1936) 77-92.

⁴ The reason for Cara L. Lewis to use the notion of medium is that she finds that the traditional idea of form is ahistorical and apolitical, staying away from sociocultural discussions: “as *modernism* has come to mean history, not form, so too has *form* been transmuted into archive, into medium” (*Dynamic Form* 6).

sense, the experimental artworks of poet-painters like Loy and Cummings are designed not just to achieve the formalist effect of defamiliarisation by estranging familiar words and images, countering the habits or automatism of disciplinary reception; more significantly, they reconsider form as both shape and essence across different mediums that properly acknowledge “modernism’s formal variety” (15). Drawing on the “idea of the medium” (Goble 17), modernist intermediality enables a series of interdisciplinary, transcultural experimentations with form, visible structure, and the materiality of language.⁵ It serves to shift from a homogeneously textual understanding and then provoke new aesthetic and societal responses. As an overarching framework, the in-betweenness and dialogic, collaborative nature of intermedial modernism, or an intermedially redefined modernism in my project, challenge the limitations imposed by singular modality and open for a vital transmutation of multiple medialities.

W. J. T. Mitchell delivered a lecture series at the OCAT Institute Annual Lectures in 2018 entitled *Metapictures: Images and the Discourse of Theory*.⁶ As a theoretical rationale for the idea of intermedial modernism advanced here, the main argument of his “metapicture” is to resist the common notion that “images are simply the passive objects of verbal explanation and interpretation” and to reverse the historical power relations between logos and icons:

In the paragone or contest of words and images that has enlivened culture since the first cave paintings enchanted their beholders, images play an equally important role, as [René] Magritte shows, and Michel Foucault re-emphasises in his famous meditation on Magritte’s *Treason of Images* or *This Is Not a Pipe*. Against the tyranny of the verbal “no,” Magritte asserts the pictorial “yes” that insists on the presence that the inscription tries to deny, in exactly the same way that a no smoking sign invariably reminds me of my unquenchable craving for a cigarette. There is, as Foucault insists, never a final victory in the struggle between the seeable and the sayable, the image and the word, representation and discourse, only a set of inconclusive skirmishes across ever-shifting borders. (*Metapictures* 126)

This paragraph indicates the most important issue underlying modernist intermediality, the problematic dynamics of *image/text*, *image-text*, or *imagetext* and how artists achieve so. From the “verbal ‘no’” to “pictorial ‘yes’,” an intermedial point of view drives us to question the authority of literal language (the sayable/word/discourse) and invite a reconsideration of its visual aspect (the seeable/image/representation). The thorough exploration of Loy’s formal designs and Cummings’ poempictures in this study reveals modernist poet-painters’ response to the (dis-)continuities of the aesthetic duality or doubling of the seeable and the sayable, the superficial and the hidden, the signifier and the signified, object and subject, and spectatorship and reading. René Magritte’s *The Treachery of Images* illustrates how images can subvert the limitations imposed

⁵ For more about the modernist media, see Goble, Introduction. “Communications Now Are Love” 1-26.

⁶ Mitchell introduces the idea of “Metapictures” in *Picture Theory* (35-82).

by language and bring forth alternative meanings to the historical notions of *ut pictura poesis*. In a similar vein, both Loy's and Cummings' imagetext as experimental artforms reformulates the relationship between word and image "across ever-shifting borders" by distorting and recomposing the preestablished mediation in-between different artistic mediums and their formal modalities. Rather than a set of "inconclusive skirmishes" or paragonal attacks, it engages in an inclusive and vibrant conversation charged with expressive propulsions that transgresses the borders of rigid genres and artistic mediums, ultimately forging a multifarious artishood against the backdrop of intermedial modernism.

The avant-garde fertility in media-oriented interdisciplinary confluence fuels their formalist experimentalism, rooted in the plastic materiality of language and vital performance of artform, which bring about a radically new approach to reconceptualising *ut pictura poesis*. At the core of this transformation is the philosophy of intermediality and its in-between agency, embracing the liminal space between different mediums and facilitating a collaborative poetics or a "dialogic compass" of modernism that demonstrates "poetry's elasticity and multiplicity [...] partly shared and partly discrepant across intergeneric field" (Ramazani 61).⁷ In "The Unravelled Calligram" of *This Is Not a Pipe*, Michel Foucault explicitly discusses this "double function" (22) of the verbal and the visual in Guillaume Apollinaire's *calligrammes* or visual poems, e.g., "L'Oeillet" and "Fumées." This collaboration of doubling functions intermedially as "neither discourse alone nor a pure drawing could do" (22):

The calligram uses that capacity of letters to signify both as linear elements that can be arranged in space and as signs that must unroll according to a unique chain of sound. As a sign, the letter permits us to fix words; as a line, it lets us give shape to things. Thus the calligram aspires playfully to efface the oldest oppositions of our alphabetical civilisation: to show and to name; to shape and to say; to reproduce and to articulate; to imitate and to signify; to look and to read. (21)

Foucault points out that the intermedial essence of the "calligram" lies in its transformative artform to combine the graphic arrangement of letterforms, which gives a palpable form to a concrete representation, with the linguistic manipulation of letters that carries an auditory dimension in the oral tradition. By merging the discursivity of "sign" and the visibility of "line," the experimental artistry of calligram "playfully" dissolves the conventional dichotomies that separate shape ("to look") and meaning ("to read"). In a logocentric alphabet-based civilisation, the calligrammic intermediality breaks from the boundaries and limitation imposed by the medial or disciplinary separation. It manifests the potential for the poetic signifier and its surrounding

⁷ On the idea of "dialogic poetics" combining Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism with Roman Jakobson's formalist poetics, see Ramazani, "A Dialogic Poetics: Poetry and the Novel, Theory, and the Law" 1-62.

space to transcend their predetermined roles as mere vessels for message or codes of language, instead becoming visible articulations and reproductions.

Therefore, exemplified by two modernist poet-painters, this dissertation has critically investigated how the dialectical dynamics and collaborative nature of intermediality work as the substrate to rearticulate the formalist aesthetics of modernism. The first half “Transcultural Modernism and Intermedial Identities” has delineated this modernist collaboration on a personal and cultural level. Both “Mongrel-Rose” and “Poet-Painter of China” incarnate the multifarious possibilities of their self-identification and re-presentation, fusing the indigenous nature with unfamiliar, foreign cultures to tailor or craft their alternative selves in creative fashions. Tailoring and craftsmanship help them to change the intermedial formalities of their word and image, object and identity across different narratives. Loy’s conversion from Italian Futurism to New York Dada, alongside with Cummings’ Cubo-Fauvist innovation during his Parisian days, thus show that their intermedial identities of poet-painters are constructed through interpersonal communications, intercultural exchanges, and international avant-garde movements. The second half of the present study, “Experimental Modernism and Intermedial Artistries,” develops this critical investigation into their micropoetic and microartistic artistries by means of various genres, materials, and artforms. We have read and seen a great variety of intermedial artworks – from Loy’s manifestic designs, verbal readymades, painterly abstractions, to Cummings’ gestural line-drawings, vital still lifes and landscapes. These modernist experiments with formal intermediality refashion the presentation of bodily or material physicality as a vital immanence, and perform our shifting perspectives, instinctive knowledge, and experiential beings. They exhibit a liberatory and plastic lineation through the typographic design of Loy’s manifestos/aphorisms and the scenographic arrangement of Cummings’ landscape arts as a verbal category; represent the visceral vibration of a presentative “thing-in-itself” captured by the inventive recomposing of readymades and still-life objects; possess a performativity of lineal, gestural, and observational movement in her abstraction and his line-drawing of portrayals.

