

Counting bodies: the untempered spaces of Mina Loy

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COUNTING BODIES: THE UNTEMPERED SPACES OF MINA LOY

JACINTA KELLY

A thesis submitted to the University of New South Wales

in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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This dissertation takes as its starting point the centrality of Mina Loy to modernism, and argues that the modernist conceptualisation of movement, inextricable from the work of philosopher Henri Bergson, sits at the heart of her work and significance. It contributes not only to existing Loy scholarship, but also to criticism that examines Bergson's impact on literary modernism. Loy scholars frequently acknowledge Bergson's influence on Loy's work; yet, little has been done to probe the effects of this influence. I propose that a key component of Bergson's importance to Loy lies in the connections he draws between movement and free will. My approach to Loy's work in terms of mobility enables a reading of the complex and ostensibly contradictory facets of her work. In order to demonstrate these connections, I consider a range of Loy's poetry, prose, essays and inventions from across her career, both published and unpublished. My examination of Loy's manuscripts alongside her published texts reveals the persistence of her interest in embodied movement and its interconnection with technology, space and temporality.

Firstly, I argue that Loy's early engagement with Bergson, and his insistence on flux over spatiality and stasis, offers a productive counterpoint to the limits imposed by both the domestic home and the static, inert female body of Futurism. Further, this engagement radically inflects the way in which Loy experiments with language and text. She produces texts that deliberately dismantle their own limits by spilling into their own margins or by complicating the ready distinction between poetic space and the external world of its poet. Next I examine how she deploys mobility to trouble the inherent limits of the organic body, the temporal body, the machine-body and the atomic body, and therefore how she navigates the rapidly changing technosphere of the early twentieth century. This dissertation thus also makes a contribution to the recent inquiries of New Modernist Studies, in particular, the role of embodiment, gender, and technology in literary production.

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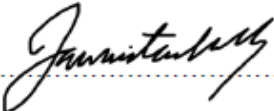
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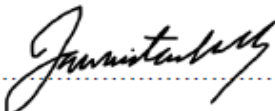
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Abstract

This dissertation takes as its starting point the centrality of Mina Loy to modernism, and argues that the modernist conceptualisation of movement, inextricable from the work of philosopher Henri Bergson, sits at the heart of her work and significance. It contributes not only to existing Loy scholarship, but also to criticism that examines Bergson's impact on literary modernism. Loy scholars frequently acknowledge Bergson's influence on Loy's work; yet, little has been done to probe the effects of this influence. I propose that a key component of Bergson's importance to Loy lies in the connections he draws between movement and free will. My approach to Loy's work in terms of mobility enables a reading of the complex and ostensibly contradictory facets of her work. In order to demonstrate these connections, I consider a range of Loy's poetry, prose, essays and inventions from across her career, both published and unpublished. My examination of Loy's manuscripts alongside her published texts reveals the persistence of her interest in embodied movement and its interconnection with technology, space and temporality.

Firstly, I argue that Loy's early engagement with Bergson, and his insistence on flux over spatiality and stasis, offers a productive counterpoint to the limits imposed by both the domestic home and the static, inert female body of Futurism. Further, this engagement radically inflects the way in which Loy experiments with language and text. She produces texts that deliberately dismantle their own limits by spilling into their own margins or by complicating the ready distinction between poetic space and the external world of its poet. Next I examine how she deploys mobility to trouble the inherent limits of the organic body, the temporal body, the machine-body and the atomic body, and therefore how she navigates the rapidly changing technosphere of the early twentieth century. This dissertation thus also makes a contribution to the recent inquiries of New Modernist Studies, in particular, the role of embodiment, gender, and technology in literary production.

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Relevant papers arising from the PhD

Publications:

- “‘Human Cylinders’: Mina Loy and the Technological Age.” *Pockets of Change: Cultural Adaptations and Transitions*. Eds. Tricia Hopton, Adam Atkinson, Jane Stadler and Peta Mitchell. Maryland: Lexington Books, 2011. 133-144.
- “Purging the Birdcage: The Dissolution of Space in Mina Loy’s Poetry.” *Limina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies*, 18.1 (2012), <http://www.limina.arts.uwa.edu.au/>

Conferences and Seminars:

- “Exhuming Maternal Ditches: Mina Loy and Technology’s Bodies” *Time Machine Arts Festival*, Serial Space, 18-29, July 2012.
- “From within the ‘Lion’s Jaws’: Mina Loy and the Technological Age” *Pockets of Change: Cultural Adaptations and Transitions*, University of Queensland, 4-6, September 2009.
- “‘Human Cylinders’: Mina Loy and the Technological Age” *Crisis: tension, transition, transformation*, English, Media and Performing Arts Postgraduate Symposium, University of New South Wales, 15-16, October, 2009.
- “Mina Loy’s ‘Songs to Joannes’” Workshop, Centre for Modernism Studies in Australia, University of New South Wales, 7 March 2012.
- “‘Nothing Here but Infinity’: The Imperative for Movement in Mina Loy” *Moving Modernisms*, University of Oxford, 21-24, March 2012.
- “Plastic Static: Mina Loy’s Poetic Vision” *Making Tracks*, School of Arts and Media Postgraduate Symposium, University of New South Wales, 3 September 2012.
- “Silence and Materiality in Mina Loy’s Manuscripts” *Literature and Censorship*, Australasian Association for Literature, Australian Defence Force Academy, 11-13, July 2012.
- “‘A Trickle of Saliva’: Excavating the body in Mina Loy’s poetry” *Science and Literature*, Australasian Association for Literature, University of New South Wales, 5-6, July, 2010.

A Note on Manuscripts

Abbreviations

YCAL: Yale Collections of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

MSS 6: Mina Loy Papers.

MSS 196: Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers.

Notation

All manuscripts in this thesis are from the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (YCAL).

Citations from manuscripts in this thesis aim to emulate the wording and visual organisation of the original drafts as far as possible.

Where I have been unable to decipher the original text with certainty, my approximation of the word appears as follows:

<?approximation>

Where Loy has drafted and then struck out a word, note of this has either been made in the text, or it appears in quotation as follows:

~~deletion~~

To movement, then, everything will be restored, and into movement everything will be resolved (Bergson *Creative Evolution* 25)

Introduction

Now, if some bold novelist, tearing aside the cleverly woven curtains of our conventional ego, shows us under this appearance of logic a fundamental absurdity, under this juxtaposition of simple states an infinite permeation of a thousand different impressions which have already ceased to exist the instant they are named, we commend him for having known us better than we knew ourselves. (Bergson *Time* 133)

This thesis takes as its primary point of departure the centrality to Modernism of the figure of Mina Loy. It proposes, further, that the modernist conceptualisation of movement, inextricably tied to the work of philosopher Henri Bergson, sits at the heart of her work and her significance. Loy's work is in every sense an embodiment of movement; indeed, she isolates "stasis" as a critical obstacle to creative and embodied freedom and to the very apprehension of real experience. Yet despite her centrality to Modernism, Loy's deliberate refusal of a fixed poetic identity has, Roger Conover argues, rendered her work rather difficult to categorise, and until recently, she consequently evaded critical attention ("Introduction" xiii). This thesis contends that reading Loy's poetry through Bergson's philosophical lens with particular attention to its emphasis on the immobilities of space and the centrality of movement demonstrates that her diverse, even contradictory, interests share a common impulse, and also enables the navigation of an astonishing breadth of her work. In particular, this thesis clarifies the operations of bodies, their limits, and their relationship to the technologies of machines and to quantum mechanics in her work. It also characterises Loy's formal experimentation that probes the limits of language, its circumscription within textual space and signification, the experimental deployment of syntax, and the workings of her "automythology".

Loy came into contact with Bergson's work early in her career, and this thesis argues not only for a consideration of similar interests between a poet and a philosopher, but also for an interrogation of the ways in which this philosopher's work might have been registered upon and extended through the poet's writing. This kind of detailed account of the way in which Loy's work appropriates Bergson's theory of space and movement, and the profound impact on her

poetics, has hitherto not been undertaken. Bergson critiques the intellect's tendency to consider matter "*provisionally final*" rather than as a state of flux, a tendency enabled by the encroachment of spatial terms upon conscious experience (*Creative* 154, italics in original). The erroneous application of immobile spatial constructs on movement and flux are of critical importance to Bergson's metaphysics, particularly his theorisation of *durée*,¹ the intuitive experience of time not structured by clock-time, and *élan vital*,² the vital impulse that agitates life towards evolution. According to these theories, space shackles and is thus oppositional to movement, and it is movement—rather than immobile spatiality—that characterises real life, free will, creativity, and language. Space and movement, then, are both inextricable and yet contrary: movement embodies what spatialisation occludes.

This thesis maps Loy's exploration of movement, and proposes that this is critical to the gendered and artistic experience of bodies and language. It argues that this poetics of movement characterises her engagement with, and artistic representation of, concomitant avant-garde movements and changing concepts of the modern body. What is at stake here is the access of the body—particularly the feminine body—to creativity. Creativity is both artistic and lived: it entails access to aesthetic production and the continued evolution of artistic expression, as well as the evolution of consciousness and the body's capacity for procreation as a supremely aesthetic event. The woman relegated to stasis, then, is readily controlled, and is occluded from creative practice and authentic experience. In addition, this thesis argues that there are various forms of movement that are qualitatively different, and which have, consequently, different implications for free will. Mobility, or the traversing of space, is critical to embodied freedom; indeed, it is the restriction of this kind of movement that enables the control of women within domestic spaces. Yet, mobility alone is not a guarantee of free will: a body can traverse space under the direction of an external force. The most productive kind of movement, I argue, is motility; that is, movement which is a bodily condition, which is inherent and relentless, and which cannot be externally manipulated. Loy explores both of these kinds of movement with a view towards

¹ For a detailed account of *durée*, see Chapter One.

² For a detailed account of *élan vital*, see Chapter Three.

evaluating their relationship to creativity and free will. Bergson's work is particularly productive for considering the ways in which this manifests in her writing, given his similar interrogation of the nexus between movement, creativity, and free will, and given Loy's contact with Bergsonian thought.

As free will and movement are so critical to creative process, this thesis not only examines work from Loy's published corpus, but additionally considers archival drafts from the Beinecke collection of American Literature that reveal the way in which Loy's own writerly practice is inflected by her experimentation with spatial limits. The unpublished novels and poetry that I examine here test out Loy's ideas on space and movement that are then formalised in her poetry. Indeed, without the restraints of the printing press, her unpublished work is often free to interrogate the visual space of the text in ways that might be precluded from published work. These works thus bear witness to the creative unfolding of ideas that are formalised in the published texts. Indeed, in some of these manuscripts, experimentation is possible in a way that is not in published material. For instance, writing beyond the margins of the hegemonic, or central, text, represents a means of facilitating creative activity that would otherwise be barred from aesthetic production. Moreover, much of Loy's writing of the 1920s and 1930s, particularly her unpublished novels, remains in manuscript form; it is therefore impossible to consider a breadth of her writing over time without the examination of these texts. Indeed, an examination of Loy's manuscripts alongside her published texts reveals the persistence of her interest in embodied movement and its interconnection with technology, space and temporality. To reveal this nexus, this thesis also introduces archival poetry that is yet to be critically acknowledged—namely, “Sunlight Somnambulist” and “Eros of Offices”³—which portray the internal movements of a body dislocated from time, and the mechanical movements of the machine-body respectively.

³ Both these poems exist in draft form, and have been filed in the archives under Loy's poem “Brain” (Box 5, fol. 80). However, neither of these poems resembles “Brain,” and thus I argue that they should be considered in their own right. For more on “Sunlight Somnambulist,” see Chapter Three. For more on “Eros of Offices,” see Chapter Four. As they were written on the verso of “Brain,” they were likely composed at a similar time in around the late 1930s or early 1940s (see

Loy's early identification of stasis with the domicile body is explored in Chapter One. Here, I chart Loy's reaction against conventionally gendered spaces of the domestic house in dialogue with Italian Futurism and Bergson at the outset of her career. I argue that this results in the formulation of Loy's poetics predicated on movement and an insistence that spatial limits are not impermeable or interminable, but unstable and porous. This chapter considers work that Loy wrote in Florence during her initial engagement with Futurism and Bergson; that is, writing that was penned when she first began to consider the lived consequences of embodied movement, particularly for the female body. It also canvasses her unpublished prose writing from the 1920s and 1930s, in order to demonstrate that these concerns are not circumscribed to her time in Florence, but persist decades later and thus reveal a career-long vision couched in the embodied implications of movement and space.

Chapter Two tests the limits of this vision in specific relation to language and argues that Loy does not adhere in a strict way to Bergsonian philosophy; rather, her poetic experiments entail an imaginative extension of his account of language and its "space". Bergson contends that the placement of ideas side by side artificially circumvents philosophical inquiry by presenting us with "insurmountable problems," and yet the human intellect has no choice (*Time* xix, 160). Loy is rather more optimistic. Where Bergson does not query the sustainability of the separation between concepts in language, Loy does. She takes Bergson's critique of extensity's hold over language and pushes it to its logical conclusion: if an understanding of language and concepts is limited by spatial terms, then we must unfetter language from space. Here, I consider in detail Loy's "Feminist Manifesto," (1914) for I argue that this is an early manifestation of Loy's interest in the relationship between language and space that performatively undoes the spatial coherence of signifiers and syntax. Moreover, by endowing poetic language with movement, Loy figures art as a means for women to cast off their conventionally imposed domestic stasis. Movement, for Loy, is therefore political, as it signifies a way to overcome gendered restrictions on the body and is thus central to the facilitation of women's changing roles. This chapter therefore

Conover's "Textual Notes" to *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, 327, for the dating of "Brain's" composition).

also examines a selection of Loy's texts that reveal how writing—specifically, writing that confounds the spatial limits of language—can be a site of resistance that is mobilised in the same gesture as unfettering the feminine body from conventional (and spatialised) constraints; namely, the rarely discussed chapter “Ladies in an Aviary” from her unpublished novel *The Child and the Parent*, (c. 1920–1930), Loy's poem “The Effectual Marriage, or, The Insipid Narrative of Gina and Miovanni,” (1915, hereafter “Effectual Marriage”) and drafts of her unpublished novel *Goy Israels* (c. 1930–1940).⁴

Chapter Three clarifies the way in which this movement not only confounds space, but also occurs through time. Loy's casting of the body as a process that disassembles its spatial perimeters renders it inextricable from time, specifically time as *durée*. She conceives of time as a forward momentum in which the past pushes toward an impending and unfolding future that facilitates evolution and change. This chapter examines Loy's manuscript for “Sunlight Somnambulist,” (c. late 1930s to early 1940s) as well as her posthumously published novel *Insel* (c. 1930s), as these texts present bodies that move in a way that do not experience the pulse of time in a way that is connected to the external world. Such movement, I argue, is occluded from authenticity or aesthetic productivity. Further, as temporality is imperative to continual change, it is revealed here to be a condition not only of bodies in movement, but bodies that are capable of artistic creation. I compare the artistic creation of the body in “Parturition,” (1914) which is embedded in time, and that in Loy's short story, “The Stomach,” (1921) which enacts repetition rather than temporal progress, and propose that time has a profound impact on each body's ability to produce art.