The intermedial artishood of poet-painters becomes a site of immanent collaboration, an inherent mediation or what Lars Elleström conceptualises as the “intermediate entities of communication among minds” (*Transmedial Narration* 37) – among their literary and pictorial psyches.⁸ As thus understood, recognising this in-between dialogue as the most essential and yielding source, for modernist poet-painters, allows for a profound reflection on and intensified

⁸ About different modalities and types of medium, see Lars Elleström, “The Modalities of Media: A Model for Understanding Intermedial Relations,” in *Media Borders* 11-48; also, a revised version, “The Modalities of Media II: An Expanded Model for Understanding Intermedial Relations,” in *Beyond Media Borders, Volume 1: Intermedial Relations among Multimodal Media*, edited by Elleström (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021) 3-91.

appreciation of varying artistic disciplines and their dynamic artforms by mediating oneself in another medium and its aesthetic, technical, and ideological implications behind. “As the proliferating, ever-extending relations of modernism attest, [not only] form” but also its mediality and modality with material, style, and spatial structure are “exceptionally dynamic” (C. Lewis, *Dynamic Form* 226) in the first decades of the twentieth century. Medium, as a transcendently hybrid process, signifies a series of formal mediation and sociocultural metamorphosis. Destroying the confines of curious disciplines into “[inter]media products” (Elleström, *Media Transformation* 2), Mina Loy’s cosmopolitan avant-gardism and intermedial portraiture, E. E. Cummings’ intercultural influences and intermedial prosody, both provide a shared space for modernist creation and re-creation, interweaving the verbal/poetical and the visual/painterly together into a microscopic complex. Furthermore, by offering a fresh perspective on the history of modernism through the lens of intermediality, this paradigmatic approach opens up avenues for reinterpreting the artworks of other figures from the twentieth century, including Djuna Barnes, Wyndham Lewis, Elizabeth Bishop, David Jones, Sylvia Plath, John Ashbery, and so on. Modernist intermediality serves as a catalyst for perceptual and interpretative contingencies, so that the reader-viewer is empowered to choose their own pathways of pluralistic engagement with the tangible world through alternative modes of feeling, experiencing, and reimagining.

Bibliography

Works by Mina Loy

- Loy, Mina. *Insel*, edited by Elizabeth Arnold, Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1991.
- . *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, edited by Roger L. Conover, Manchester: Carcanet, 1985.
- . *The Lost Lunar Baedeker: Poems of Mina Loy*, edited by Roger L. Conover, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1997.
- . *Mina Loy: Strangeness Is Inevitable*, edited by Jennifer R. Gross et al., Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2023.
- . *Stories and Essays of Mina Loy*, edited by Sara Crangle, Champaign, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 2011.

Works on Loy

- Altieri, Charles. *The Art of Twentieth-Century American Poetry: Modernism and After*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Armstrong, Tim. *Modernism, Technology, and the Body: A Cultural Study*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Bozhkova, Yasna. *Between Worlds: Mina Loy's Aesthetic Itineraries*. Clemson, SC: Clemson University Press, 2022.
- Burke, Carolyn. *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy*. New York: Picador, 2021.
- . "Mina Loy's 'Love Songs' and the Limits of Imagism." *San Jose Studies*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1987, pp. 37-46.
- . "Without Commas: Gertrude Stein and Mina Loy." *Poetics Journal Digital Archive*, edited by Lyn Hejinian and Barrett Watten, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2015, pp. 217-26.
- Caws, Mary Ann. *Mina Loy: Apology of Genius*. London: Reaktion Books, 2022.
- Churchill, Suzanne W., et al. "Feminist Designs: Modernist Digital Humanities & Mina Loy: Navigating the Avant-Garde." *Feminist Modernist Studies*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2018, pp. 243-56.
- Conover, Roger L. Introduction. Loy, 1997, pp. xi-xx.
- Crangle, Sara. "Feminism's Archives: Mina Loy, Anna Mendelssohn, and Taxonomy." *The New Modernist Studies*, edited by Douglas Mao, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021, pp. 246-77.
- . "Mina Loy." *A History of Modernist Poetry*, edited by Alex Davis and Lee M. Jenkins, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 275-302.
- DeMaagd, Allyson C. *Dissensuous Modernism: Women Writers, the Senses, and Technology*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2022.

- Dunn, Susan E. "Loy, Fashion, and the Avant-Garde." *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet*, edited by Maera Shreiber and Keith Tuma, Orono, ME: National Poetry Foundation, 1998, pp. 443-56.
- Frost, Elisabeth A. "'Crisis in Consciousness': Mina Loy's 'Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose'." *The Feminist Avant-Garde in American Poetry*. Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2003, pp. 29-62.
- Goody, Alex. "Ladies of Fashion/Modern(ist) Women: Mina Loy and Djuna Barnes." *Women: A Cultural Review*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2008, pp. 266-82.
- . *Modernist Articulations: A Cultural Study of Djuna Barnes, Mina Loy and Gertrude Stein*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- . "Nonhuman Animals and Decorative Modernism in Djuna Barnes and Mina Loy." *Women: A Cultural Review*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2021, pp. 8-31.
- Harris, Rowan. "Futurism, Fashion and the Feminine: Forms of Repudiation and Affiliation in the Early Writing of Mina Loy." Potter and Hobson, pp. 17-46.
- Hayden, Sarah. *Curious Disciplines: Mina Loy and Avant-Garde Artisthood*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2018.
- . Introduction. *Insel*, by Mina Loy, edited by Elizabeth Arnold, New York: Melville House, 2014, pp. ix-xxxii
- Januzzi, Marisa. "Dada through the Looking Glass, or: Mina Loy's Objective." *Women in Dada: Essays on Sex, Gender and Identity*, edited by Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001, pp. 578-612.
- Kinnahan, Linda. *Mina Loy, Twentieth-Century Photography, and Contemporary Women Poets*. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- . *Poetics of the Feminine: Authority and Literary Tradition in William Carlos Williams, Mina Loy, Denise Levertov, and Kathleen Fraser*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Konkol, Margaret. "Prototyping Mina Loy's Alphabet." *Feminist Modernist Digital Humanities*, special issue of *Feminist Modernist Studies*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2018, pp. 294-317.
- Kouidis, Virginia M. *Mina Loy: American Modernist Poet*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980.
- . "Rediscovering Our Sources: The Poetry of Mina Loy." *boundary 2*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1980, pp. 167-88.
- Lazevnick, Ashley. "Impossible Descriptions in Mina Loy and Constantin Brancusi's *Golden Bird*." *Word & Image*, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 192-202.
- Lein, Julie Gonnering. "Shades of Meaning: Mina Loy's Poetics of Luminous Opacity." *Modernism/modernity*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2011, pp. 617-29.
- Lewis, Cara L. *Dynamic Form: How Intermediality Made Modernism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020.
- Lusty, Natalya. "Sexing the Manifestos: Mina Loy, Feminism and Futurism." *Women: A Cultural Review*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2008, pp. 245-60.

- Miller, Cristanne. *Cultures of Modernism: Marianne Moore, Mina Loy, and Else Lasker-Schüler, Gender and Literary Community in New York and Berlin*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005.
- . "Finding 'Only Words' Mysterious: Reading Mina Loy (and H.D.) in America." *The Cambridge History of American Poetry*, edited by Alfred Bendixen and Stephen Burt, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 583-602.
- . "Mina Loy." *A Companion to Modernist Poetry*, edited by David E. Chinitz and Gail McDonald, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2014, pp. 380-88.
- Miller, Tyrus. *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction, and the Arts between the World Wars*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Nicholls, Peter. "Mina Loy and Lexicophilia." *Feminist Modernist Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2019, pp. 263-73.
- Parmar, Sandeep. *Reading Mina Loy's Autobiographies: Myth of the Modern Woman*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014.
- Peppis, Paul. "Rewriting Sex: Sexology and Sentimental Modernism in Marie Stopes' *Married Love* and Mina Loy's *Songs to Joannes*." *Sciences of Modernism: Ethnography, Sexology, and Psychology*. Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 148-93.
- . "Schools, Movements, Manifestoes." *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Poetry*, edited by Alex Davis and Lee M. Jenkins, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 28-50.
- Perloff, Marjorie. "English as a 'Second' Language: Mina Loy's 'Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose'." *Poetry on & Off the Page: Essays for Emergent Occasions*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2000, pp. 193-207.
- Potter, Rachel, and Suzanne Hobson, editors. *The Salt Companion to Mina Loy*. London: Salt, 2010.
- Pound, Ezra. "Marianne Moore and Mina Loy." *Selected Prose 1909-1965*, edited by William Cookson, London: Faber & Faber, 1978, pp. 394-95.
- Prescott, Tara. *Poetic Salvage: Reading Mina Loy*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2017.
- Re, Lucia. "Mina Loy and the Quest for a Futurist Feminist Woman." *The European Legacy*, vol. 14, no. 7, 2009, pp. 799-819.
- Rives, Rochelle. "Modernist Prosopopoeia: Mina Loy, Gaudier-Brzeska and the Making of Face." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2011, pp. 137-59.
- Schaffner, Ingrid, and Lisa Jacobs, editors. *Julien Levy: Portrait of an Art Gallery*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998.
- Scuriatti, Laura. Introduction. *Groups, Coteries, Circles and Guilds: Modernist Aesthetics and the Utopian Lure of Community*, edited by Scuriatti, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019, pp. 1-14.
- . *Mina Loy's Critical Modernism*, Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2019.
- . "Transnational Modernist Encounters in the Provinces: *Lacerba*, Mina Loy and International Debates on Sexual Morality in Florence." *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2017, pp. 303-13.

- Stauder, Ellen Keck. "Beyond the Synopsis of Vision: The Conception of Art in Ezra Pound and Mina Loy." *Paideuma: Modern and Contemporary Poetry and Poetics*, vol. 24, no. 2/3, 1995, pp. 195-227.
- Thurston, Michael. "Mina Loy: *Lunar Baedeker*." *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture*, edited by David Bradshaw and Kevin J. H. Dettmar, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, pp. 411-21.
- Walter, Christina. *Optical Impersonality: Science, Images, and Literary Modernism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014.

Works by E. E. Cummings

- Cummings, E. E. *CIOPW*. New York: Covici-Friede, 1931.
- . *Complete Poems, 1904-1962*, edited by George J. Firmage, New York: Liveright, 2016.
- . *E. E. Cummings: Selected Works*, edited by Milton A. Cohen, New York: W. W. Norton, 2020.
- . *The Enormous Room*, edited by George J. Firmage, New York: Liveright, 1978.
- . *i: six nonlectures*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962.
- . *A Miscellany*, edited by George J. Firmage, New York: Liveright, 2018.
- . "The Poetry of Silence." *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 23, 2020, pp. 131-39.
- . *Selected Letters of E. E. Cummings*, edited by F. W. Dupee and George Stade, London: André Deutsch, 1972.
- Pound, Ezra, and E. E. Cummings. *Pound/Cummings: The Correspondence of Ezra Pound and E. E. Cummings*, edited by Barry Ahearn, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996.

Works on Cummings

- Abella, Rubén. "'I am that I am': The Dadaist Anti-Fiction of E. E. Cummings." *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 23, 2020, pp. 68-82.
- Bradford, Richard. "Cummings and the Brotherhood of Visual Poetics." Flajšar and Vernyik, pp. 2-26.
- . *Graphic Poetics: Poetry as Visual Art*. London: Continuum, 2011.
- Carruth, Allison. "The Space Stage and the Circus: E. E. Cummings' *Him* and Frederick Kiesler's *Raumbühne*." *Modern Drama*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2008, pp. 458-81.
- Cheever, Susan. *E. E. Cummings: A Life*. New York: Vintage, 2015.
- Cohen, Milton A. "Disparate Twins: Spontaneity in Cummings' Poetry and Painting." *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 4, 1995, pp. 83-94.

- . Introduction. *E. E. Cummings: Selected Works*, by Cummings, pp. xiii-xxxiii.
- . *PoetandPainter: The Aesthetics of E. E. Cummings's Early Work*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987.
- Cone, Kate. "E. E. Cummings." *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature*, vol. 1, edited by Jay Parini et al., New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 342-46.
- Cureton, Richard D. "Visual Form in E. E. Cummings?: *No Thanks*." *Word & Image*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1985, pp. 245-77.
- Desblaches, Claudia. "Crossing Generic Boundaries: Sculpture, Painting and Engraving as Compensations for E. E. Cummings' Hermeneutic Short-Cuts." Flajšar and Vernyik, pp. 156-69.
- Dickey, Frances. *The Modern Portrait Poem: From Dante Gabriel Rossetti to Ezra Pound*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012.
- Fallon, April D. "Modernist *Faiteur*: Influence of Paris on E. E. Cummings." *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 18, 2011, pp. 48-59.
- Farley, David G. "E. E. Cummings: Intourist in the Unworld." *Modernist Travel Writing: Intellectuals Abroad*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010, pp. 55-96.
- Flajšar, Jiří, and Zénó Vernyik, editors. *Words into Pictures: E. E. Cummings' Art across Borders*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007.
- Forrest, David V. "E. E. Cummings and the Thoughts That Lie Too Deep for Tears: Of Defenses in Poetry." *The Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 43, no. 1, 1980, pp. 13-42.
- Friedman, Norman. *E. E. Cummings: The Arts of His Poetry*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019.
- . "E. E. Cummings and the Theatre." *The Theatre of E. E. Cummings*, edited by George Firmage, New York: Liveright, 2013, pp. 193-206.
- . *(Re)Valuing Cummings: Further Essays on the Poet, 1962-1993*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1996.
- Grabher, Gudrun M. "I paint (my poems), therefore i am: The Visibility of Language and Its Epistemological Implications for the 'i' in E. E. Cummings' Poetry." *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 10, 2001, pp. 48-57.
- Harris, Kurt. "Beyond the Scope of the 'P' in E. E. Cummings' Leaf Poem." Flajšar and Vernyik, pp. 188-200.
- Heusser, Martin. *I Am My Writing: The Poetry of E. E. Cummings*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1997.
- . "The Semantics of Structure: Iconicity in the Poetry of William Carlos Williams and E. E. Cummings." *Iconic Investigations*, edited by Lars Elleström et al., Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2013, pp. 159-72.
- . "The Visual Rhetoric of E. E. Cummings' 'Poempictures'." *Word & Image*, vol. 11, vol. 1, 1995, pp. 16-30.