Chapter Four then interrogates the implications of modern technology for representations of embodied movement. Through an examination of Loy's response to the machine-body and Dada, I demonstrate that productive movement for Loy occurs not only temporally, but intrinsically. In

⁴ Conover suggests that Loy writes a number of parallel autobiographical novels between 1923 and 1930 (*LaLB*, lxxii), of which *The Child and the Parent* could be a part, and Parmar places the composition date about twenty years before that of *Islands in the Air*, (“Mina Loy's ‘Unfinishing’ Self,” 78) which she dates “during and after World War II” (89). The approximate date of *Goy Israels* is suggested by Burke in her biography, *Becoming Modern* (375).

contradistinction, mechanical movement is both externally controlled, and is dislocated from the flux of time. An examination of Loy's poetry that represents the mechanical body, such as "Brain," (c. late 1930s–early 1940s) "Human Cylinders," (1917) "Impossible Opus" (1961) and her short story, "All the Laughs in one Short Story by McAlmon" (c. 1923),⁵ and the manuscript for "Eros of Offices" reveal that bodies figured as machines are thus objectified, stripped of their agency and their capacity for artistic production. That is, temporality and agency are both imperative to authentic bodily movement, and are absent from the mechanical body. Unlike many of her contemporaries, then, Loy saw in mechanical embodiment a spectre that inhabits not intrinsic modernity or masculine power, but an objectified body relegated to repetition and boredom.

Chapter Five complicates Loy's reaction to technology set out in Chapter Four, arguing that she does not repudiate it wholesale; indeed, Loy is profoundly interested in the volatility of nuclear physics and early-century quantum mechanics, and explores its potential as a metaphor for embodied movement. Through the examination of the atomic in Loy's work, such as her poems and essays on Gertrude Stein and Constantin Brancusi, as well as *Insel* and "Time Bomb" (1945),⁶ I further establish her distinction between inherent and directed movement, for she conceives of atomic movement as already and always in progress. Truly productive movement, therefore, is motile: it is inherent, volatile, and confounds the coherence of enclosed and singular embodied space. It is this motility the mechanical body lacks, and that is recuperated by the atomic body. Loy thus navigates contemporaneous modernist movements and the rapidly changing technosphere of the early twentieth-century. By reading her work through a Bergsonian lens, I enable a consideration of Loy's diverse poetic practices and engagements at once according to their consequences for the body in movement.

⁵ In the notes to *Stories and Essays*, Crangle suggests that "All the Laughs" was written in response to Robert McAlmon's "The Laughing Funeral" in *Post-Adolescence*, published in 1923 (368-69). I suggest that Loy therefore wrote "All the Laughs" around the time of *Post-Adolescence's* publication.

⁶ First published in 1961 in *Between Worlds* 1:2. Date of composition c. 1945 asserted by Cristanne Miller, 194.

In this introduction, I chart the various ways in which Loy came in contact with Bergsonian metaphysics, and argue that there are three key levels of continuance between them. There is, firstly, a striking historical similarity between Loy's and Bergson's luminescent careers in the early twentieth century, their subsequent disappearance from critical attention, and their energetic recuperation in scholarship in recent years. By drawing attention to this historical similarity, I posit their shared centrality to early twentieth-century thought, and also their continued importance to recent Modernist criticism. The second level of continuance that I identify is Loy's direct contact with Bergson's work, as Loy engaged closely with Bergsonian metaphysics through her own reading of his works during the early years of her career. Loy's third level of contact with Bergson's metaphysics is indirect. Loy's writing is deeply modulated by early twentieth-century artistic movements that he influenced. Loy developed her own writing in dialogue with avant-garde artists, such as the Futurists, New York Dada, and Stein, who in different ways registered Bergson's valence for politically charging the body, and who adopted in varying degrees his metaphysics of movement and temporality. Additionally, Loy indirectly engages with Bergson through their shared interest in scientific advances; a particular point of confluence is their attention to the ways that science overthrows previously held views of matter as solid and stable. Indeed, these consequences were similarly registered by both the general public, and through artistic representations of bodies, matter, and space. Loy's interaction with Bergson via modernist practitioners on one hand, and scientific inquiry on the other, is profoundly interlinked. By reading her writing as a radical deployment of Bergson's account of movement, I propose that Loy envisions a motile feminine body that is charged with political and aesthetic potential, and that it is in this way that Loy's place in feminist history can be most productively asserted. Moreover, it is through a consideration of Loy's writing in tangent with Bergson's metaphysics that apparent schisms in her writing—particularly between the corporeal and the abstract—can be seen as unified, and as part of the same project.

However, this is not to suggest that Loy subscribed to Bergson (or to anyone for that matter) in order to follow, or even produce, a definitive and closed aesthetic theory. Indeed, to do so would engender an inherent paradox, for

any assertion of a “theory” or a “framework” that delineates a creative body of work necessarily imposes a spatial construct upon it. In “Conversion,” Loy writes that D. H. Lawrence “dangerously damned his own creative flux with a theory” (*Stories* 228). A theory, Loy purports, attempts to offer to the artist an “absolute,” a “mechanised” means of achieving art through a “ready-made”; the only creative gesture is for an artist to turn her back on absolutes. Thus, to attempt to unify what Loy does beneath a single umbrella is unavoidably thorny. This project aims not to impose a theory upon Loy’s work; rather, it proposes an aesthetic “system” in the spirit of Loy’s essay, “The Metaphysical Pattern in Aesthetics”. Loy asserts that the work of an artistic genius is identifiable not by subject matter, but by the presence of their “individuality” that is etched upon an “aesthetic system” (*Stories* 263). Thus, rather than a coherent or closed “theory,” I offer instead a reading of Loy that gestures to an aesthetic system, one which is by no means final or closed, but rather open-ended, internally conflicted, and conducive to other readings.

Moreover, I do not propose a historical reading of Loy’s poetry that attempts to connect specifics in Loy’s work to what she may have known about Bergson; that is, I do not undertake a project that points to Bergson as a straightforward “cause” to Loy’s “effect,” nor do I wish to imply that such a reading is possible. It would be an impossible task either to assert definitively what texts Loy read, or to insist that she embraces Bergson without affecting permutations of her own. Indeed, Loy dismantles spatial frameworks with more fervour than a strict Bergsonian aesthetic could permit, for the Bergsonian intellect requires spatiality in order to make sense of world, and thus could not proceed without space. Loy, on the other hand, confounds the parameters of space in a way that is beyond the scope of what a rigid adherence to Bergsonian metaphysics would permit. Rather, I contend that there are significant thematic and philosophical continuities between Loy and Bergson, that key Bergsonian ideas inflect Loy’s writing, and that Loy, in turn, imaginatively recasts these ideas in order to navigate the complex exigencies that she confronts in artistic accounts of the body, experience and gender, and does so in ways that often supersede the original purpose and scope of Bergson’s metaphysics.

To be sure, Loy’s work is inflected by a plurality of influences in addition to Bergson, many of which similarly had implications for embodiment and

movement, such as Futurism, Dada, changes in the technological landscape, and Freudian psychoanalysis. Yet, I propose that none of these influences alone can adequately explain Loy's conceptualisation of embodied movement and its consequences for free will in the way that a Bergsonian optic can. For instance, Futurism's enthusiastic embrace of movement in the figures of speed and dynamism not only specifically precludes women's involvement, but its celebration of the machine does not readily facilitate a consideration of free will. Similarly, while Loy worked closely with Dada, whose work also depicted embodied movement, their representation of movement is often explored in terms of the machine, which, for Loy, has no authentic agency. Loy also came into contact with Freud in 1922 (Burke *Becoming Modern* 313). Yet, while the body is critical to Freudian psychoanalysis, bodily movement in Loy's poetry and its capacity for creativity and free will does not so readily lend itself to a Freudian lens, which understands behaviour causally, that is, as a manifestation of psychological causes or bodily drives. The radicality of Loy's vision, on the other hand, rests on her resistance to determinism. Loy, like Bergson, insists upon actions that are not causally determined, but which are rather propelled by creative possibilities.⁷ Therefore, a Bergsonian lens is the most productive means to consider the key problematic of embodied movement that this thesis interrogates.

It is Bergson's earlier texts that Loy was likely to have read with Mabel Dodge Luhan, as she visited Dodge's residence frequently between 1910 and 1913. It is also these texts that are credited with having the most profound effect on literary Modernism. Although 1922 is frequently designated as Modernism's *annus mirabilis*,⁸ its central ideas were well worked out by that time, for as Mary Ann Gillies argues, the avant-garde, working between 1909 and 1914, were delineating their own artistic identities as radically different from those before, and it is Bergson's earlier, seminal works that were most pertinent to the crafting

⁷ Bergson argues that determinism and causality is only possible if we conceive of future time spatially, for such a view requires that we think of time in terms of pathways. His response to this view is that "Before the path was traced out there was no direction, either possible or impossible, for the very simple reason that there could not yet be any question of a path.' Get rid of this clumsy symbolism, the idea of which besets you without your knowing it; you will see that the argument of the determinists assumes this puerile form" (*Time* 182).

⁸ See North.

of these identities. Bergson's later texts, on the other hand, were published after Modernism's central ideas had already been teased out (Gillies 5-6). Given the years of Loy's direct engagement with Bergson in Florence, and the import of Bergson's earlier texts on Modernism—through which Bergson influenced Loy indirectly—this thesis is primarily interested in those works that were translated into English by this time; namely, *Time and Free Will* (1889), *Matter and Memory* (1896), *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (1900), and *Creative Evolution* (1907), all of which were translated into English by 1911. As such, it does not grapple at length with his later texts—that is, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1932), *The Creative Mind* (1934), or his controversial *Durée et Simultanéité* (1922), developed in response to Einstein's theory of general relativity—for these were published long after Loy's visits to Dodge, after Loy wrote much of her work, and after Modernism's central ideas had been crystallised.

The first level of continuance between Loy and Bergson is not one of influence but of the significant historical coincidence of their luminary careers, their subsequent disappearance, and their contemporary recuperation in criticism. Both Loy and Bergson were central figures in the early twentieth century; just as the translation of Bergson's texts into English in 1911 had a profound impact on modernism, few poets embodied modernity quite like Loy. Loy's axiomatic embrace of modernity was evident to her contemporaries: a reporter for the *New York Evening Sun* recounted how upon their search for the emblematic modern woman, they were advised: "Try Mina Loy: you know she writes free verse and thinks like that. If she isn't the modern woman, who is, pray?" ("Do You Strive" 10). Loy was deeply invested in numerous influential movements and artists; even the briefest gloss of her career reads like a catalogue of modernist art. In addition to her involvement in Futurism, Dada and her recurring presence in the salons of Dodge and the Arensbergs, Loy frequented Natalie Barney's Paris Salon in the late 1920s, where she introduced Stein in one of the Salon's soirées, and read her own poetry in a program held there in her honour (Burke *Becoming Modern* 361), and in the 1930s, Loy became associated with Surrealism and wrote her posthumously published novel, *Insel*, based on her friendship with Surrealist

painter Richard Oelze, before retreating into reclusion.⁹ And yet, while these multifarious traces are unmistakable in her writing, she never fully subscribed to any of these, choosing instead to stake her reputation upon her position of utter originality—a “hidden wrinkle,” as she called herself in a letter to her literary agent Carl Van Vechten (“Letters” c. 1915).

On one hand, this dual engagement and detachment marks Loy as truly modern: if modernism’s dictum is, as Pound asserts, to “Day by day make it new,” Loy insisted on her newness with such fervour that she never could be entirely assimilated anywhere (*Cantos* LIII). However, this has made Loy rather difficult to place: in a critical account of modernist schools of thought, where would one put Loy? As Conover argues, Loy refused a fixed identity, much to the catalogist’s “confusion,” and created for herself an “anti-career” (“Introduction” xiii). Indeed, it is this same “anti-career,” propelled both by self-effacement and indifference towards self-legitimation, that Johanna E. Vondeling contends is responsible for Loy’s long absence from accounts of modernism (139-40). Loy witnessed the waning of her career, and attributed it in part to economic concerns: while in Florence in the early 1920s, Loy wrote to Dodge, bemoaning that she had no time to work on her poetry because she was “so poor” (“Letters” c. 1922), and in the late 1920s, compelled to spend time earning a living designing lampshades, she protested, “I am supposed to be a fine artist and everybody thinks I am mad because I have to make lampshades” (qtd in *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, hereafter *LaLB*, lxxii). Loy’s resistance to the establishment of her reputation—whether as a result of her deliberate refusal to be assimilated beneath a particular modernist banner, her desire to be a “hidden wrinkle,” her reclusion in the final decades of her life, or conversely as an unintended outcome of her poverty—culminated in her occlusion from accounts of modernism until the 1980s.

Although Bergson’s career flourished in the early twentieth century, he subsequently suffered from the same critical occlusion as Loy. Ironically, in many ways it was Bergson’s popularity that was responsible for his later obscurity. His work was widely read outside of the confines of academia, resulting in an “almost

⁹ For scholarship on Loy’s engagement with Surrealism, see Arnold’s afterword to *Insel*; Burke’s *Becoming Modern*; and Ayers.

cultlike popularity” amongst the public, who confused Bergson’s ostensible accessibility and “clarity of language” with amenability for comprehension, thus muddling what was a rather complex and nuanced philosophy. This misapprehension resulted in two kinds of readers: philosophers who grappled with Bergson’s philosophy on its own terms, and those in the wider population who appropriated it for other means, sometimes misunderstanding the true import of Bergson’s key concepts. Bergson’s “catch phrases,” such as *élan vital*, *intuition*, and *durée* were thus circulated in a way that discombobulated the original terms (Gillies 25). One particularly damaging appropriation of Bergson was by the political far right with which Bergson had no actual connection (Douglass 113; Duffy 167-68). As a result, Bergson’s critics often engaged with circulating versions of his metaphysics rather than the original philosophy, and this generated “misinformed censure and ridicule from his peers, particularly those politically opposed to him” (Gillies 27). Moreover, and again as a result of his popularity, Bergson became a “polarizing figure” who divided people between spiritualism and materialism, classicism and romanticism, and intellect and intuition, even if these binaries are not so readily extricable in Bergson’s work (Gillies 25; Douglass 113). Nonetheless, the prevalence of materialism, mechanism, logical positivism and Formalism in twentieth-century philosophy, and the association of Bergson with spiritualism, culminated in Bergson being branded as a “scatter-brained . . . mystic”¹⁰ by George Santayana and a “phony” by other major philosophers such as Bertrand Russell and Carl Jung (Burwick and Douglass 2), and resulted in Bergson falling out of favour during the 1920s and 1930s (Gillies 27). Bergson’s preoccupation with public work in the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations after World War One and his intensifying arthritis meant that he had little time or means to stage a retort (Gillies 26).

After an extended period of critical silence, Bergson is now being recuperated not only in recognition of his past achievements, but also for his continuing influence in contemporary philosophy. I have already noted Bergson’s importance to literary modernism, which is now receiving increased critical attention (Gillies 27). In addition, concepts pertaining to *élan vital*—namely, *durée*, flux, and indeterminacy—have “re-emerged in philosophical discussions”

¹⁰ For original citation, see Santayana, 100.

(Douglass 121). Although Maurice Merleau-Ponty was writing on Bergson as early as 1953 (*In Praise*), this re-establishment of Bergson's place amongst philosophical thinkers today owes much to Gilles Deleuze and his 1966 text, *Bergsonism*, translated into English in 1988 (Ardoin, Gontarski and Mattison 5; Guerlac *Thinking* 173-74). Deleuze's interest in Bergson anticipated a turn in French philosophy away from Hegel, as well as a move away from structuralism and post-structuralism—whose limitations were becoming increasingly apparent in the 1990s—toward Cultural Studies and new media, although, as Suzanne Guerlac suggests, critics have been divided over whether Deleuze posits Bergson as a precursor to post-structuralism or a means to go beyond it.¹¹ Moreover, Deleuze's *Cinema I: The Movement-Image* (1986) and *Cinema II: The Time-Image* (1989),¹² which explore Bergson's account of movement in detail, recast Bergsonian metaphysics in light of contemporary interest in new media, film theory and cultural studies, according to Guerlac (*Thinking* 174-77). Bergson's traces in contemporary philosophy have also been identified in the work of Jacques Derrida. Both thinkers are pre-eminently concerned with the relationship of time and language: Derrida's *Of Grammatology* has been read as a philosophy of time expressed in terms of semiology, and it has been argued that both Derrida and Bergson cast time as philosophy's "other" (Guerlac *Thinking* 185). Moreover, continuances have been identified between Bergson's critique of nothingness in *Matter and Memory* and Derrida's discussion of presence and absence, and his insistence that *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*, for Bergson asserts that the concept of "nothingness" exposes the trickery of language, as rather than "nothing," the postulation of an absence requires *more* than the postulation of a presence: "*the idea of the object 'not existing' is necessarily the idea of the object 'existing' with, in addition, the representation of an exclusion of this object*" (Douglass 122; Bergson *Matter* 286, italics in original). Bergson's metaphysics is now being asserted not as an historical oddity, but as an ongoing presence in recent philosophical thought.

¹¹ Guerlac categorises Paul Douglass as one critic who suggests that Bergson is a post-structuralist precursor, and Brian Massumi and Elizabeth Grosz as those who view him as a means to surpass post-structuralism (*Thinking* 176).

¹² First published in French as *Cinéma I: L'Image-Mouvement* (1983) and *Cinéma II: L'Image-Temps* (1985).

After decades of critical silence, Loy is similarly enjoying an energetic resurrection in accounts of literary modernism. Her recuperation has undoubtedly been shaped by the recent collections of her poetry—*LaLB* in 1982, and *The Lost Lunar Baedeker* (hereafter *LoLB*) in 1996—as well as Carolyn Burke’s 1996 biography, *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy*, two significant collections of essays—the 1998 publication of *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet* and *The Salt Companion to Mina Loy* in 2010—and the recent publication of a substantial amount of archival material in Sara Crangle’s *Stories and Essays of Mina Loy* (2011). Moreover, Loy’s manifest interest in both the bodily and in linguistic experimentation casts her poetry as central to the expansion of new modernism, as her writing intersects in a number of scholarly interests that propel the field’s continuing research, including questions of “literary form . . . affect, gender, sexuality, racial dynamics, psychoanalysis [and] science” (Mao and Walkowitz 738).¹³ Through the argument that Loy’s representation of movement troubles the stability and stasis of language and literary form in the same way as it depicts embodiment—particularly gendered, sexual, and scientific embodiment—as inherently motile, this thesis asserts the centrality of Loy to on-going concerns of contemporary modernist criticism.

The second level of Loy’s engagement with Bergson is direct and personal. Loy was introduced to Bergson’s works by Dodge in the early years of her career, (Burke *Becoming Modern* 120) and I argue that Loy was a more assiduous reader of Bergson than is often supposed. Indeed, Burke writes that Loy’s admiration of Stein during this period was due in part to the way that both Stein and Bergson arrived at “truth through introspection” (130). And it was in the years immediately following Loy’s frequent visitations of Stein and Dodge—and thus subsequent to her foremost engagement with Bergsonian metaphysics—that

¹³ For details of the presence of science in Loy’s poetry, see Chapters Four and Five. For investigations on Loy’s exploration of affect, see Selinger (1998), Shreiber’s “‘Love Is a Lyric’” (1998), and Twitchell-Waas (1998); for Loy’s exploration of race, particularly Jewishness, see Feinstein (2005), Goody’s “‘Goy Israels’” (2006), Jaskoski (1993), Perloff (1998), Potter’s “‘Obscene Modernism’” (2010), Tuma (1998), and Winkiel. For an account of Loy’s engagement with psychoanalysis, see Gaedke (2008) and Hobson’s “Mina Loy’s ‘Conversions’” (2010).

Loy began writing poetry that explored the intersections between feminine decorum and spatial restriction.¹⁴

Despite wide critical acknowledgement that Loy read Bergson's texts early in her career, little attention has been paid to the details of how this is manifested in her poetry. Thus Bergson's impact on Loy is most often announced in broad strokes with little close reading;¹⁵ the few exceptions tease out Loy's appropriation of Bergson's *Laughter: An Essay on the Comic*, or his concept of *élan vital*, as Tim Freeborn, Joshua Schuster and Anja Isabel Klock do in their doctoral theses. The most extensive published account of Bergson's presence in Loy's writing is undertaken by Virginia Kouidis in *Mina Loy: American Modernist Poet* (1980); in her account of Loy's depiction of feminine selfhood, she argues that Loy abandons Bergsonian flux for she cannot overcome stasis and fragmentation (63-64).¹⁶ In contrast, I contend that it is precisely via a reading of Bergson that Loy disassembles the limits of the spatial and the static, casting both her poetic language and the bodies it portrays as radically motile. Moreover, in recent publications devoted to Bergson's presence in literary modernism, Loy's name is yet to be mentioned.¹⁷

¹⁴ Dodge lived in Florence between 1910 and 1913, and spent the summer in Vallombrosa with Loy in 1914 (*LaLB* lxvii). Dodge also introduced Loy to Stein during this time (Burke, *Modern*, 129). "Virgin Plus Curtains Minus Dots" was written in December 1914, and published in August 1915 in *Rogue* 2.1; "Three Moments in Paris" was written in 1914 and published in *Rogue* 1.4 in 1915; "Italian Pictures" was published in *Trend* 8.2 in 1914; and "Effectual Marriage" was written in 1915 and published in *Others: An Anthology of the New Verse* in 1919.

¹⁵ For example, Crangle notes in "Desires Dissolvent" (2010) that Loy's deployment of the comical has continuances with Bergson's *Laughter: An Essay on the Comic*; however, her essay's focus is on the body's excess in Georges Bataille. Additionally, Richard Cook notes that Bergson's appeal to "inexhaustible possibility" was attractive to Loy, and a part of a "continuum of ideals" including Futurism and Christian Science (1998); Januzzi states that Loy appropriates some of her vocabulary from Bergson in "Mongrel Rose" (1998); Lyon notes that Loy's "Parturition" reveals a "Bergsonian moment of *durée*" in *Manifestoes*, (1999, 165); and Shreiber mentions that Loy's spiritual journey "dip[s] into" Bergsonian metaphysics in "Divine Women, Fallen Angels" (1998) 469. Burke, in *Becoming Modern*, (1996) documents how Loy came in contact with Bergson and suggests that his theories help her to arrive at metaphysical truths (121-22; 130), but she does not read Loy's poetry through this lens.

¹⁶ For a detailed examination of Kouidis, Freeborn, Klock and Schuster, see Chapter One.

¹⁷ Bergson's impact on modernism has attracted much recent discussion. For example, James Joyce's deployment of Bergson has been examined by Anderson (2013), Toker (2013) and Gillies

This thesis, then, intercedes not only in Loy scholarship, but also in historical accounts of Bergsonian influence on literary modernism, and argues for the consideration of Loy's poetry in these narratives in a way that goes beyond the rather cursory nods to their connection that are most often implied.

Loy additionally comes into contact with Bergson indirectly through her engagement with the avant-garde, on which Bergson had a profound impact. It is difficult to overstate Bergson's importance to modernism, for his work was widely read.¹⁸ Indeed, in early twentieth-century Florence where Loy was initiated into his

(1996). The way in which Woolf and T.S. Eliot draw on Bergson in their writing has been mapped in detail by Gillies, and by Douglass (2013); Gillies additionally examines Bergson's presence in the works of Dorothy Richardson and Joseph Conrad, and Douglass's examination of modernist writers who are influenced by Bergson also includes Henry Miller, Wallace Stevens, Ezra Pound, William Faulkner, Willa Cather, and Robert Frost. Gertrude Stein's deployment of Bergson has attracted considerable attention by scholars such as Douglass, and although Stein makes no explicit reference to Bergson in her writing, her literary experiments and her conceptualisation of time cannot be understood without accounting for his influence, according to Posman in "Time as a Simple" (2012). Indeed, Bergson's presence in Stein was perceived as early as 1929 by Loy, who published her essay "Gertrude Stein" in the *Transatlantic Review* (reprinted in *LaLB* 289-99), arguing that Bergson found his "literary conclusion in the austere verity of Gertrude Stein's theme—'Being' as the absolute occupation" (289). Conversely in 1928, Wyndham Lewis condemned Stein's "time-obsession" that he identifies as having its traces in "Bergson, Prof. Alexander, Einstein . . . etc.," and claims that as a result, Stein writes like "a confused, stammering, rather 'soft' (bloated, acromegalic, squinting and spectacled, . . .) child" (*Time and Western Man* 49). Rather than craft his aesthetics in alignment with Bergson, Lewis deliberately opposed what he claimed were Bergson's "pretentious" metaphysics, according to Ohana (2010, 146). Bergson also had an impact on the imagism of H. D., according to Mattison in "H.D.'s Institutional Imagism" (2013), and Proust's deployment of *durée* is charted by Gunter (2013). In addition, Bergson's profound influence on the visual arts have been noted: Matisse's pre-war paintings draw upon Bergson's concepts of "organic completion and aesthetic closure" while his portraits reveal an engagement with "a Bergsonian concept of *durée* as an unbounded flux," according to Antliff ("The Rhythms of Duration", 1999, 185), who further argues that Bergsonian thought was also incorporated into the artistic practices of Fauvism, Cubism and Futurist painting in *Inventing Bergson* (1993). Note that Loy's name, here, is conspicuously missing.

¹⁸ T.E. Hulme's writings between 1909 and 1913 were explicitly concerned with Bergson's philosophy, and it was in 1909 in which Hulme began a poetry group attended by Ezra Pound;

philosophy, Bergson was everywhere—he was read by the Italian Futurists with whom Loy was famously intimate, as well as by the “advanced” readers among the foreign residents with whom Loy was acquainted (Burke *Becoming Modern* 111-12). His popularity in the early twentieth century has been credited to his interest in language, as he, along with Friedrich Nietzsche, was one of the earliest interrogators of the problems that language poses for philosophical thought; language “requires iteration, whereas in Bergson’s view, there is no such thing as repetition in lived experience; by the very fact of being repeated, the same moment or feeling becomes a different one” (Guerlac “Foreword” vii). For Loy, halted temporality and repetition are similarly oppositional to real experience, and accordingly, they play a vital role in the critique of immobility and creative lack; “Human Cylinders,” for example, casts the mechanical body into a repetitive loop that precludes it from experience, creativity and agency, as Chapter Four contends (*LoLB* 40-41). Bergson’s popularity can also be attributed to his articulation of “a convincing justification for art,” and an insistence on the inherent difficulty of artistic success, for art must “confound thought to evoke intuition” (Douglass 120-22). Paul Douglass argues that the difficult, “resistant” and “fragmented” styles of T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, Ezra Pound’s *Cantos*, and William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* are confounding to habitual thought in such a way, and thus have a “common Bergsonian strategy”; one could well add Loy’s “Songs to Joannes” (1917)¹⁹ to that list. Moreover, for Bergson, as for the modernists, art is more than merely its own finished object; it

is the experience of these things. The real art lies behind the object (or deep within it); in aesthetic experience and through aesthetic experience both artist and audience are joined in a common activity—the rediscovery of the emotions, perceptions, and impressions that prompted the fashioning of art. Bergson’s expansion of the realm of aesthetics to include any experience that enables a viewer or participant to see life more clearly is matched by the tendency of the [modernist] period to see art in places seldom examined for it. The early twentieth century is notable for finding aesthetic experiences in the industrial

these meetings, according to Beasley, formed the basis of Imagism (3-4). For details on the many other artists influenced by Bergson, see note 17.

¹⁹ First four songs were published in 1915 as “Love Songs”; all thirty-four songs were published as “Songs to Joannes” in 1917. 1917 version reprinted in *LoLB*.

squalor of cities, in factories and quarries, and even in the fires and trenches of war. (Gillies 20)

Many of the aesthetic interests of the modernist period were propounded by Bergson, and these are manifested in Loy's work, specifically in her insistence on art as a creative process rather than an end-point or a series of repetitions, as well as her fascination with marginalised bodies on the outskirts of society, and her identification of beauty in "squalor"²⁰.

Bergson's articulation of the relationship between spatial surfaces, time and movement also pervades many of the avant-garde movements in which Loy was immersed. For instance, Cubism's fragmentation of surfaces was intended to belie the depth of space in a way that evoked the passage of time and "simultaneity," a term that the Cubists borrowed from Bergson (Whitworth 245), and Wyndham Lewis's Vorticism rallied for the "immobile r[h]ythm of [the vortex's] swiftiness" ("Our Vortex" 149), revealing an interest in the dialectic between static "immobil[ity]" and motile "swiftiness". Lewis engaged vociferously with Bergson both in favour of his philosophy and against it; his early encounters with Bergson's lectures inspired his enthusiasm, while he later vehemently rejected what he termed Bergson's "Time cult" (Douglass 112-13). Perhaps it was this denunciation that Loy had in mind when she noted in a letter to Mabel Dodge that Lewis "is <?nothing> of the Picasso school in method" (Loy "Letters" c. 1915). Lewis's position toward Bergson was enacted in terms of a contest between spatialisation and the "Time-view [and its] flux". According to Lewis, this was encapsulated in the works of James Joyce, Marcel Proust and Gertrude Stein, who express "hostility to . . . the 'spatializing' process of the mind *not* a 'Time-mind'" (*Time and Western Man* xv).

²⁰ The marginalised bodies that Loy's writing explores are silenced and cloistered women (for instance, in "Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots," the biological body (for example, the birthing body in "Parturition," or the body constituted by saliva and mucous in "Songs to Joannes"), the aging woman (see "Chiffon Velours" and "An Aged Woman"), the decrepit or starving artist (see *Insel* or "Crab Angel"), and the homeless in New York's Bowery ("Hot Cross Bum"). Late in her career, Loy also makes "constructions" out of detritus that she finds in the alleys around the Bowery.

Among the members of this “Time cult,” Gertrude Stein is particularly notable, for Loy met Stein frequently between 1910 and 1914 while in Florence. Stein wrote that Loy was one of the earliest people to take notice of her experimental writing style and had “always been able to understand” (Burke *Becoming Modern* 129-30). Stein’s assertion of a “continuous present” (32) in “Composition as Explanation” has been identified as a poetics that is based on Bergson’s account of poetic language: it points to *durée* despite its circumscription to language, the “static world of intellect and spatiality”; and it privileges a phenomenological approach to time over a mathematical one (Douglass 118; Posman “Time as a Simple/Multiple Melody” 106-07). Loy was attentive to Stein’s interest in Bergson and *durée*, noting in her essay, “Gertrude Stein” (1929) that Bergson’s conception of time “seemed to have found a literary conclusion in the austere verity of Gertrude Stein’s theme—‘Being’ as the absolute occupation” (*LaLB* 289).