- Huang-Tiller, Gillian. "A(r)mor amoris: Modernist *Blason*, History, and the Body Politic of E. E. Cummings' Erotic Sonnetry in *♫* [AND]." *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 19, 2012, pp. 110-29.
- . "‘Baby-Talk’ or Artistic Precision: Cummings’ ‘Post Impressions’ in *♫* [AND] and *No Thanks* to R. P. Blackmur." *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 23, 2020, pp. 83-107.
- . "Reflecting *EIMI*: The Iconic Meta-Sonnet, Manhood, and Cultural Crisis in E. E. Cummings’ *No Thanks*." Flajšar and Vernyik, pp. 27-57.
- . "Review of E. E. Cummings, *Erotic Poems* (Norton 2010)." *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 18, 2011, pp. 167-71.
- Kennedy, Richard S. *Dreams in the Mirror: A Biography of E. E. Cummings*. New York: Liveright, 1994.
- Kidder, Rushworth M. "‘Author of Pictures’: A Study of Cummings’ Line Drawings in *The Dial*." *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 17, no. 4, 1976, pp. 470-505.
- . "Cummings and Cubism: The Influence of the Visual Arts on Cummings’ Early Poetry." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1979, pp. 255-91.
- . *E. E. Cummings: An Introduction to the Poetry*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.
- . "Picture into Poem: The Genesis of Cummings’ ‘I Am a Little Church’." *Art and Literature*, special issue of *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 21, no. 3, 1980, pp. 315-30.
- . "‘Twin Obsessions’: The Poetry and Paintings of E. E. Cummings." *The Georgia Review*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1978, pp. 342-68.
- Kilyovski, Vakrilen. "The Nude, the Grasshopper, and the Poet-Painter: A Reading of E. E. Cummings’ ‘r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r’." *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 20, 2013, pp. 99-109.
- Kurdyla, Jennifer N. "‘well) here’s looking at ourselves’: Fragmented Visual Identity in the Poetry of E. E. Cummings." *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 21/22, 2014-15, pp. 83-105.
- Matore, Daniel. "Cummings’ Typewriter Language: The Typography of *Tulips & Chimneys*." *Textual Practices*, vol. 31, no. 7, 2017, pp. 1509-31.
- Mitchell, Lee Clark. *Mark My Words: Profiles of Punctuation in Modern Literature*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020.
- Moe, Aaron M. "Cummings’ Urban Ecology: An Exploration of *EIMI*, *No Thanks*, and the Cultivation of the Ecological Self." *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 18, no. 4, 2011, pp. 737-62.
- . "Poetry & Expanding the Ecological Self: A Contextualisation of Cummings’ Typographies within the Modernist Ecological Vision." *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 16, 2007, pp. 134-55.
- . *Zoopoetics: Animals and the Making of Poetry*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014.

- Nikitina, Svetlana. "Innovation and Multimedia in the Poetry of Cummings and Mayakovsky." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, vol. 11, no. 4, 2009, pp. 1-10.
- Norman, Charles. *E. E. Cummings: The Magic-Maker*. New York: Macmillan, 1972.
- Olsen, Taimi. "'As usual I did not find him in cafés': I-Space, 'i' space, and Spatial Cognition in E. E. Cummings' Poetry." Flajšar and VERNYIK, pp. 108-25.
- . "E. E. Cummings and the Futurist Art Movement." *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 5, 1996, pp. 155-60.
- Rosenblitt, J. Alison. *The Beauty of Living: E. E. Cummings in the Great War*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2020.
- . *E. E. Cummings' Modernism and the Classics: Each Imperishable Stanza*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Ruiz, Antonio. "The Dadaist Prose of Williams and Cummings: *A Novelette* and [No Title]." *William Carlos Williams Review*, vol. 28, no. 1-2, 2008, pp. 101-15.
- Tashjian, Dickran. "E. E. Cummings and Dada Formalism." *Skyscraper Primitives: Dada and the American Avant-Garde, 1910-1925*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1975, pp. 165-87.
- Terblanche, Etienne. *E. E. Cummings: Poetry and Ecology*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012.
- . "Iconicity and Naming in E. E. Cummings' Poetry." *Signergy*, edited by C. Jac Conradie, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2010, pp. 179-92.
- . "Reading Blank Space from an Eco-poetic Perspective in Selected Poems by E. E. Cummings and William Carlos Williams." *Literator*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2022, pp. 1-8.
- , and Michael Webster. "Eco-Iconicity in the Poetry and Poem-Groups of E. E. Cummings." *Insistent Images*, edited by Elżbieta Tabakowska et al., Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2007, pp. 155-72.
- Wasserman, Sarah. "E. E. Cummings and 'The New Art'." *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 16, 2007, pp. 156-62.
- Webster, Michael. "Afterword to 'The Poetry of Silence'." *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 23, 2020, pp. 140-59.
- . "Cummings's Silent Numerical Iconic Prosody." *Media inter Media: Essays in Honour of Claus Clüver*, edited by Stephanie A. Glaser, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009, pp. 423-38.
- . "E. E. Cummings." *A Companion to Modernist Poetry*, edited by David E. Chinitz and Gail McDonald, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2014, pp. 494-504.
- . "'Floating particles of paper': E. E. Cummings' Collage Poems." *Cahiers Charles V*, no. 34, 2003, pp. 51-74.
- . "Magic Iconism: Defamiliarisation, Sympathetic Magic, and Visual Poetry (Guillaume Apollinaire and E. E. Cummings)." *European Journal of English Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2001, pp. 97-113.

- . “‘Singing is silence’: Being and Nothing in the Visual Poetry of E. E. Cummings.” *Form Miming Meaning: Iconicity in Language and Literature*, edited by Max Nänny and Olga Fischer, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 1999, pp. 199-214.
- . “The ‘small eye poet’ from Imagism to ‘not numerable whom’.” *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society*, no. 21/22, 2014-15, pp. 106-18.
- Williams, William Carlos. “E. E. Cummings’ Paintings and Poems.” *A Recognisable Image: William Carlos Williams on Art and Artists*, edited by Bram Dijkstra, New York: New Directions, 1978, pp. 233-37.
- . “Lower Case Cummings.” *E. E. Cummings: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Norman Friedman, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972, pp. 100-03.