Bergson’s influence on New York Dada is also especially pertinent, as Loy closely associated with Dada while living in New York,²¹ even exhibiting her work alongside Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain* in the 1917 Exhibition for the Society of Independent Artists. Like the Cubists, Dada explored representations of movement and time, particularly in relationship to the ostensibly fixed space of visual art, such as Marcel Duchamp’s endlessly spinning *Bicycle Wheel* (1913), and his prototypical Dada painting, *Nu Descendant un Escalier no. 2*, exhibited at the 1913 Armory Show in New York, which treats the flurry of movement as a body descends a staircase, and which Eric Berlatsky locates in a historical moment entrenched in Bergsonian influence and pervaded by artistic experiences that present movement “in a medium of stillness” (257-58).

Among those that Loy worked closely with, Bergson’s technologically mediated presence in Modernism is perhaps most evident in Futurist Dynamism.²²

²¹ For an account of Loy’s involvement with Dada, see Goody’s “Cyborgs” (2007); Januzzi’s “Dada” (1998); and Panzera (2000). For Loy’s involvement in the Arensberg Salon, see Voyce (2008).

²² For an examination of Bergson’s presence in Dynamism, see Antliff’s, “The Fourth Dimension”. For particular examples of descriptions of Dynamism that draw on Bergson, see “Plastic Dynamism” by Boccioni, and “Futurist Painting” by Boccioni, Carrà et al.

Loy teases out the implications of movement on gendered bodies and their access to artistic practice in close dialogue with the Futurists, the details of which I examine in detail in Chapter One. Indeed, Futurist Dynamism is an example of an artistic movement that was not only interested in the same discourses as Bergson, but that in fact acquired its understanding of technology via Bergson. Futurism deploys Bergsonian metaphysics in their very conceptualisation of dynamism, according to Mark Antliff, who argues that Umberto Boccioni employs Bergson's distinction between intuition and intellect in his manifesto, "Plastic Dynamism" (1913) in order to explore the different approaches to art between the academy and Futurism ("The Fourth Dimension" 721). However, Dynamism's manifestation in technological speed resulted in the appropriation of Bergsonian philosophy in right-wing politics in a way that Bergson did not endorse. The Futurist F. T. Marinetti categorically apotheosised the "the beauty of speed" embodied in the machine and the "racing car whose hood is adorned with great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath" (*Selected Writings* 41). Pitted against historical institutions and passivity at the outset of World War One, Futurist speed, as an expression of Dynamism, was politically motivated and characterised by violence and masculinised force.²³ By incorporating what they had read of Bergsonian movement into this political agenda, Enda Duffy argues that the Futurists rework Bergson's vitalism and "transcendental tendency" in terms of "will to power," resulting in what Jean Baudrillard categorises as "social desertification," an ambivalence towards the objects of their violence as "[d]isaffection finds its pure form in the barrenness of speed" (Duffy 172; Baudrillard 5).

Loy's deep investment in Futurism during the early years of her career had a profound impact on her conception of the inherent perils of stasis on one hand,

²³ The potency of speed as a political and militarised force has been long established; Virilio argues that the negotiation of control between the bourgeois state and the masses is negotiated through speed and mobility, for the wandering masses wield a dangerous power unless fruitfully "possessed with wills other than their own" (86). The metropole is thus set up in order to domesticate the "menace" of the "proletariat horde," to stultify their movements at the periphery of the city and to harness it when necessary for military power (8-9). For both the state and the masses, speed is thus revolutionary and military, and indeed, the faster the speed of the projectile in war, the more space is contracted and "penetration and destruction become one" (133).

and the fecundity of movement on the other. While in Florence between the years 1906 and 1916, she consulted closely with the Futurists; this relationship has been frequently commented on in recent scholarship.²⁴ At the time when Loy was writing, her association with the Futurists was similarly underscored, as she was labelled in the *Chicago Evening Post* as “the woman who split the futurist movement” (G. C. Cook 7),²⁵ and she was designated by Alfred Kreymborg as an artist and poet who “imbibed the precepts of Apollinaire and Marinetti [sic]” (488). According to Loy, Futurism was responsible for jolting her out of her own stasis. In her letters to Dodge, she credited Marinetti with waking her up from artistic lethargy and adding twenty years to her life (“Letters” n.d.), and indeed the years that Loy spent with the Futurists in Italy were her most prolific (Schmid 1). Nonetheless, Loy’s vision for embodied movement takes a radically different form from that of Futurism despite their shared interests in Bergson, for Loy is attuned not to movement as a force—or as speed—but as an inherently creative impulse. Like Loy’s, Futurism’s deployment of Bergson is always embodied; however, Loy diverges markedly from the Futurist conception of embodiment that is predicated on masculine being and militarism, and her poetry lampoons their aggrandisement of machismo and its parallel antipathy toward women.²⁶ Moreover, although Loy’s work remains forever indebted to the Futurists, she mocks the seriousness with which they consider Dynamism—calling their work “dynamic carnival” in “Lion’s Jaws,” (*LōLB* 48) and her initial enchantment with Marinetti’s “big genius” eventually dissipates, as she notes in a letter to Van Vechten that the only thing that Marinetti has really achieved is to be arrested twice, and to Dodge she declares that “Futurism is dead” (“Letters” to Van Vechten c. 1913-14, c. 1915; “Letters” to Dodge c. 1914).

²⁴ The list of scholars who have traced Loy’s engagement with Futurism is extensive. See, in particular, Burke’s Biography of Mina Loy, *Becoming Modern* (1996), Arnold’s “Mina Loy and the Futurists” (1989); Augustine (1989); Harris (2010); Lusty (2008); Lyon’s *Manifestoes* (1999); Pozorski (2005); Re (2009); Ress (1993); and Schmid (1996).

²⁵ G. C. Cook refers here to Loy’s affairs with Futurists Giovanni Papini and F. T. Marinetti that allegedly ended their alliance. See Burke’s *Becoming Modern*, 170-71.

²⁶ In particular, see “The Sacred Prostitute” in *Stories*, and “One O’Clock at Night” and “Lions’ Jaws” in *LōLB*.

One consequence of Loy's interaction with both New York Dada and Italian Futurism is her cynicism towards the machine body, which was celebrated and artistically represented by both. Bergson's account of the body offers a productive framework through which to read Loy's reaction against the machine, for this reveals that the machine body is inherently static and atemporal. For instance, whereas the speeding machine is consummately mobile according to the Futurist Dynamism, machines are not inherently mobile for Loy. Rather, their "movements" are directed by external powers, and time is not registered upon their bodies (they do not change but are discarded and replaced). Loy insists that the machine-body is incongruous with embodied movement as propounded by Bergson despite the fact that her contemporaries saw productive continuances between them; her position is, then, one of considerable originality.

Loy thus evaluates the role that particular sciences play in embodied motility and the reification—or conversely, the subversion—of enclosed bodily space and access to movement through time. Accordingly, not all science engenders uniform derision by Loy, and indeed, her invocation of a plurality of circulating scientific discourses has been noted by Paul Peppis, who argues that Loy thus asserts women's ability to engage with matters of science and the intellect (566). Loy mingles scientific lexicons with religious language, according to Sandeep Parmar (2010), revealing the body's connection to a "unifying divine force" while concurrently casting selfhood as "provisional" ("Unfinishing' Self" 73), and according to Lara Vetter (2010), who argues that Loy's writing similarly combines electromagnetism and religion in order to consider the body as penetrable. The connection between technological advances and the body's capacity for organic plasticity in Loy's work has also been examined from a Cultural Studies point of view by Tim Armstrong in *Modernism, Technology and the Body: A Cultural Study* (1998). Notably, this articulation of plasticity is qualitatively different from the motility that this thesis explores, for as Chapter Four will argue, motility requires agitation from within the body, such that movement is inherent to embodiment, whereas plasticity is inflicted upon an unwilling body by external forces, and is thus a kind of manipulation.

The dissemination of scientific knowledge among non-scientific communities is, to be sure, another way in which Loy comes into indirect contact

with Bergson. He intercedes in a number of scientific debates upon which Loy drew in her writing, particularly those that interrogate the effect of scientific inquiry on embodiment and conventional notions of space. First trained as a physicist, Bergson, as Deleuze has noted, “give[s] modern science the metaphysics that corresponds to it, which it lacks as one half lacks the other” (*Cinema* 17). For example, his conceptualisation of *durée* is modulated by his reflection on mathematics and physics (Guerlac *Thinking* 2-3; Guerlac “Foreword” viii; Posman “Time as a Simple” 110). By reading Loy’s writing, and its exploration of variant technologies, through a philosophical and Bergsonian lens, this thesis considers Loy’s complex attraction and repulsion to science in terms of corporeal movement and spatialisation.

Particular facets of scientific research captivated Bergson and the modernists alike. Contemporary criticism increasingly acknowledges the ubiquitous presence of science and technology in modernist artistic practice and insists that a “quasiscientific experimental attitude” among writers is “one of the permanent legacies of Modernism” (Douglass 121). One particular point of confluence is their shared interest in turn-of-the-century physics, especially Einstein’s General Relativity and developments in quantum mechanics, which concurrently overturned the coherence of Euclidean space. Indeed, Bergson retrospectively attempted to reconcile his theories of *durée* with General Relativity in the 1920s, arguing that *durée* gave to space-time the metaphysics that it was missing (*Duration*). Metaphors drawn from General Relativity and quantum mechanics productively undermine the solidity of space in the literary modernisms of Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot (Whitworth *Einstein’s Wake*; Albright). There is, moreover, a convergence between literary interest in mathematics, equations, laboratories—specifically in the work of Pound, Stein and Eliot—and Bergsonian philosophy, as Douglass contends (118).

I would add Loy to this list of modernists whose work is permutated by this dual influence. Indeed, what Douglass terms Stein’s “laboratory protocol” is explored by Loy in her poem, “Gertrude Stein,” in which she compares Stein’s poetry to the chemical purification of radium (*LoLB* 94), and as I have noted, Loy’s essays on Stein connect Stein’s work to Bergson’s insistence on time as flux

(*LaLB* 289). Loy's manifest fascination with radium—whose atomic properties importantly confound the nature of stable space—and her experimentation with radium as a metaphor for poetic work in “Gertrude Stein,” as well as the body in *Insel*, reveal the way in which contemporary discoveries in nuclear science were productively adapted by Loy in her interrogation of spatial coherence, as will be argued in Chapter Five. Her interrogation of space, matter and solidity—and the repercussions of this for art and the body—thus occur in dialogue with contemporaneous discussions of space in modernism, which in turn were inflected by Bergson and atomic science.

One key consequence of considering motility as Loy's underpinning aesthetic is that it locates her in a tradition of philosophical thought and artistic practice that insists upon movement as a lynchpin of feminine bodies and their literary production. To be sure, Loy's place within feminism is frequently asserted.²⁷ Yet, as Chapter Two outlines, this necessitates significant caveats; not

²⁷ Gender and sexuality have proven a particularly fruitful direction for Loy studies and indeed modernist studies, for Loy's feminism plays a role in the poetics of William Carlos Williams, according to Kinnahan (1994). The earliest monograph on Loy's work by Kouidis (1980) evaluates the status of feminine subjecthood. Since then, the role that Loy's persistent concerns with representations of women, the visual, and her “accidental aloofness” played in Loy's reclusion has been interrogated by Burke (“Accidental Aloofness” 1991). The role that fashion plays for the body and gender has been examined by Dunn (1998) and Goody (“Ladies of Fashion” 1999), and the function of the “persona of the imposter” (273) in Loy's masquerade in rendering the writer's presence both visible and elusive within a poetics of radically gendered bodies has been argued for by Gilmore (1998). The sexual body, particularly in “Songs to Joannes,” has been of particular import to DuPlessis (“Seismic Orgasm” 1998), who examines the narration of the sexual act, and to Lusty (2008), who proposes that the poem enacts the consequences of failing to “heed the warnings” of the “Feminist Manifesto” (256); moreover, it has been contended that the desiring body in *Insel*, wrought with sexuality and hunger, anticipates the writing of Georges Bataille (Crangle, “Desires Dissolvent” 2010). Additionally, the potential for the maternal body to operate as a space of artistic possibility has been examined by Lyon (“Mina Loy's Pregnant Pauses” 1998). Loy critiques heteronormative binaries, according to Galvin (1999), and the role that Loy's satire plays in undermining hegemonies of race and gender in “Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose” are studied by Frost (1998); however, it has also been contended that Loy employs binaries in her poem “Love Songs” and “Human Cylinders” in order to reveal the failure of bodies to overcome

only did Loy resist affiliation with feminist movements of her time, but her depiction of maternity has proven resistant to reconciliation with feminist thought, and she has been charged with promoting essentialist, eugenicist, and even violent ideas against the female body.²⁸ Nonetheless, it is my contention that Loy can be productively read as a feminist writer via her representation of feminine embodied movement, for her singular insistence on the body's political currency precociously anticipates feminist debates that occur decades later. For instance, Simone de Beauvoir's examination of the female body's experience of the world has continuances with Loy's insofar as they both insist on the centrality of the body—for the body “is both a thing of the world and a point of view on this world”—and in the way in which they confront gendered metaphors that locate the feminine squarely in immobility and passivity. For example, Beauvoir condemns the way in which metaphors of the passive ovum and active sperm are translated into a cultural ideology of movement and stasis, activity and passivity (24-26). In a different way, Loy's attention to bodily space and the way in which it is always already disrupted, multiple, and unbounded, also anticipates the work of Luce Irigaray and her contention that the female sex organ, habitually conceived of in terms of a lack, is in fact a multiplicity that “touch[es] itself over and over again, indefinitely, by itself,” is always “*at least two*” and which confounds subject and object relations, for there is no “possibility of distinguishing what is touching from what it touched” (*This Sex* 26, italics in original). Like the body in Loy's “Parturition” that is “knowing / All about / Unfolding,” and which is “traversing [it]self,” the body for Irigaray folds in upon itself, making of itself a subject and object at once (*LoLB* 7, 5). Movement, then, is at the centre of Loy's continued relevance to contemporary feminism, and her engagement with Bergson is critical to the development of movement as a central aesthetic in Loy's poetry.

their essentialist designations (Goody, “To Who?” 2001). If one agrees with Fernald when she states that modernist criticism cannot proceed without “serious engagement with woman and feminist theory,” and that despite the rapid expansion of the modernist field, this work is lamentably marginalised, then Loy's poetics—with its inextricability from questions of gender, sexuality, and the body—is indispensable to the future of modernist studies (229-30).

²⁸ In particular, see Lyon's *Manifestoes* (156) and *Lusty* (247). For further discussion, see Chapter Two.