Other Critical and Theoretical Works

- Abrams, M. H. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- Addison, Joseph. “The Pleasures of the Imagination.” *Addison and Steele: Selections from The Tatler and The Spectator*, edited by Robert J. Allen, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970, pp. 397-405.
- Adorno, Theodor W. *Aesthetic Theory*. Translated by C. Lenhardt, edited by Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984.
- Alpers, Svetlana, and Paul Alpers. “*Ut Pictura Noesis?* Criticism in Literary Studies and Art History.” *Literary and Art History*, special issue of *New Literary History*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1972, pp. 437-58.
- Alsdorf, Bridget. “Interior Landscapes: Metaphor and Meaning in Cézanne’s Late Still Lifes.” *Word & Image*, vol. 26, no. 4, 2010, pp. 314-23.
- Altieri, Charles. *Modernist Poetry and the Limitations of Materialist Theory: The Importance of Constructivist Values*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2021.
- . *Painterly Abstraction in Modernist American Poetry: The Contemporaneity of Modernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Aristotle. *Poetics*. Translated by George Whalley, edited by John Baxter and Patrick Atherton, Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997.
- Armstrong, Carol. “The Landscape of Still Life.” *Cézanne in the Studio: Still Life in Watercolours*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2004, pp. 45-73.
- Auden, W. H. “Letter to Lord Byron.” *The English Auden: Poems, Essays and Dramatic Writings, 1927-1939*, edited by Edward Mendelson, London: Faber & Faber, 1977, p. 178.
- Badiou, Alain. “Drawing.” *Lacanian Ink*, issue 28, 2006, pp. 42-49.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Translated and edited by Caryl Emerson, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

- Bal, Mieke. *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.
- Barthes, Roland. *Image-Music-Text*. Translated by Stephen Heath, London: Fontana Press, 1977.
- . *The Pleasure of the Text*. Translated by Richard Miller, New York: Hill & Wang, 1975.
- . *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*. Translated by Richard Howard, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Bateman, John A. *Text and Image: A Critical Introduction to the Visual/Verbal Divide*. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Beasley, Rebecca. *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, edited by Michael W. Jennings et al., translated by Edmund Jephcott et al., Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Bennington, Geoffrey. "Inter." *Post-Theory: New Directions in Criticism*, edited by Martin McQuillan et al., Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, pp. 103-19.
- Berman, Marshall. *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Penguin, 1988.
- Berger, John. *Confabulations*. London: Penguin, 2016.
- Best, Steven, and Douglas Kellner. *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*. New York: Guilford Press, 1991.
- Bishop, Elizabeth. *Exchanging Hats: Paintings*, edited by William Benton, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2011.
- Blanchard, Marc Eli. "On Still Life." *Yale French Studies*, no. 61, 1981, pp. 276-98.
- Bornstein, George. *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Translated by Susan Emanuel, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996.
- Brown, Judith. *Glamour in Six Dimensions: Modernism and the Radiance of Form*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009.
- Bruhn, Jørgen. *The Intermediality of Narrative Literature: Medialities Matter*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- Bryson, Norman. *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life*. London: Reaktion Books, 1990.
- Brancusi, Constantin. "Selected Aphorisms." *Constantin Brancusi: The Essence of Things*, edited by Carmen Giménez and Matthew Gale, London: Tate Publishing, 2004, pp. 127-33.

- Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, edited by Adam Phillips, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Burstein, Jessica. *Cold Modernism: Literature, Fashion, Art*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012.
- Butler, Judith. “‘But what ground? What wall?’: Kafka’s Sketches of Bodily Life.” *Franz Kafka: The Drawings*, edited by Andreas Kilcher and Pavel Schmidt, translated by Kurt Beals, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2022.
- Calvino, Italo. *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*. Translated by Patrick Creagh, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Carson, Ciaran, and David Laskowski. “Inventing Carson: An Interview.” *Chicago Review*, vol. 45, no. 3/4, 1999, pp. 92-100.
- Caws, Mary Ann. *Creative Gatherings: Meeting Places of Modernism*. London: Reaktion Books, 2019.
- . “The Poetics of the Manifesto: Nowness and Newness.” *Manifesto: A Century of Isms*, edited by Caws, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001, pp. xix-xxxii.
- Clark, T. J. *If These Apples Should Fall: Cézanne and the Present*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2022.
- Clüver, Claus. “Intermediality and Interarts Studies.” *Changing Borders: Contemporary Positions in Intermediality*, edited by Jens Arvidson et al., Lund: Intermedia Studies Press, 2007, pp. 19-37.
- Costello, Bonnie. *Planets on Tables: Poetry, Still Life, and the Turning World*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008.
- . *Shifting Ground: Reinventing Landscape in Modern American Poetry*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992.
- Da Vinci, Leonardo. *Notebooks*, edited by Thereza Wells, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Danchev, Alex. Introduction: Manifesto, Manifestoed, Manifestoing. *100 Artists’ Manifestos*, edited by Danchev, New York: Penguin, 2011, pp. xix-xxx.
- Davies, Cicely. “Ut pictura poesis.” *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1935, pp. 159-69.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Claire Parnet. *Dialogues II*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.
- , and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- DeLillo, Don. *Cosmopolis*. London: Picador, 2012.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Acts of Literature*, edited by Derek Attridge, New York: Routledge, 1992.
- . *Dissemination*. Translated by Barbara Johnson, London: Athlone Press, 1981.

- . *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.
- Dryden, John. Preface of the Translator, with A Parallel of Poetry and Painting. *The Art of Painting*, by C. A. du Fresnoy, translated by Dryden, London: J. Heptinstall for W. Rogers, 1695, pp. i-lvi.
- Duchamp, Marcel. *The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp: Marchand du Sel/ Salt Seller*, edited by Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson, London: Thames & Hudson, 1973.
- Dworkin, Craig. *No Medium*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013.
- . *Radium of the Word: A Poetics of the Word*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020.
- Eilittä, Leena. Introduction: From Interdisciplinarity to Intermediality. *Intermedial Arts: Disrupting, Remembering and Transforming Media*, edited by Eilittä et al., Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012, pp. viii-xiii.
- Eliot, T. S. *Collected Poems 1909-1962*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963.
- . "Tradition and the Individual Talent." *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*. London: Methuen, 1957, pp. 47-59.
- Elkins, Amy E. *Crafting Feminism from Literary Modernism to the Multimedia Present*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022.
- Elleström, Lars, editor. *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- . *Media Transformation: The Transfer of Media Characteristics among Media*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- . *Transmedial Narration: Narratives and Stories in Different Media*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.
- Emden, Christian J., and Gabriele Rippl. Introduction. Image, Text and Simulation. *ImageScapes: Studies in Intermediality*, edited by Emden and Rippl. New York: Peter Lang, 2010, pp. 1-20.
- Evine, Simon J. "Ready-Mades: Ontology and Aesthetics." *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 53, no. 4, 2013, pp. 407-23.
- Fish, Stanley. "Being Interdisciplinary Is So Very Hard to Do." *Profession*, 1989, pp. 15-22.
- . *Save the World on Your Own Time*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Fong, Wen C., and Alfreda Murck. Introduction. The Three Perfections: Poetry, Calligraphy, and Painting. *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy, and Painting*, edited by Murch and Fong, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991, pp. xv-xxii.
- Foucault, Michel. *Manet and the Object of Painting*. Translated by Matthew Barr, London: Tate Publishing, 2011.
- . *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Routledge, 1989.