Bergson's declaration that all "reality is mobility" thus takes on new life in Loy's writing about women, as her "bodies" are compelled towards movement and evolution (*Introduction* 49). Loy's earliest poetry interrogates her newly awakened concern with "The Sex War," ("Letters" to Dodge n.d.), and through her engagement with Futurist Dynamism, she locates the key peril to women's freedom as immobility—be it within the domestic house, in theorisations of modernist aesthetics, in a corset, or within the confines of the body itself. Thus, despite the fact that her utopian polemical texts (such as "International Psycho-Democracy") are difficult to apply to reality, her exploration of motile poetic bodies, particularly the marginalised bodies of women, artists, and the homeless, provides a more concrete mode of political amelioration.

Indeed for Loy and Bergson alike, the creative impulse and movement are inextricable; one depends upon the other, and both are necessary in order to ensure both free will and the continued evolution of humanity. Yet, the continuances between the suitability of Bergson's metaphysics for politically charging language and embodiment, and Loy's aesthetic project that pursues just that, remain hitherto unconsidered. Although the presence of spatial—particularly architectural—constructs in Loy's work has been examined before,²⁹ this has not been considered in terms of a project of wrenching language from these constructs, or in dialogue with her reading of Bergson. Similarly, while a small

²⁹ The presence of architectural metaphors in Loy's writing has provided a productive reading of Loy's linguistic experimentation in spatial terms. Such architectural readings have argued for the collapse of text and context in Loy's poetry and suggest that this is implicated in the representation of houses and their spatial perimeters, as done by Churchill, who reads Loy through this lens alongside writers who published in concurrent issues of *Others* (206-21). In addition, the role that the thresholds of the house—such as windows and doors—play in reifying gendered categories through framing and producing a visual economy are interrogated in the architectural reading undertaken in Scuriatti's doctoral thesis, "Negotiating Boundaries". For an examination of Churchill and Scuriatti, see Chapter Two. In a different vein, Loy's deployment of a language that is inherently unstable has been explored from the perspective of overturning binary oppositions by Galvin, and the suggestion that Loy's language is inherently unstable in "Songs to Joannes," for the subject who occupies the linguistic "ground" of the poem is unreliable, argued by Wilkinson. Although Galvin's and Wilkinson's studies are not conceived of in terms of troubling space, they nonetheless implicitly point to the ways in which the space of language for Loy is not hermeneutically sealed.

number of scholars have interrogated the tendency of Loy's language toward movement,³⁰ Bergson's import here has hitherto not been considered. Moreover, like language, the body in Loy's writing must be inherently motile in order to harness creative agency. The body located in mathematical space signifies that which can be contained; one way in which Loy defies this is by focussing upon the body's fissions and secretions, and its propensity to surpass its own thresholds. The role of corporeal thresholds in Loy's poetry has been critically studied,³¹ but again, this has not been considered in terms of an extension or rewriting of Bergsonian metaphysics.

One final consequence of reading the presence of motility in Loy through a Bergsonian lens is that it enables us to apprehend a curious contradiction that Loy's poetry seems to occupy: it is at once bodily, and thus rooted in corporeal experience, and abstract. This schism is reflected in the reactions of the first readers of her poetry. On one hand, Loy portrayed the body in all its sordid details, and in a way for which many of her readers were not prepared. Infuriated by her bodily imagery, Amy Lowell vowed never again to publish poetry in the

³⁰ Loy's language has been approached in terms of echoes of sound in Loy's "Brancusi's Golden Bird," that mirror the refraction of light across the motile surface of Brancusi's sculpture by Stauder, and a detailed consideration of this is provided in Chapter Three. In addition, the way in which the wandering of Jewish bodies is played out in the "linguistic wandering" in "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose," and in which conventional meaning is dislocated from the word, is considered by Potter, although it is not the key purpose of her article ("Obscene Modernism" 58). Pietroiusti, on the other hand, contends that Loy's "Songs to Joannes" can be read according to three "directions" (vertical, horizontal and metonymical) by considering the poem metaphorically as a "sign". Rather than exploring a broader spatial aesthetic, then, Pietroiusti reveals the way that one poem can be read against its linear presentation on the page.

³¹ For instance, the space of the body, and the coherence of its skin, limits and thresholds, has been examined by Armstrong, Helle and Potter. Armstrong argues in *Modernism* (1998) that Loy is preoccupied with transgressing corporeal limits, and revealing the inherent porosity of skin as a membrane (119). Skin is also examined in Helle's account of the melancholic body (1998); it is the passageway where bodies and culture interact, and in Loy's elegiac poetry, mourning is a cultural construct that emerges at the body's physical threshold (324-25). Thresholds play a critical role in Potter's "Obscene Modernism" (2010); she contends that the restlessness of Jewish wandering produces in the self a contradictory identification and distancing from structures and limits (51).

same magazines as Loy, and Kenneth Rexroth noted that as “one reads of Mina Loy’s babies one’s sphincters loosen” (Conover “Introduction” xiv; Rexroth 69-70). Yet on the other hand, her poetry was also widely characterised as detached; in a gesture of praise, Pound labelled Loy’s writing as “logopoeia or poetry that is akin to nothing but language, which is a dance of the intelligence among words,” while Eliot conversely invoked the same tendency in Loy to criticise her poetry, lamenting that “the word detached from the thing” (Pound 57; Eliot “Observations” 70).

This embrace of both abstraction and corporeal imagery results in the categorisation of her poetry into readily severable “stages”. Kouidis in particular argues for three stages in Loy’s career: the first is characterised by sexuality and the female self; the second is interested in the artist and launches into abstract language; and the third is concerned with the material reality of the homeless. Scholars have tried to reconcile this division in different ways. One way in which this has been achieved is through a focus on materiality. The figure of the “angel-artist-bum” in poems such as “Crab Angel” and “Apology of Genius” unite the poetry on art and the materiality of the homeless, according to Suzanne Hobson (259). Similarly, the materiality of art in “Brancusi’s Golden Bird” connects Loy’s work on artistic abstraction to her poems on the body, argues Ellen Keck Stauder, who reads “Brancusi’s Golden Bird” alongside Loy’s notoriously bodily poem, “Songs to Joannes” (358). In contrast, it is marginality that is the common denominator of Loy’s poetry for Mary E. Galvin and Rachel Potter (“Margins of the Law”). What motivates Loy’s dual tendency towards the corporeal and the abstract has also been attributed to her interest in free love, science, birth control, and New York polyglossia.³² I propose a further reason: Loy’s conception of the body is informed by a metaphysics that is not primarily interested in embodiment, but in the experience of consciousness, and which is “frankly dualistic,” although in a way that seeks to overcome “the theoretical difficulties which have always beset dualism” (Bergson *Matter* vii). This is not to suggest that the divisions between the kinds of poetry that Loy writes is tenable; rather, Loy employs

³² For Loy’s concomitant interest in free love, science and birth control, see Peppis and Duplessis’s “Seismic Orgasm”; for Loy’s deployment of American polyglot, see Perloff, Nicholls and Januzzi’s “Mongrel Rose”.

language that is both abstract and bodily throughout her writing; her arguably most bodily poem, “Songs to Joannes,” is replete with abstraction, and her poetry on artistry and abstraction is anchored in materiality. For example, “Apology of Genius” depicts the bodies of artists as “lepers” with “luminous sores” (77); “Brancusi’s Golden Bird” is interested in the refractive nature of metal sculpture; and “Joyce’s Ulysses” is attentive to libidinal impulses and the “word made flesh” (89). Moreover, it must be noted that Bergson is not entirely antithetical to embodiment, for although he invokes dualism in order to attend to consciousness, his account of experience as it unfolds is necessarily embedded in the body’s engagement with the world. Indeed, the critical return to Bergson after post-structuralism has revealed his importance not only to the subject of consciousness, but also to the “subject of action, centred upon the dynamic body” (Guerlac “Foreword” vii-viii).

Nonetheless, there are inherent difficulties in adopting a metaphysics of consciousness for a poetics of embodiment; in a characteristically paradoxical manoeuvre, Loy appropriates Bergson in order to depict the body as that which evades extension, whereas the body for Bergson is a spatial, *extensive* entity. Loy’s application of Bergson thus entails an imaginative redeployment, for her original mode of incorporating Bergsonian terms and ideas in ways that grate against their initial philosophical intentions results in an embrace of the bodily and visceral, and the abstract and seemingly disembodied.

Chapter one –Drafting a Lunar Baedeker: the Conquering of Space

“Feel me”, drawled Time, “How endless I am, Feel how I am all bare, with nothing on for you to distinguish me by. Count me”, jeered Time.

Hoping to save myself in space, I turned to the room again and tried to cling to form; but design on a scene of devastation is so unruly that I could find nothing to sustain my equilibrium. I tried to balance mass, to rearrange pattern, and keep them in place, but everything fell back into the same wrong shape again as soon as I moved my mind. (Loy, *The Child and the Parent*, box 1, fol. 12. c. 1920-1930)

Time’s challenge in Mina Loy’s unpublished manuscript *The Child and the Parent* dares the reader to impose upon it the constructs of space, to combat time’s endlessness by counting it. Yet this attempt to “cling” to form and conquer the continuous flux of time cannot keep up with the movements of the mind, for space collapses into the “wrong shape” and cannot accurately document authentic experience. Experience, Loy cautions, cannot be safely contained in spatial terms. Nor is such containability desirable, for in her writing, she alludes to a history of women being safely contained in their domestic spaces, and announces that in order for women to experience real life, spatial perimeters must be dismantled. This chapter contends that at the beginning of her poetic career, Loy isolated “stasis” as a critical obstacle to lived and artistic freedom. She identified tendencies to fix women in place in the prohibitions of Victorian etiquette that she associates with her childhood and with the traditional Italian households near which she lived in Florence between 1906 and 1916, and the figure of stasis continues to haunt her work decades later in the manuscripts of her novels. This analysis is undertaken in dialogue with Loy’s engagement with Bergson, whose work she read during this period; Bergsonian metaphysics thus plays a pivotal role in Loy’s understanding of spatial constructs, and the way in which it occludes mobility. Thereafter, explorations of the inherent perils of stasis pervaded Loy’s career—that is, her conceptions of the poetic body, the body of the poetry, and her theory of creativity stem, at the outset, from this initial concern with space, stasis and movement.

Loy first identified spatial constructs as threatening to feminine mobility in particular as a result to her resistance of the Victorian, domestic household. Loy’s engagement with the Victorian here is rather specific; it is concerned with the “all-

pervasive” image of ideal femininity as an embodiment of passivity, family, and “‘natural’ submission,” rather than its presence as a literary movement (Vicinus x). This is not so suggest that Loy’s literary experiments did not challenge the conventions of the century before, but rather that her evocations of the “Victorian” were specific to a domestic situation that opposed itself to feminine artistic production. The Victorian is thus what Loy comes to identify with a very particular image of the domestic woman, comparable to Coventry Patmore’s “Angel in the House,” and associated feminine ideals that keep women cloistered within their homes and strip them of lived and artistic agency. Specifically, the “Angel” for Loy represents the perils of feminine immobility: she is an embodiment of woman’s relegation to stasis, a keeper of domestic space but not a creative agent. The house, then, is an intuitive place for Loy to begin sketching out her aesthetics of mobility and space, in part because it is itself a literal space, enclosed by walls and severable from the outside world, but also because of the historical relationship between the house and the women who inhabit it, and the consequences that this has for gendered mobility. Although I do not examine the details of how Loy dissembles the boundaries of the house in her poetry in this chapter—for this is inextricable from Loy’s literary experiments that trouble the perimeters of the body of text, and as such, will be discussed at length in Chapter Two—consideration of Loy’s response to the domestic home in this chapter is critical, for it demonstrates where her early misgivings with spatial constructs stem from, and therefore elucidates why Bergson’s metaphysics were so enticing and precisely what problems pertaining to space Loy endeavoured to solve by appropriating his ideas.

This chapter subsequently details the components of Bergson’s philosophy that I contend are of greatest consequence for Loy and her suspicion of stasis; namely, the ways in which the encroachment of the spatial upon consciousness precludes one from an intuitive experience of real life. In particular, I examine the relationship between space and mobility, for Bergson argues that movement is not a function of space but of *durée*; movement occurs across space but is fundamentally distinguishable from it, for it cannot be divided into segments in the same manner as space and thus must not be conflated with it. In this way, the Bergsonian proposition that authentic experience is located in *durée*

and perpetual movement, rather than in space, offers a productive counterpoint to the containable stasis of the domestic house. Loy came into contact with Bergson and the opposition between spatial stasis and temporal movement both directly through her own reading in Florence between 1910 and 1913, and indirectly, through her engagement with Futurism in Florence between 1913 and 1915, for the Futurists depended heavily on Bergsonian metaphysics in order to conceptualise Dynamism, and their vehement opposition to “slowness” hinges upon Bergsonian concepts of *durée*, *élan vital*, intuition and movement. Loy grappled extensively with Futurism, and like Bergson, the Futurists proffered an alternative to the stagnant existence of the “Victorian” home. Indeed, Futurism identified containable spaces—such as houses, rooms, and anything pertaining to the domestic sphere—as inherently static and vile. However, they also relegated women inescapably to these spaces, and as such, offered no option for feminine mobility. Loy ultimately distances herself from Futurism, and yet its influence on her poetry long outlives her loyalty to the movement. I contend that this loyalty particularly involves the ideas that Futurism shared with Bergsonism, and as such, while Futurism’s impact on Loy has been examined at length,³³ the comparatively small amount of critical space devoted to Loy’s reading of Bergson is both curious and amiss.

Loy’s deployment of Bergson entails a radical reworking of its original metaphysical scope. Unlike other theorists who interrogate the body’s relationship to its own corporeal space and the external space that it inhabits, many of whom are deeply invested in cultural constructions of space and its social implications,³⁴

³³ See note 24.

³⁴ The number of critics and philosophers who engage with space, the bodily, and their social relations is extensive, and the following list of examples is by no means attempts to be exhaustive, but is rather intended as an indication of some of the key directions in which this has been critically pursued. Examples include feminist inquiry into the role of the containing, internal spaces of the chora, such as is undertaken in Irigaray’s critique of Western philosophy’s assessment of the space (or formlessness) of the feminine body through her reading of Plato’s mythology of the cave (*Speculum*), and—in a very contrary move—Kristeva’s redeployment of chora (as posited in Plato’s *Timaeus*) as a motility formed *prior to* space, temporality and language to describe semiotic drives in (*Revolution in Poetic Language*). Irigaray further interrogates the way in which psychoanalysis perceives the spaces of the female body as a lack, and proposes instead the endlessly multiple

Bergson's interest in space is rather more abstract, and describes not social interaction or the construction of self within a cultural frame, but the individual's access—via the consciousness—to intuition and authentic experience. Loy's poetics thus imaginatively extends Bergsonian metaphysics beyond its original reach, for while she is indubitably interested in consciousness and individual experience, she is also attentive to the social construction of self through space and poetry, and, in particular, in the marginalisation of deviant bodies; namely, the female body, the body of the artist, the bodies of the aged, and the bodies of the homeless. Loy's writing is thus much more invested in the corporeal than Bergson's metaphysics of consciousness, which tends to relegate the body either to the domain of habitual, bodily memory (as he does in *Matter and Memory*), as a central "image" through which other "images" of the world are organised and reflected—the terms of which downplay the body's materiality—or as the locus of animalistic instinct, as opposed to intelligence, in *Creative Intuition*. At its most powerful, it is an object that moves other objects: a "centre of action". But as an image amongst images, "it cannot give birth to a representation"; it cannot "condition the image of the universe" (*Matter* 4-5, italics in original). To be sure, Bergson is not referring here to the ability to produce art but to the process of perception. Nonetheless, throughout Bergson's writing, the terms in which the body is

tactile spaces of the lips that embrace both the interior and exterior, and embody both objectivity and subjectivity in *This Sex Which is not One*. Phenomenological philosophy analyses the body's relationship to the surrounding world through perception, particularly Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, in which perception is posited as the body's active engagement (rather than passive representation) with the world such that the body *belongs to* space and time (rather than simply existing within space and time). Like Merleau-Ponty, Grosz insists on the body's active occupation of space and temporality in *Space, Time, and Perversion* in order to challenge the body's "neutral" status in the pursuit of knowledge, and develops this discussion in order to assert that the production of public spaces (for example in architecture and geography) is both "messy" and "corporeal" (4). In contrast, Marxist readings of the social construction of space have been pursued by Lefebvre; *The Production of Space*—focused as it is primarily on how space is produced by forces of production—proposes that space is deeply embedded within social contexts, and yet Lefebvre is less concerned with embodiment; however, Simonsen writes persuasively in favour of a reconsideration of the importance of corporeal spaces in his work. Other examples include critics who examine the role and construction of the gendered body within the very specific spaces of a particular context; of particular interest to this thesis are analyses of Victorian domesticity, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

described do not have the same radical import as that of consciousness; in other words, one could say with David Morris, who writes in detail about the role of Bergson's bodily motor schemes, that Bergson's logic of "bodily thinking" is not, in fact "a logic of embodied thinking," for the body is only ever "an *instrument* of action" (63, emphasis mine).