- . *This Is Not a Pipe*, edited and translated by James Harkness, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018.
- Frost, Robert. *Complete Poems of Robert Frost*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1964.
- Fry, Roger. *Cézanne: A Study of His Development*. London: Hogarth Press, 1927.
- Gaither, Mary. "Literature and the Arts." *Comparative Literature: Method and Perspective*, edited by Newton P. Stallknecht and Horst Frenz, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961, pp. 153-70.
- Gilman, Ernest B. "Interart Studies and the 'Imperialism' of Language." *Art and Literature I*, special issue of *Poetics Today*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1989, pp. 5-30.
- Goble, Mark. *Beautiful Circuits: Modernism and the Mediated Life*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- Goody, Alex. *Modernist Poetry, Gender and Leisure Technologies: Machine Amusements*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.
- Gorringer, T. J. *Earthly Visions: Theology and the Challenges of Art*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from Cultural Writings*, edited by David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, translated by Willian Boelhower, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1985.
- Greenberg, Clement. "Towards a Newer Laocoon." *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 1, *Perceptions and Judgements 1939-1944*, edited by John O'Brian, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988, pp. 23-37.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. *The Greenblatt Reader*, edited by Michael Payne, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
- . "The Interart Movement." Lagerroth et al., pp. 13-15.
- Haight, Elizabeth Hazelton. "Horace on Art: *Ut pictura poesis*." *The Classical Journal*, vol. 47, no. 5, 1952, pp. 157-62+201-02.
- Hallet, Wolfgang. "A Methodology of Intermediality in Literary Studies." Rippl, pp. 605-18.
- Hampson, Robert, and Will Montgomery. "Innovations in Poetry." *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, edited Peter Brooker et al. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 63-84.
- Hayles, N. Katherine, and Jessica Pressman. Introduction. *Making, Critique: A Media Framework. Comparative Textual Media: Transforming the Humanities in the Postprint Era*, edited by Hayles and Pressman, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013, pp. vii-xxxiii.
- Heffernan, James A. W. *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Helsing, Elizabeth K. *Poetry and the Pre-Raphaelite Arts: Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Morris*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.
- Herzogenrath, Bernd, editor. *Travels in Intermedia[lity]: Re-Blurring the Boundaries*. Dartmouth: Dartmouth College Press, 2012.

- Higgins, Dick. *Horizons: The Poetics and Theory of the Intermedia*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984.
- Howard, William Guild. "Ut pictura poesis." *PMLA*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1909, pp. 40-123.
- Howe, Susan. *Spontaneous Particulars: The Telepathy of Archives*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2020.
- Huang, Yunte. *Transpacific Displacement: Ethnography, Translation, and Intertextual Travel in Twentieth-Century American Literature*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Hughes, Mary Joe. *The Move beyond Form: Creative Undoing in Literature and the Arts since 1960*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Hutchinson, Ben. *Modernism and Style*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Jacobs, Karen. *The Eye's Mind: Literary Modernism and Visual Culture*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001.
- Jakobson, Roman. "On the Verbal Art of William Blake and Other Poet-Painters." *Linguistic Inquiry*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1970, pp. 3-23.
- . "Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry (Excerpts)." *Roman Jakobson: Language and Poetry*, special issue of *Poetics Today*, vol. 2, no. 1a, 1980, pp. 83-85.
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981.
- . *A Singular Modernity*. London: Verso, 2012.
- Johansson, Christer, and Sonya Petersson. Introduction. *The Power of the In-Between: Intermediality as a Tool for Aesthetic Analysis and Critical Reflection*, edited by Petersson et al., Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2018, pp. 1-21.
- Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing, 2011.
- Kamien-Kazhdan, Adina. *Remaking the Readymade: Duchamp, Man Ray, and the Conundrum of the Replica*. London: Routledge, 2018.
- Kandinsky, Wassily. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. Translated by M. T. H. Sadler, New York: Dover Publications, 1977.
- Klee, Paul. *Creative Confession and Other Writings*. London: Tate Publishing, 2013.
- Krieger, Murray. "Ekphrasis and the Still Movement of Poetry; or Laokoön Revisited." *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2019, pp. 263-88.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Revolution on Poetic Language*. Translated by Margaret Waller, New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.
- Lagerroth, Ulla-Britta, et al., editors. *Interart Poetics: Essays on the Interrelations of the Arts and Media*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997.
- Lawrence, D. H. "Introduction to His Paintings." *Selected Essays*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976, pp. 307-46.

- Lee, Rensselaer W. *Ut pictura poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1967.
- Lehan, Richard. *Literary Modernism and Beyond: The Extended Vision and the Realms of the Text*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012.
- Leighton, Angela. *On Form: Poetry, Aestheticism, and the Legacy of a Word*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Leitch, Vincent B. "Deconstruction and Pedagogy." *Theory in the Classroom*, edited by Cary Nelson, Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1986.
- Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim. *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Poetry and Painting*. Translated by Edward Allen McCormick, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984.
- Levenson, Michael. *Modernism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.
- Levine, Caroline. *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Lewis, Cara L. "Still Life in Motion: Mortal Form in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*." *Twentieth-Century Literature*, vol. 60, no. 4, 2014, pp. 423-54.
- Li, Shuangyi. *Travel, Translation and Transmedia Aesthetics: Franco-Chinese Literature and Visual Arts in a Global Age*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.
- Li, Zehou. *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*. Translated by Maija Bell Samei, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009.
- Lloyd, Rosemary. *Shimmering in a Transformed Light: Writing the Still Life*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005.
- Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. London: Thomas Tegg, 1829.
- Logan, Robert K., and Marshall McLuhan. *The Future of the Library: From Electric Media to Digital Media*. New York: Peter Lang, 2016.
- Loizeaux, Elizabeth Bergmann. *Twentieth-Century Poetry and the Visual Arts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Louvel, Liliane. *The Pictorial Third: An Essay into Intermedial Criticism*, edited and translated by Angeliki Tseti, New York: Routledge, 2018.
- Lyon, Janet. *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. *Driftworks*, edited by Roger McKeon, New York: Semiotext(e), 1984.
- . *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*. Translated by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991.
- MacGowan, Christopher. *Twentieth-Century American Poetry*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.
- MacLeod, Glen. "The Visual Arts." *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, edited by Michael Levenson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 194-216.

- Mao, Douglas. Introduction. The New Modernist Studies. *The New Modernist Studies*, edited by Mao, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021, pp. 1-22.
- Marcuse, Herbert. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso. *Futurist Manifestos*, edited by Umbro Apollonio, translated by Robert Brain et al., London: Tate Publishing, 1973.
- . *F. T. Marinetti, Selected Writings*, edited by R. W. Flint, translated by Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1972.
- Markiewicz, Henryk, and Uliana Gabara. "Ut pictura poesis...A History of the Topos and the Problem." *On Poetry*, special issue of *New Literary History*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1987, pp. 535-58.
- Matisse, Henri. "Facility in Painting." 1948. Translated by Esther Rowland Clifford. *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, edited by Herschel B. Chipp, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996, pp. 140-41.
- Matz, Jesse. *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- McClatchy, J. D., editor. *Poets on Painters: Essays on the Art of Painting by Twentieth-Century Poets*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.
- McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965.
- Miller, Tyrus. "Medium-New." *Historical Modernisms: Time, History and Modernist Aesthetics*, edited by Jean-Michel Rabaté and Angeliki Spiropoulou, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021, pp. 121-39.
- . *Singular Examples: Artistic Politics and the Neo-Avant-Garde*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009.
- Mitchell, W. J. T. *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- . *Image Science: Iconology, Visual Culture, and Media Aesthetics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.
- , editor. *Landscape and Power*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.
- . *Metapictures: Images and the Discourse of Theory*. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2023.
- . *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- . "There Are No Visual Media." *Journal of Visual Culture*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2005, pp. 257-66.
- Moore, Marianne. *The Complete Poems of Marianne Moore*. London: Faber & Faber, 1967.
- . "People Stare Carefully." *Critical Essays on E. E. Cummings*, edited by Guy Rotella, Boston: G. K. Hall, 1984, pp. 46-49.
- . "Tedium and Integrity in Poetry." *East-West Exchange and Late Modernism*, by Qian, pp. 143-55.