This thesis accordingly reconciles Loy's poetics with Bergsonian philosophy not by asserting that the two aim for the same ends, but by acknowledging Loy's radical extension of Bergson's work for her own project. Although it is difficult to conceive in strictly Bergsonian terms of a volatile creative body that is not severable from either consciousness or the art that it produces, this thesis argues that this is precisely the kind of body that Loy's work generates. Her deployment of Bergsonian metaphysics is thus in many ways rather unusual—even counter-Bergsonian. What I argue for in this and subsequent chapters, then, is not only for Loy's engagement with space and movement, but for a radically idiosyncratic poetics that results from the deployment of a metaphysics that is arguably uninterested in cultural constructions; in order to unpick and undercut the way that bodies are constructed in space, Loy straddles an often uneasy split between abstraction on one hand and the social on the other.

This chapter therefore considers how Loy first conceptualises space by grappling with Victorian femininity, domestic spaces, Futurism and Bergson, and suggests that this is formative of an aesthetic project that defines the rest of Loy's career. Precisely what defines space for Loy demands particular attention; what characterises a spatial construct for Loy is difficult to pin down and is aptly mercurial for it is formulated in response to the variant influences. Indeed, to define space as it is set out by Loy is to set the term within its own limits, when it is the very notion of limits and parameters that Loy most furiously contests. It is perhaps no surprise, then, that space arises in Loy's texts under many different guises, or that it is a particularly thorny concept that too readily eludes definition. Nonetheless, this chapter argues that despite the polysemic nature of "space," it comes to represent for Loy that which enables limits and containability not only in the physical world—for example, the space of the domestic bourgeois household—but also in art. It imposes stasis upon bodies (particularly gendered bodies) by locking them in place, and thus occludes them from the experience of

motility, which Loy associates closely with freedom. Her aesthetic accordingly aims to dismantle the operations of space, for it is spatial constructs that shackle embodied and intellectual autonomy.

1.1 “Because she hoped Victoria would die”:³⁵ Virtuous angels and artistic pursuit

The social implications of the bourgeois Victorian home on the dialectics of space and the body are inscribed upon Loy’s poetry at the outset of her career. Loy was wary of the identification of the interior of the house with femininity on the grounds that it precluded female mobility. By the time that Loy was writing, this association between domestic space and femininity had a long and pervasive history; as Lynda Nead argues, the ascension of the domestic feminine ideal of the “angel in the house” is embedded within the separation between private and public spheres—that is, between the domestic home and public working or political life—that was solidified in the nineteenth century following the industrial revolution, particularly in the middle classes. The roles of the immobile “wife/mother/homemaker in the domestic sphere” and the mobile “paterfamilias travelling between the home and work in the city” are thus a result of the reification of the division between kinds of lived space and have a direct consequence on the mobility of gendered bodies. Men were free to travel between public and private spheres, whereas female respectability was defined in terms her containment within the private, domestic home (659-60). Although, as Nead argues, “respectable” women often did move alone through the public spaces of the city, there nonetheless existed a “religious fantasy of femininity,” which located women squarely in the home and associated wandering women as “streetwalkers” (660). By the time Loy was born in 1882, this fantasy was the subject of fierce dispute.³⁶ And it is precisely this kind of fantasy of woman that Loy’s poetry pits itself against.

³⁵ Loy, “Preceptors of Childhood, or, The Nurses of Maraquita,” *L&LB* 163.

³⁶ High-profile publications disputed the fantasy of domesticated femininity. Many critics proposed that the idleness and stasis is imposed upon women when their only function is to serve men, such as Bodichon (1857); additionally, it is argued that women’s confinement to the home and occlusion from public life is formed from irrational arguments by Mill (1869); and the state of marriage is depicted as parasitic, and education the mean of securing future financial independence

Moreover, the Victorian ideal of femininity excludes women from artistic production. The analogy between virtuous femininity and woman's inability—or refusal—to write was pervasive. For instance, Alfred Austin condemned the heroines of sensationalist novels written by women as characterised by lust and perversion, and he admonished that this was the result of allowing women to be “no longer [contained by] the nursery, the drawing-room, or the conjugal chamber, but unrestrainedly rioting in any and every arena of life” (Austin in Parker, 12). Tellingly, this criticism is framed in terms of mobility: it is a failure of containment that enables such debauched literature. For Austin, the domestic home and the world of literature are best kept as mutually exclusive and containable spaces that are distinctly gendered; Christopher Parker suggests that this is indicative of an attitude in which femininity is valued, but only within its proper place (12). Loy's issue with the Victorian feminine ideal is that it reifies this very division between art and tightly bounded femininity. Her resistance to what she conceives of as “Victorian” is thus twofold: it is a reaction against the figure of the domestic “angel” trapped in her house, and it is a rejection of an ideal that was opposed to art. That is, Loy conceived of the Victorian in terms of the spatial containment of women that disciplines their bodies and precludes them from artistic practice.

Loy was certainly not alone in her cynicism toward the relegation of the feminine to stasis and docility; indeed, as the “Angel” is precluded from artistic practice, women's literature proffers aptly subversive terrain from which to launch a counteroffensive. For example, in “An Extinct Angel” (1891), Charlotte Perkins Gilman sardonically described the domestic angel as humanity's unfortunate but

of women by Caird (1888). On the opposing side of this debate, the separate spheres for men and women were adamantly defended in Ruskin's influential paper, “Of Queen's Gardens,” (1865), which claims that “man's power is active, progressive” whereas women are better suited to “sweet ordering, arrangement” in the home and “praise” (1587-88); and although the continued improvement of women's position throughout history was argued for by Lecky (1869), he ultimately proposes that the domestic family is the centre of civilised society, and that resistance against “prevailing moral notions” might result in “wild theories” that should not be permitted to unsettle “certain eternal moral landmarks” (372). However, these are only a handful of examples from a very energetic and widespread public discussion—for more details, see Caine; Parker; Pykett; and Christ and Robson, eds.

complicit Other: “the angels—bless their submissive, patient hearts!—never thought of questioning [their situations]” (49). This correlation between gender, mobility and freedom also surfaces in modernist works. Djuna Barnes’s *Ryder*, for example, explores the power that a man can seize by commanding the boundaries of the house and keeping his women located within its limits—Wendell can defy his community and his wives and continue his polygamous marriages as long as he keeps his wives hidden indoors. With his wives properly contained, he has total control over their sexuality and their capacity for maternity—the women have no authority over their own “experiment-shocked bod[ies], heavy of belly, the stiff legs, a distorted shape of death” (222).

Woolf similarly interrogates domestic feminine virtue, and the way in which it obstructs the pursuit of art, in “Professions for Women,” in which she famously declares that the Angel of the House needs to be killed in order to write, or “She would have plucked the heart out of my writing” (“Professions” 285-86). This is exemplified in *Orlando*, for after Orlando enters the nineteenth century, she identifies an insidious “damp” that “chill[s] . . . hearts,” dampens minds, and seeps into the ink pots. The result is that Orlando’s attempt at writing poetry collapses into “the most insipid verse she had read in her life,” although—if it could be a consolation—it is written in a beautifully feminine “sloping Italian hand” (*Orlando* 124-29). In the same way, the lovely and passive Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* might have “the whole of the other sex under her protection; for reasons she could not explain, for their chivalry and valour, for the fact that they negotiated treaties, ruled India, controlled finance,” but when faced with the artist Lily Briscoe, she confirms to herself that she “could never take [Lily’s] painting very seriously” and focuses only on her “little Chinese eyes and her puckered-up face” that might make it difficult for her to find a husband (*To the Lighthouse* 11, 21). To the female artist, the pitfalls of domestic circumscription and stasis are both apparent and perilous, and Loy counters this by embracing a metaphysics that wholly confounds spatial division and immobility.

In Woolf’s “A Room of One’s Own,” mobility and gender, and specifically their relationship to the “Angel” and intellectual pursuit, are explored in a way that entails a reversal of the angel’s role as keeper of feminine domesticity that locks women inside; rather, the “inside” is cast as a masculine space of

knowledge—of university libraries and colleges—from which women are cast out, and the “angels” are the gatekeepers of institutionalised masculine privilege. Woolf describes the impositions that “Oxbridge” imposes upon women who wish to meander from the gravel path onto the grass:

I found myself walking with extreme rapidity across a grass plot. Instantly a man's figure rose to intercept me. Nor did I at first understand that the gesticulations of a curious-looking object, in a cut-away coat and evening shirt, were aimed at me. His face expressed horror and indignation. Instinct rather than reason came to my help; he was a Beadle; I was a woman. This was the turf; there was the path. Only the Fellows and Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me (Room of One's Own 5-6).

Woolf's protagonist is precluded from free movement across the grass by virtue of her gender, which, moreover, implicates a secondary exclusion: the Beadle can automatically eliminate her, a woman, from the male scholars and fellows. Woolf casts this exclusion as one without logic, for “reason” provides no aid in uncovering the reason for her banishment to the gravel. A similar experience occurs when she attempts to enter the library to examine the manuscripts of Lamb, Milton and Thackeray: a “guardian angel barring the way . . . regretted in a low voice as he waved me back that ladies are only admitted to the library accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction” (7). The library is thus a space that operates conversely to that of the domestic house, and yet it is still structured by similar logic. That is, women are kept outside, rather than inside, the walls; the “angel” is the custodian of masculine knowledge rather than feminine purity; yet, impediments to mobility and restrictions upon access to particular spaces are still imposed upon women.

Loy's work is replete with images of unfortunate “angels,” who are stripped of their mobility and who desperately repress traces of their sexuality. In “Effectual Marriage” Gina remains confined in the kitchen among her husband's “pots and pans / Where he so kindly kept her” (*LoLB* 36). Additionally, young virgins make an exhibition of their angelic and fragile natures before potential husbands in “Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots,” (1915) and peep softly, “My dear I should faint’ / Flutter.....flutter....flutter....” (*LoLB* 22). This poem explicitly ties feminine stasis to sexual purity, for women without dowries safeguard their

only remaining currency: their virginity. In turn, the girls are safeguarded within the confines of the house, the door of which is “locked / Against virgins who / Might scratch”. Unlike the men who pass beneath the window and “are going somewhere,” the unmarried girls are fixed in place; they lament that while they are trapped behind the windows, the men that they observe appear to be free:

Fleashes like weeds
 Sprout in the light
 So much flesh in the world
 Wanders at will (*LoLB*, 22-23)

Like weeds the men beyond the house exist without the imposed structure of the household, their movements are unrestrained, and their freedom is attained at the expense of the pruned and suffocated virgin girls, who can barely “squeak” out their fluttering acquiescence between ellipses. Loy employs line indentation to evoke a sense of the men’s unrestrained travel, and the words traverse, or “wander,” across the blank space of the last line. In this way, Loy’s use of free verse—and in the same move, her deliberate rejection of traditional and structured verse—echoes the free, unstructured movements of the men in “Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots”.

Indeed, the presence of trapped angels in Loy’s writing persists decades after her early and better-known poetry on Florentine domesticity. In manuscript drafts of *The Child and the Parent*, suitors demand that their prospective brides, figured as birds in a cage, “be angels,” and the newly wedded “Ada” hopes for pleasure when she consummates her marriage, but is punished for this expectation of “beautific lightning” with the dwindling of her desire into “an excruciating cramp” that “leaves her as nothing but a tangle of snapped nerve cables or wounded feelers dripping with a vital sap that she had drawn from him”. Ada’s disappointment is chided by her doctor, who admonishes: “No nice woman ever likes it” (fol. 5, 17, 18, underlining Loy’s). Similarly, Loy quips in the manuscript for *Goy Israels* (c. 1930-1940) that “there is no deeper shame than that of the man who has failed to keep his indignant womb in the home,” (box 2, fol. 28, 82) and recounts how an adventurous “Lady Cornwall” suggests to her friend’s husband

(for her friend was getting no sexual pleasure from their marriage) that there “is another position,” to which he responds, “I would rather my wife lay dead at my feet than make an immoral woman of her” (box 2, fol. 27, 35).

Loy’s evocation of the angel is in every instance steeped in criticism; in her writing, they are not paragons of virtue, but women who have had power wrenched from their hands, or worse, have relinquished their own agency voluntarily in pursuit of marital happiness. However, happiness is precisely what these women fail to achieve: the birds in “Ladies in an Aviary” are trapped in a cage, Ada suffers from interminably disappointing sex that rapidly transforms into irritability, and Gina is unable to emotionally connect with her husband. Loy’s work thus cautions against the ideal of the original illustration of the “Angel” in Patmore’s devotional poem “Angel in the House,” (1854) written to his wife to exalt her qualities as a gentle and passive paragon of virtue:

Man must be pleased; but him to please
Is woman’s pleasure; down the gulf
Of his condoled necessities
She casts her best, she flings herself.
How often flings for nought, and yokes
Her heart to an icicle or whim,
Whose each impatient word provokes
Another, not from her, but him;
While she, too gentle even to force
His penitence by kind replies,
Waits by, expecting his remorse,
With pardon in her pitying eyes;
And if he once, by shame oppress’d,
A comfortable word confers,
She leans and weeps against his breast,
And seems to think the sin was hers (Bk.1, Canto IX.1, 52)

Patmore’s heroine is noble not for action she takes, but for her refusal to act; she receives her husband’s antagonising words with silence and pitying eyes, meekly accepting censure with no sense of injustice or resentment. The unfortunate fates of Loy’s women admonish against the pursuit of this kind of idealised woman, for it leads only to disillusionment and entrapment.

Analogous to the “Angel” is Loy’s figure of “English Rose,” associated with Christian asceticism, Victorianism and empire. The “Rose” frequently assumes characteristics analogous to Loy’s memory of her mother, Julia, although as Alex Goody argues, these textual explorations of Loy’s relationships are always coded, are “never simply autobiographical,” and must therefore not be simplistically considered as representations of a pre-textual subject (“Empire” 63). The spectre of the austere mother has very pointed consequences for the production of art in Loy’s writing. Burke gives a detailed account of Julia in her biography *Becoming Modern*, describing her in terms that resemble an antagonistic version of Woolf’s insidious angel who haunts Victorian homes, pleading with women to “[b]e sympathetic; be tender; flatter,” attempting to circumvent their creativity, for Loy’s mother could materialise as a “voice” inside Loy’s head that chastised her for her “evil ways” and censored her imagination (Woolf “Professions” 285; Burke *Becoming Modern* 26-27, 42). While it is impossible to ascertain how much of Loy’s work is strictly factual and how much consists of artistic license, Loy persistently portrays the “Rose” as a maternal figure who idealises feminine chastity and identifies women’s involvement in art as antithetical to this ideal, such as in her long poem “Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose,” (1923-1925) and in her manuscripts for her unpublished novels *Goy Israel* and *The Child and the Parent*. Indeed, the figure of the “outsider,” exemplified by the artist, is diametrically opposed to the “philistine, conformist view she sees embodied in the English Rose,” according to Helen Jaskoski (364). The Rose is a “neurotic and intolerant emblem of empire,” who cannot herself be an outsider, but who bears sole responsibility for internalised sexual repression. Indeed, Jaskoski proposes that Loy’s depiction of the Rose is so damning that it refuses to consider that the Rose too is victim to an insidious and controlling patriarchy (367).

The Angel—or Rose—is thus not only a spectre of female imprisonment in “Anglo-Mongrels”: she is its fiercest perpetrator, and this has severe consequences on the young Ova’s quest for artistic self-realisation. Goody compares Loy’s “Anglo-Mongrels” to James Joyce’s *Künstlerroman, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*; while Stephen Dedalus is able to ascend above the restrictive social sphere of institutions, family, religion and tradition in order to

autonomously pursue his aesthetic vision, Ova in “Anglo-Mongrels” is tethered to her mother, Ada, and Victorian England “as daughter, colonised subject and failed incarnation of the feminine ideal,” and thus no triumphant, aesthetic subject emerges at the poem’s conclusion (“Empire” 70). As an “armoured tower . . . of curved corsets,” this mother is doubly restricted by both her clothes and her household, and bequeaths these restrictions onto her daughter (“Anglo-Mongrels,” *LaLB* 140). Spatial restriction therefore imposes itself not only upon Ada’s ability to physically move from one space to another, but on her freedom to think independently in a way that might give her access to artistic genius. And it is these ideas that Loy draws upon when she challenges the reader in *The Child and the Parent* to watch her “escape from the Victorian Era,” (box 1, fol. 13, 28), or when she portrays Maraquita’s increasing empathy for her governess “Queenie” in “Preceptors of Childhood, or, The Nurses of Maraquita,” as a result of Maraquita’s supposition that Queenie names herself thus “because she hoped Victoria would die” (*LoLB* 163).

1.2 Bergson and the parameters of mathematical space

Given the parallels that Loy draws between limitations to women’s mobility and the imposition of space, Bergson’s metaphysics—with its critique of the encroachment of space upon authentic experience at its centre—provides a natural framework for her writing. It was during this period that Loy had her first personal encounter with Bergson’s writing through Dodge, whose guidance—both literary and personal—Loy described as “a great salvation” (Burke *Becoming Modern* 119). It is difficult to understate the scope of Bergson’s influence on Loy both aesthetically and personally. His theorisation of the way that mathematical space encroaches upon language and consciousness is critical to Loy’s articulation of an aesthetic project. Moreover, Burke proposes that Loy’s study of Bergson enabled Loy to rethink creatively her real-life struggles with marriage, religion, and citizenship; Bergsonian introspection

might show her the way past the painful inner division of which she was so conscious. In the realm of pure duration, perhaps, the contradictions between being Christian and Jewish, British and foreign, respectable and commercial, might dissolve. (*Becoming Modern* 122)

Although Burke's text is not concerned with a detailed treatment of Bergson, the part of his philosophy that enables such a reading is his rejection of the "gradual incursion of space into the domain of pure consciousness," (*Time* 126) for such an incursion would result in the artificial separation of non-extensive qualities—like, for instance, the condition of being "Christian," "Jewish," "British," "foreign," "respectable" and "commercial". One of Bergson's earliest criticisms of the traversing of spatial terminology into non-spatial concepts is his differentiation between intensity and extensity in the opening of his text, *Time and Free Will*. He defines the extensive as that which can be quantifiably measured against another object; for example, when we can assert that one object is larger than another object, as the space of the larger object can contain that of the smaller, the objects in question participate in extension. In contrast, intensity refers to internal states, including conscious thought and the impression of sensation—these cannot be compared to one another in any quantifiable way, as we cannot assert that one sensation contains the other (*Time* 1-2). In other words, in order to speak of measurement we can deal only with extensity; intensity, as it is not bound by the limits of space, cannot be contained, measured, and sat side by side other intensities. And yet intensive forces are still referred to (erroneously, according to Bergson) in spatialised terms. Loy's distress with the condition of being "Christian and Jewish, British and foreign, respectable and commercial" is caused by pitting seemingly dichotomous entities against each other; for example, if one considers being "British" or "foreign" in the same manner as we think about matter and extension, these terms become impenetrable and separable in the same way as two measurable objects placed side by side.³⁷

There are thus considerable continuances between Loy and Bergson in terms of the role played by extension, and yet, they diverge in their assertion or refutation of the inherence of extension to a "natural" misunderstanding of the world. For Loy, extension imposed upon identity, like the walls of the domestic

³⁷ However, if "British," "foreign," etc. are understood not as "conditions of being" but as abstract terms, Bergson would argue that these must, by default, be considered extensive, even if such a consideration is not true to real life. The status of abstract language for Bergson and Loy will be discussed in Chapter Two in connection to Loy's endeavour to break language out of its spatial constraints.

house, must be overcome, for it establishes artificial restraints upon subjecthood; in a similar vein, space encroaches upon the very operations of our intellect for Bergson. He argues that the human intellect is by design prone to misapprehending the nature of real life. There is thus a variance between Loy and Bergson as a result of the way in which they frame the conditions of spatial imposition: for Bergson, the misapprehension of experience in terms of space is a natural, if lamentable, occurrence, whereas for Loy, extension's domestication of the subject is more deliberate and insidious, and has very specific and gendered cultural and historical consequences. Regulation of bodies may be cloaked in terms that make this regulation appear natural, but this is a guise that attempts to elide the spurious subjugation of "outsider" bodies and is thus a construction, according to Loy, that must be uncovered. By contrast, Bergson's seminal text, *Creative Evolution*, contends that the intellect takes unorganised and imperfect matter and manipulates it "for any purpose," demonstrating ingenuity and intelligent problem solving by enforcing upon matter organisation and form (141). Thus intelligence, by its nature, knows nothing innately (147). That is, in order for us to control matter effectively, we must artificially render it discontinuous rather than fluid, consider it "*provisionally final*" rather than in a process of change, and split it into measurable units: only of the discontinuous and the immobile does the intellect "form a clear idea" (154-55). It is thus the imposition of spatial constructs that dislocate the subject from the fluidity of movement and real life for Bergson, and it is precisely this contention that is so productive for Loy's poetics, even if space operates, for her, with more insidious intent.

Further, the relationship between extension and time is imperative to an appreciation of the way in which movement operates for both Loy and Bergson, for movement and time are inextricable. Bergson argues that spatial constructs cause the intellect to misunderstand time; this underpins his landmark assertion of the difference between mathematical time and *durée*. Bergson designates the conscious experience of time, or *durée*, as real time, a unified process that is not divisible into homogenous units. In contradistinction, time as it is generally understood—that is, as mathematical—is a series of distinct and equal moments. Like the intervals separated in space along the surface of a clock, mathematical time spreads out individual seconds to be counted and presumes that time "is

nothing but space” (*Time* 91). As extension hinges upon differentiation and severability, mathematical time is rendered a quantitative reality, not a qualitative one, and is dislocated from real experience. Moreover, time and movement are entangled, for *durée*’s qualitative, rather than quantitative, nature hinges upon its unrelenting forward momentum. Bergson elucidates the nexus between the qualitative nature of *durée* and its forward propulsion by recounting his experience of listening to a clock chime, an experience which one might expect to be divisible into separate parts (each chime demarcating a new section of time) but is, rather, indivisible:

Whilst I am writing these lines, the hour strikes on a neighbouring clock, but my inattentive ear does not perceive it until several strokes have made themselves heard. Hence I have not counted them; and yet I only have to turn my attention backwards to count up the four strokes which have already sounded and add them to those which I hear. If, then, I question myself carefully on what has just taken place, I perceive that the first four sounds had struck my ear and even affected my consciousness, but that the sensations produced by each one of them, instead of being set side by side, had melted into one another in such a way as to give the whole a peculiar quality, to make a kind of musical phrase out of it. In order, then, to estimate retrospectively the number of strokes sounded, I tried to reconstruct this phrase in thought: my imagination made one stroke, then two, then three, and as long as it did not reach the exact number four, my feeling, when consulted, answered that the total effect was qualitatively different. It had thus ascertained in its own way the succession of four strokes, but quite otherwise than by a process of addition, and without bringing in the image of a juxtaposition of distinct terms. In a word, the number of strokes was perceived as a quality and not as a quantity: it is thus that duration is presented to immediate consciousness, and it retains this form so long as it does not give place to a symbolic representation derived from extensity. (*Time* 128)

Despite the homogeneity of each stroke upon the clock, the experience of hearing or remembering is a unified experience of indivisible time, rather than the recounting individual “moments” of seemingly homogenous events like the striking of a clock. To be sure, even the most instantaneous perception, Bergson argues, is inundated with memories, including the recollection of the moments that immediately preceded the instant of perception (*Matter* 194). Thus each moment carries within it the memory of the ones before, and each subsequent moment must be qualitatively different from the next as it will carry within it a set

of new and ever-accumulating memories. Indeed, it is this function of the progression of ostensibly indistinguishable sounds through time that engenders internal movement in the repetition of nouns in Gertrude Stein's writing, according to Sarah Posman, for Stein conjures the "life of things" by recreating them "again and again" ("Modernist Energeia" 224), and as I have proposed, Stein's appropriation of Bergson deeply affected Loy.

Bergson's attempt to enumerate the chiming clock bears striking resemblance to a passage from Loy's unpublished novel, *The Child and the Parent*. The young protagonist in the novel has recently discovered her consciousness, which results in engagements with her environment that are at once exhilarating and dizzying. This new conscious awareness of the world brings about "incalculable transformation" in the objects that she touches (box 1, fol. 13, 26-27), but the power of this is also overwhelming. She deploys the process of counting as a means of imposing stability upon her increasingly vertiginous experiences of the world:

Once alone, I would turn round and round until objective reality dissolved and stop when I found myself attracted in a direction. It was imperative that I should bow low in this direction while certain numbers I had learned made a great to-do in my head. Numbers that are forces for my protection, at once very remote and very present. Numbers that must not only be muttered, but also spoken to. The awe they inspired was overpowering and only offset by the security they bestowed. They must, moreover, be bowed out to the measure of their own count. (Box 1, fol. 13, 28)

Reality that is "objective," that exists outside of an individual's consciousness, falls away beneath the furious revolutions of the girl's spinning body, and what she is left with is an experience of the room that fuses her body's movement with the external reality of the room. Once she becomes giddy enough that she struggles to remain firmly in one place and instead stumbles forward, it is only the drumming out of numbers that can reinstate her sense of objective space. She recognises that the numbers are distinct in kind from her experience of the room: they are abstract, or "remote," and inspire an awe that she later labels as "immemorably holy". And yet by embodying them, by muttering the numbers, speaking them out loud and entering into communion with them, the numbers feel suddenly "present," and their awe is matched by their imposition of "security". Indeed, this

security can be described by invoking Bergson's words, for we can "see that the human intellect feels at home among inanimate objects, more especially among solids, where our action finds its fulcrum . . . [and] that, consequently, our intellect triumphs in geometry" (*Creative* ix). Although in this particular instance enumeration is a welcome counterbalance to the instability of the child's movement, the security of geometry elsewhere in Loy's poetry engenders an opposition to woman's mobility that is far more insidious.

Mobility is particularly at stake in the incursion of space onto real experience for Bergson, not only as a result of time's forward propulsion, but also because it engenders the misapprehension of movement in mathematical terms. Indeed, for both Bergson and Loy, space can only produce a series of immobilities, and cannot make sense of authentic movement. Bergson argues that movement, like time, is "*a passage from rest to rest*" that is "*absolutely indivisible*" (*Matter* 246, italics in original). As we move our arm in the air from point A to point B, our consciousness understands this movement as unified by way of an "inner feeling," for "in A was rest, in B there is rest again, and between A and B is placed an indivisible or at least an undivided act, the passage from rest to rest, which is movement itself" (246). This account of movement may appear counter-intuitive, given the common expression of movement as the traversing of space—an extendible and therefore divisible entity—over time. Yet Bergson counters this by affirming that divisibility is applicable only to the space beneath the movement, and not to the movement itself (246). Thus the parts of the movement AB correspond not to the space beneath it, but to a "part"³⁸ of duration (250). Yet the intellect misconstrues the nature of movement as it is only comfortable with stabilities, solids, and immobility; as such, when it conceives of movement it does so by stringing immobilities together, by conceiving of movement in terms of static moments in space (*Creative* 155). Bergson elucidates his theories through a consideration of Zeno's paradox: Zeno posits that the trajectory of an arrow moving through the air is divisible into points, each of which the arrow needs to travel through in order to reach its destination. And yet as the line through which

³⁸ Note the slippage of language into spatial terms; as Chapter Two will demonstrate, this tendency of language to depend upon spatial terms, even for non-spatial entities, is inevitable, according to Bergson.

the arrow travels is divisible into sections, and those sections into further sections, the number of points through which the arrow must travel approaches infinity—the arrow therefore never reaches its destination. According to Bergson, Zeno’s error consists of a conflation of the (divisible) space that the arrow moves over with the (indivisible) movement itself. What Zeno unwittingly proves is not, as he concludes, that there is no movement, but rather that movement cannot be constructed out of immobilities. Movement must not be confused with the space over which it travels (*Matter* 251); it participates in *intension*, and cannot be characterised by extension. It occurs *across* space but *in* duration.

The consequence of time constructed by immobilities is particularly apparent in “Café du Néant”, the second poem in Loy’s “Three Moments in Paris” series. The café is a world unto itself, suffocating and claustrophobic, dislocated from social and political concerns, severed from the outside world entirely. Its spatial isolation results in temporal suspension: the café reveals no marker of time, and there is therefore no sense that time is passing. Indeed, nobody enters, leaves, nor moves within the café—a monstrous permutation of Fredric Jameson’s Utopian enclave that reveals no trace of being born of “agitation” (15). It is itself an immobile moment of the kind Bergson identifies in Zeno’s paradox, and it therefore cannot progress but is ensnared within its own timeless eternity. Specifically, the café appears to be trapped in a moment of decay, between life and death, and yet not moving towards either. The interior resembles a sepulchre, lit only by tapers “stuck in coffin tables” (*LolLB* 16). The taper is a “Synthetic symbol of LIFE” in the café, which is itself a “factitious chamber of DEATH”—both symbols of life and death are counterfeit and artificial: an unreal symbol of life enclosed by an unreal symbol of death renders life and death abstract and inert rather than cyclical or progressive.