- Moran, Joe. *Interdisciplinarity*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Murphet, Julian. *Multimedia Modernism: Literature and the Anglo-American Avant-Garde*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Müller, Jürgen E. "Intermediality: A Plea and Some Theses for a New Approach in Media Studies." Lagerroth et al., pp. 295-304.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Muses*. Translated by Peggy Kamuf, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994.
- . *The Pleasure in Drawing*. Translated by Philip Armstrong, New York: Fordham University Press, 2013.
- North, Michael. *Camera Works: Photography and the Twentieth-Century Word*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Oosterling, Henk, and Ewa Plonowska Ziarek. General Introduction. *Intermedialities: Philosophy, Arts, Politics*, edited by Oosterling and Ziarek, New York: Lexington Books, 2011, pp. 1-7.
- Panofsky, Erwin. "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art." *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers in and on Art History*. New York: Anchor Books, 1995, pp. 26-54.
- Park, Roy. "'Ut pictura poesis': The Nineteenth-Century Aftermath." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1969, pp. 155-64.
- Pater, Walter. *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, edited by Donald L. Hill, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.
- Pavis, Patrice. *Contemporary Mise en Scène: Staging Theatre Today*. Translated by Joel Anderson, London: Routledge, 2012.
- Perloff, Marjorie. *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- . *Infrathin: An Experiment in Micropoetics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021.
- . *Unoriginal Genius: Poetry by Other Means in the New Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- . *21st-Century Modernism: The "New" Poetics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002.
- Picasso, Pablo. *Picasso: Forty Years of His Art*, edited by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1939.
- Pound, Ezra. *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, edited by T. S. Eliot, New York: New Directions, 1968.
- Praz, Mario. *Mnemosyne: The Parallel between Literature and the Visual Arts*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970.
- Preminger, Alex, and T. V. F. Brogan, editors. *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993.

- Proust, Marcel. *Remembrance of Things Past*. Translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, New York: Vintage, 1982.
- Puchner, Martin. *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Punzi, Maddalena Pennacchia. Literary Intermediality: An Introduction. *Literary Intermediality: The Transit of Literature through the Media Circuit*, edited by Punzi, New York: Peter Lang, 2007, pp. 9-14.
- Qian, Zhaoming. *East-West Exchange and Late Modernism: Williams, Moore, Pound*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017.
- , editor. *Ezra Pound's Chinese Friends: Stories in Letters*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- . *The Modernist Response to Chinese Art: Pound, Moore, Stevens*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003.
- . *Orientalism and Modernism: The Legacy of China in Pound and Williams*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995.
- Rajewsky, Irina O. "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation." *Intermediality: History and Theory of the Arts, Literature and Technologies*, no. 6, 2005, pp. 43-64.
- Ramazani, Jahan. *Poetry and Its Others: News, Prayer, Song, and the Dialogue of Genres*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.
- Rancière, Jacques. *Figures of History*. Translated by Julie Rose, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015.
- . *The Future of the Image*. Translated by Gregory Elliott, London: Verso, 2019.
- . *The Time of the Landscape: On the Origins of the Aesthetic Revolution*. Translated by Emiliano Battista, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2023.
- Rich, Adrienne. *Poems: Selected and New, 1950-1974*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1975.
- Rippl, Gabriele. Introduction. *Handbook of Intermediality: Literature-Image-Sound-Music*, edited by Rippl, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015, pp. 1-31.
- Rogers, Franklin R. *Painting and Poetry: Form, Metaphor, and the Language of Literature*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1985.
- Rorty, Richard M. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980.
- Roston, Murray. *Modernist Patterns in Literature and the Visual Arts*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000.
- Runchman, Alex, and Tom Walker. "Introduction: Modernism's Collaborative Poetics." *Collaborative Poetics*, special issue of *Modernist Cultures*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2019, pp. 1-16.
- Ruskin, John. *The Complete Works of John Ruskin: Modern Painters*. Vol. II. New York: Kelmscott Society, 1900.
- Russell, Bertrand. "Chinese Civilization and the West." *The Dial*, vol. 72, no. 4, 1922, pp. 356-64.

- Saisselin, Rémy G. "Ut pictura poesis: DuBos to Diderot." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 20, no. 2, 1961, pp. 144-56.
- Sanchez, Rebecca. *Deafening Modernism: Embodied Language and Visual Poetics in American Literature*. New York: New York University Press, 2015.
- Schiller, Friedrich. *Letters on the Esthetic Education of Man*. Translated by E. M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby. *Critical Theory since Plato*, edited by Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2004, pp. 461-72.
- Schröter, Jens. "Four Models of Intermediality." Herzogenrath, pp. 15-36.
- Shattuck, Roger. "The Art of Stillness." *The Banquet Years: The Origins of the Avant-Garde in France, 1885 to World War I*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1969, pp. 325-52.
- Sidney, Philip. *An Apology for Poetry (or The Defence of Poesy)*, edited by Geoffrey Shepherd, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989.
- Siraganian, Lisa. *Modernism's Other Work: The Art Object's Political Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Sousanis, Nick. *Unflattening*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Death of a Discipline*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.
- . "Translation as Culture." *Parallax*, vol. 6, no.1, 2000, pp. 13-24.
- Stein, Gertrude. *Tender Buttons: The Corrected Centennial Edition*, edited by Seth Perlow, San Francisco: City Lights, 2014.
- Steiner, Wendy. *The Colours of Rhetoric: Problems in the Relation between Modern Literature and Painting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- Stevens, Wallace. *The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951.
- Sutton, Walter. "The Literary Image and the Reader: A Consideration of the Theory of Spatial Form." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1957, pp. 112-23.
- Synge, J. M. *The Playboy of the Western World and Riders to the Sea*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Taylor, Joshua C. Introduction to "Futurism: Dynamism as the Expression of the Modern World." *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, edited by Herschel B. Chipp, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996, 281-83.
- Teukolsky, Rachel. *The Literate Eye: Victorian Art Writing and Modernist Aesthetics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Tobin, Claudia. *Modernism and Still Life: Artists, Writers, Dancers*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020.
- Trotter, David. *The Literature of Connection: Signal, Medium, Interface, 1850-1950*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

- . *Literature in the First Media Age: Britain between the Wars*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.
- Tzara, Tristan. "Dada Manifesto." Translated by Barbara Wright. *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents*, edited by Vassiliki Kolocotroni et al., Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013, pp. 276-80.
- Waddell, Nathan. "Modernist Coterie and Communities." *The Oxford Handbook of Modernism*, edited by Peter Brooker et al., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 740-61.
- Wagner, Peter. Introduction: Ekphrasis, Iconotexts, and Intermediality – the State(s) of the Art(s). *Icons – Texts – Iconotexts: Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*, edited by Wagner, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996, pp. 1-40.
- Weisstein, Ulrich. *Comparative Literature and Literary Theory: Survey and Introduction*. Translated by William Riggan, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973.
- . "Literature and the Visual Arts." *Interrelations of Literature*, edited by Jean-Pierre Barricelli and Joseph Gibaldi, New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1982, pp. 251-77.
- Wellek, René, and Austin Warren. "Literature and the Other Arts." *Theory of Literature*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1956, pp. 125-35.
- Wolf, Werner. "Framings of Narrative in Literature and the Pictorial Arts." *Storyworlds across Media: Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*, edited by Marie-Laure Ryan and Jan-Noël Thon, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014, pp. 126-47.
- . Introduction: Frames, Framings and Framing Borders in Literature and Other Media. *Framing Borders in Literature and Other Media*, edited by Wolf and Walter Bernhart, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006, pp. 1-40.
- . "Intermediality." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, edited by David Herman et al., New York: Routledge, 2005, pp. 252-56.
- Woolf, Virginia. "Pictures." *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: 1925-1928*, edited by Andrew McNeillie, London: Hogarth Press, 1994, pp. 243-47.

Appendix 1
Letter to a Toy Merchant from Mina Loy¹

Steny Acres
Olmstead Mill Road
Wilton
Cenn:
Aug 6th ~~July~~ 1940

Dear Sir,

I am submitting to you the rough drafts of two Alphabet games in case they might interest you. They consist of two variations of the same theme.

No:1. A box containing, in sep[a]rate compartments the different pieces with which to form letters, and a board having slightly raised ridges at intervals to hold the letters in line.

This educational game is titled

BUILD YOUR OWN ALPHABET

The pieces of let[t]ers to be put together should be manufactured of attractive inexpensive plastics, or brightly lacquered cardboard. These are laid on the board of a contrasting colour during the process of Alphabet Construction.

This method of constructing the ABC grips the child's interest, and the rapidity with which he learns his letters is surprising. It stimulates his observation of form, construction and similarities. He enjoys it as a good game.

Attached to this letter is a description of how the alphabet is put together, to give an idea of how the "teacher" or elder playfellow presents the letter-building to the little one. It may at first glance appear repetitive and ever abundant in detail, but it is this repetition and detail that, I found in my own experience, fixes the letters so easily and firmly in the budding mentality.

A child's attention wanders if each letter is introduced with the same preamble. The occasional "jolt" of "Now let us make a magic and turn — into —" has proved to be most inspiring.

¹ Mina Loy, *Letter* (1941), Mina Loy Papers, box 7, fol. 184, YCAL MSS 6, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Also attached please find explanations of a second game. ~~ALSO A THIRD: AN ALPHABET TOY~~

Believe me Yours

most truly

Mina Lloyd

Under sep[ar]ate Cover I send herewith 1 rough MODEL of Alphabet Toy

[SIGNATURE: Mina Lloyd]

NO:2

This second game is on the same principle as the first with the difference that the letter parts are made of thick upstanding blocks.

It is titled: –

THE ALPHABET THAT BUILDS ITSELF.

The surfaces of the sides that meet, (that is, sides of the blocks,) in the formation of the letters, have small pieces of magnetic metal fitted into them. Consequently when the child is about to bring the block “parts” together the magnetic pull causes them to spring together, which highly delighted the small student.

NB. Should magnetic connectors be too expensive ~~the few~~ the few “parts” which cannot be supported by the mere building of the blocks,/ viz: SUCH AS OCCUR IN E F N K P (R – perhaps) S and Z, can be held in place with small protuberances (page) fitting into holes. Or with some sort of spring. Should such letters ever – balance, a small piece of lead must be inserted into the base or upright block in the letter.

Enclosed please find rough draft of six letters showing both magnetic and peg (also bag of letter-parts) connectors; also lead inserted for stability.

Appendix 2

Marianne Moore: "E. E. Cummings"²

December 2, 1962 E. E. Cummings 1894-1962 The Academy December 5, 1962

E. E. Cummings was too distinctive a person to be subjected to inapposite comment. It is with difference that I am here – as Mr. Brooks and Miss Geffen will corroborate.

Art, E. E. Cummings said, is pur[e] personal feelings. His work says it again – the painting, writing, drawing: especially the line drawings comprising curves, swirls, and leaning ellipses, are like Chinese calligraphy which does not hesitate. His art of economy has left its mark on us, making verbosity seem suicidally crass. Instead of saying that the prison cell was six feet long and four feet wide, he says it was six feet short and four feet narrow.

Ignorance to E. E. Cummings was "a monster, the collective pseudo-beast." Nonentity as "the general managerr smoked a robert burns cigerr to the god of things as they err."

A poem by E. E. Cummings has the sound of the voice:

SNO falls
...
(on air)
don't speak

and I've come to ask you if there isn't a
 new moon outside your window saying
 if that's all, just if

This grace with naturalness is best personified, I think, in the text by E. E. Cummings to Marion Cummings' photographs entitled ADVENTURES IN VALUE: "a wave...beginning--e-x-p-a-n-d-i-n-g--uprearing--to" infinity?, he leaves us to say it.

The cross-shadows in Patchin Place enshrine reverence: "and nobody ever thought of touching them," the water-lillies [sic] Mrs. Corkery, care-taker of Patchin Place, remembers in the fountain behind Washington Square arch.

One of the pictures is of a stone angel – a marvel of grace – superimposed on a grave, its wings closing about the grave in all-embracing compassion.

E. E. Cummings said (in another connection), "as men call him, ends what they call The face of it is dire. It makes of us orphans, waifs, mourners. Attempted consolation emphasises the

² Marianne Moore, "E. E. Cummings 1894-1962 The Academy December 5, 1962" (Typescript), box 26, James Sibley Watson/The Dial Papers, Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

impossibility of consolation. For a positiveness, however, that is indivisibly dismemberable joy, it doesn't exist. At the Dial, we talked about "intensity" as a test of what purported to be art. What is this individual thing? that lasts, that can not be counterfeited, this magician's secret that we call beauty – the result of hyper-care that is synonymous with affection? Henry McBride, our art critic for The Dial said of the paintings by E. E. Cummings exhibited by the American-British Art Centre, "They have the purities of mushrooms bloom in darkness." His oil, "Paris Roofs, rue de la Bucherie" has this sacrosanctity of untainted naturalness; some of his poems have it. Tow [sic] poems especially have made an indelible impression on me – the one about the gravenstein apples, in its ability to evoke a place where apples grow by a wall in sunny grass:

It's over a (see just
over this) wall

There are further lines, returning then like a fugue, to say:

But over a (see just
over this) wall
the red and the round
(they're gravensteins) fall
With a kind of a blind
big sound on the ground

The other poem is yet more the person. I has the unyielding vitality of one who knew how "in an epoch of Unself" (of nonself) "to be ONEself":

Now (more near ourselves than we)
is bird singing in a tree
who never sings the same thing twice
and still that singing's always his
.....
there never was a gayer he:
...