Even the bodies themselves appear to have no access to time or movement, for they can bring about no action, their lies have “no consequence,” and the only reference to past events is in the phrase, “nostalgic youth,” which in fact relates not to an individual’s sense of her past, but a curious, disembodied force that compels a woman to hold her fingers in a flame that never succeeds in burning her—a flame that is incapable of moving towards a future (*LolLB* 16).

These bodies are wholly antithetical to those described by Bergson, bodies that are embedded in the ineluctable movement of *durée*:

But already we may speak of the body as an ever advancing boundary between the future and the past, as a pointed end, which our past is continually driving forward into our future. Whereas my body, taken at a single moment, is but a conductor interposed between the objects which influence it and those on which it acts, it is, on the other hand, when replaced in the flux of time, always situated at the very point where my past expires in a deed. (*Matter* 88)

Rather, the bodies in the café have no sense of past or future, and are at best bodies of a single moment, “interposed between objects,” but with no influence on surrounding objects and incapable of being affected in return. They thus resemble cadavers more than living beings: the woman who blossoms in the spotlight does so in “perfect putrefaction”—evoking a sense of both decay and moral vacancy—and even the brandied cherries “Are decomposing / Harmoniously / With the flesh of spectators” (*LōLB* 17). Moreover, the bodies of “young lovers” in the café are entombed in black clothing, “hermetically buttoned up in black / To black cravat”—they are contained both by the café walls and their own fashionable clothing, and the speaker asks, “What color could have been your bodies / When last you put them away” (*LōLB* 16). The bodies of the lovers in the café are long forgotten, as temporal stasis eliminates sexuality in the same way as domestic containment does in “Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots”. However, in the final line of the poem, the speaker indicates that despite this temporal suspension inside the café, “there are cabs outside the door”. These cabs gesture to outside movement—beyond the café, things are not stagnant, taxis come and go, and people transit. And yet, the café remains unimpinged by the progress of the external world, and the comparison serves only to reveal the café’s absolute isolation, for the world of mobility has left the “Café du Néant” behind.

It is Bergson’s account of time, and his distinction between intension and extension, that Kouidis invokes in her study of the feminine self, *Mina Loy: American Modernist Poet* particularly in her discussion of Loy’s poem, “Parturition,” and its connection to Bergsonian thought. Kouidis argues that “Parturition” depicts a woman who exceeds her own selfhood, is unified with time and is thus sensitive to the rhythms of intension, but for whom extension is equally

imperative, as it locates pain in the space of the body (45). Yet, for Bergson pain is a sensation that cannot be quantifiably measured except by counting the bodily reactions that accompany it; it is not the experience of pain itself which is extensive, but only the bodily spasms which concurrently occur. Pain, like other bodily sensations and vibrations, is intensive and defined not by “magnitude” but by “quality” (*Time* 37-38). Kouidis’s evaluation of Loy’s appropriation of Bergsonian philosophy in “Parturition” is thus enabled by a *mis*reading of the nuances of Bergson’s distinction between intensity and extensity; her evaluation of the workings of Bergson in this poem identify a shift between intension and extension, and thus hinge upon the distinction between the two—a distinction which, if we follow Bergson’s theories closely, is inaccurate.

Although Loy’s assimilation of Bergson’s writing is not the focus of Kouidis’s study, it encompasses what is to date the most comprehensive published account of Bergson’s pervading influence on Loy’s work, for although numerous critics gesture to the parallels between Loy and Bergson, or state that Loy draws on Bergsonian thought,³⁹ curiously little has been done to chart the specifics of how they are manifested in Loy’s poetry. Kouidis’s attention to Bergson is concentrated on Loy’s early writing, for she argues that it is in this period that Loy identifies the “universal situation” of female subjectivity “mirrored in her own life and the lives of her contemporaries” (26). She is particularly attentive to Loy’s “Costa San Giorgio,” in which Loy portrays the bustle of the Florentine streets by juxtaposing images in quick succession. Kouidis draws on Bergson’s claim in *An Introduction to Metaphysics* that disparate images can contrive to make us see, momentarily, the pulse of duration (27-28). There, it is Loy’s collage of dissimilar images in “Costa San Giorgio” that is indicative of Bergson’s influence (58-59). However, while Kouidis locates Bergsonian concepts in the poems “Parturition” and “Costa San Giorgio,” she argues that Loy ultimately abandons her attempts to place the self within the flux of time, choosing instead the “fixed, spatialized realm of the work of art,” for Loy’s “Songs to Joannes” unites both “her most innovative structural experiments” with her “bleakest examination of female selfhood” (139, 60). It is thus in this poem,

³⁹ See note 15.

Kouidis asserts, that Loy's ultimate rejection of Bergson and *durée* is most apparent:

She has wanted to assert and define the self as Futurism and Bergsonian metaphysics encouraged her to do. But instead of experiencing a continuous, spontaneous, and sexually luminescent self-expansion in time (*i.e.*, Futurist dynamism or Bergsonian duration), she knows fragmentation and stasis. She rearranges the fragments of love in each poem, but she cannot escape the closed circle formed by the shifting of these fragments. (63-64)

On the contrary, I argue that if "Songs to Joannes" is in fact, as Kouidis proposes, Loy's "bleakest examination of female selfhood," (60) the presence of fragmentation and stasis, reveals not that Loy forsakes *durée* and flux, but that stasis represents a threat to agency and subjecthood. Just as Loy's lugubrious portrayal of "Café du Néant" connects stasis and the absence of *durée* with an air of stagnancy and aimlessness, the abandonment of indivisible time in "Songs to Joannes" results in a feminine self who is characterised by exhaustion, cynicism and detachment.

In addition to the important work undertaken by Kouidis, several unpublished doctoral theses have charted the impact of Bergson on Loy's art in more depth, particularly the feminist reading of Futurist theatre undertaken by Klock, Freeborn's New Historical reading of the influence of spiritualism on Loy's satire, the post-Darwinian reading of modernist poetry by Schuster, and Lintz's reader-response analysis of Gertrude Stein that proposes that poets who read Stein turned to metaphors of nuclear disintegration. Indeed, only Freeborn's thesis takes Bergson's impact on Loy's poetics as one of its primary objects, for he argues that Loy's satire is profoundly influenced by Bergson's account of the comic as a tension between *élan vital* and mechanical inelasticity, as well as by Mary Baker Eddy's Christian Science, and Roberto Assagiolo's psychosynthesis. On the other hand, Klock, Schuster and Lintz all engage with the connection between Bergson and Loy in some detail, although this is not the central point of their arguments.

The correlations drawn between Loy and Bergson by Klock, Freeborn and Schuster are all underpinned by a reading of *élan vital*, the force in Bergsonian metaphysics that drives the species towards increasing complexity, that causes all

variation in biology, and which is “the ultimate principle of existence . . . the creative power which rolls through all things” (Goudge 17). Klock argues that female theatre artists who participated in Italian Futurism, such as Loy, Valentine de Saint-Point, and Giannina Censi, used their theatre to contest circulating images of the female body and that the practices of these artists are representative of an epistemological shift within modernism; namely, the shift from considering time, space, and matter as linear and indivisible to an appreciation of their multiple and fragmented nature (iii). Specifically, she argues that Loy’s deployment of Futurist-styled typography, bellicose tone and dichotomous declarations such as “DIE in the Past/ Live in the Future” (*LoLB* 149) in “Aphorisms on Futurism” belie the text’s true undertaking: the representation of non-linear time, space, and bodies of matter (129-39). However, this is separate to her discussion of Bergson—that is, Klock curiously does not engage with Bergson’s comprehensive account of the linearity of time, space and matter in order to discuss precisely time, space and matter, but only with his theories of consciousness. And yet it is precisely these questions that frame Loy’s pursuit of authentic artistic freedom. Moreover, the consciousness that Klock describes is rather antithetical to that of Bergson in its relationship to time: Klock describes Loy’s white spaces, inhabited by the evolving consciousness, as examples of pure present time with “no definite past nor future” (141). Yet as we have seen, *durée* is inextricable from both past and future, and evolution, in turn, inextricable from *durée*, for life “*endures* in time” (*Matter* 51, italics in original). There cannot be a present moment that is not interpenetrated with its past, and which does not push against an impending future; such a representation of Loy’s work as fractured from past and future renders it artificially static.

Rather, the fecundity of Klock’s consideration of Bergson lies in her reading of an evolving consciousness that Loy derives from Bergsonian *élan vital*, and which promises endless possibilities of future action. Klock contends that the white spaces in “Aphorisms” represent a consciousness that exists as a gap between actions that have been committed, and possible action that is yet to take place. As the consciousness depicted here is “heightened,” it is attuned to the inner workings of intuition rather than simply following the structures of the intellect that Bergson designates as “*inert*” and “*automatic*” (141-42, italics in

original). Although Klock's interest in Bergson does not pervade her thesis or her discussion of Loy, it provides her with a way to read "Aphorisms" and enables a consideration of Loy's attention to the potential freedom of artistic bodies. Thus while her thesis is a productive start to an analysis of the presence of Bergson's philosophical thinking in Loy's writing, it is concerned only with a reading of consciousness, isolated from Bergson's consideration of time, flux, movement and matter, a consideration that must be undertaken in order to achieve a better appreciation of Loy's enigmatic quest for artistic and political freedom—the two concepts being, for Loy, inextricably linked.

Like Klock, Schuster argues for the importance of Bergsonian *élan vital* in Loy's poetics for its denunciation of finality; however, he proposes that Loy eventually abnegates Bergson's metaphysics, and instead frames her poetry as a riposte. He investigates the intersection between American modernist poetry and the new biological theories of Bergson, Charles Darwin, and Friedrich Nietzsche in the works of Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams, Gertrude Stein, Louis Zukofsky and Loy (v-vi), and argues that these poets pursue a "biotopia" in their art in order to envision a new way of being (3). Schuster argues that while Loy shares Bergson's metaphysical outlook, she criticises him for vacating his theories of corporeality and sexuality. For Schuster, Loy's "Parturition" is a case in point; he contends that while "Bergson subsumed the organic into the virtual to redeem time and memory, Loy reasserts its connection to the body to show how embodied sensations mediate between the virtual and the actual" (95). Thus, while Bergsonian *durée*, flux, and the infinite unfolding of possibilities is critical to Loy and other modernists for its emphasis on Dynamism over inevitability and finality, what Bergson's philosophy is lacking—and what Loy critiques him for—is an appreciation for the experiences of the lived female body in the role of evolution and reproduction. This is apparent in the messiness of Loy's poem "Parturition" that depicts how the emotional experience of birth is caught in a desire for "organic redemption" not accounted for in Bergson's *élan vital*. According to Schuster, Loy therefore rewrites Bergson's a-sexual biotopia "to respond to women's political and sexual desires" (118-19).

In contrast to Schuster, this thesis is concerned not with Bergson's organicism, but with Bergson's engagement with spatialisation. To be sure,

Schuster's claim that Bergson evacuates his metaphysics of organic evolution of the lived experience of the birthing woman is salient, and moreover, I believe that Schuster is right when he contends that Loy is a closer reader of Bergson than most critics have conceded (118). Yet, this "close reading" extends beyond the particulars of the birthing body and its role in evolution; Loy examines the spatial limits of a range of bodies, and a Bergsonian lens productively troubles the bodily spaces that they inhabit. I therefore propose that Loy's aesthetic does not entail, as Schuster suggests, a rejoinder to Bergson's philosophy, but a radical exploration and expansion of its possibilities for the poetic and lived body.

Freeborn's concern with the role of *élan vital* is primarily with the comic tension that is caused by the dissonance between flux and mechanical inelasticity, which he argues is integral to the operation of Loy's satire. Bergson's *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* thus provides a framework with which to read the presence of humour in Loy's satires on Futurism and "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose". However, while Loy's satires accord with Bergson's account of the comic, Freeborn proposes that their conception of laughter's social role differs: Bergson argues that laughter is normative and reifies standards of behaviour, whereas Loy deploys laughter in order to disrupt the habitual stability of "pernicious . . . social standards" (119-20). In this way, Freeborn identifies the same impulse in Loy's poetry as this thesis; that is, Loy aims to disrupt stasis as it artificially precludes the evolution of society. Freeborn further contends that Loy's language is indicative of her engagement with Bergson. He suggests that for both Bergson and Loy, language is inherently troublesome for is a representation of reality mediated by intellect, rather than reality itself, and that this mediation falsely envisions the world in terms of discrete units. Moreover, language is ordered and restricted by rules of syntax and the spatiality of the printed word (61). Loy's experimental syntax thus signals an expanding consciousness (64)—moments when intuition flickers through the intellectual domain of language. Yet, as I will argue in detail in Chapter Two, the dismantling of syntax and punctuation is not merely indicative of a disruption to linguistic order: it brings about a radical proliferation of possible meaning and opens up the contained "space" of a given text. The space of the text thus becomes a site of resistance against the rigidity of language that Bergson argues is inescapable; it is language itself that enables this disruption, and thus

Loy's vision of the potential of language is more sanguine than a strictly Bergsonian framework would permit. Freeborn's careful consideration of Bergson's impact on Loy's poetry is perhaps the most thorough study done to date; it is, however, rather different in approach from the work of this thesis, which focuses not on Bergson's account of the comic and *élan vital*, but on Bergson's and Loy's shared interest in the artificialities of space and its consequences.

Only Lintz chooses not to focus his analysis of Loy's connection to Bergson on *élan vital*. His thesis argues that in response to Gertrude Stein's poetry, T. S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis, Mina Loy and William Carlos Williams all turn to nuclear disintegration. Lintz proposes that Stein and Loy had a reciprocal influence upon the other's work, and draws on Loy's essay "Gertrude Stein," her poems "Parturition," and "Tuning in on the Atom Bomb," and her novel *Insel* to reveal that this relationship was characterised by Loy's interest in Marie Curie and radium. These works embody the competing radioactive forces of concentricism and excentricism—a dual process of particle expulsion (the emanation of "rays") and of extraction, or "relentless concentric purification" (95), and although his chapter is not concerned primarily with Loy's relationship to Bergson, he points to a continuance between concentricism and Bergsonian *durée*, which Lintz argues is a "literalization of the concentric," for one must enter intuitively into *durée* in order to comprehend it (114). I reserve more detailed commentary on Lintz for Chapter Four in order to discuss his work on the way Loy employs a metaphoric of radioactivity in my discussion of Loy's interest in the atomic body.

Thus, despite the important work that has been done on Loy's reading of Bergson and its various manifestations in her work, a detailed account of Loy's reading of Bergsonian space and its inherent immobility is yet to be undertaken. Indeed, I would argue that the artificial constructs of space is the most fundamental principle in Bergson's philosophy, for it space that prohibits access of the intellect to *durée*, intuition, and *élan vital*. As Thomas Goudge suggests in his preface to Bergson's *An Introduction to Metaphysics*:

Can the intellect form an adequate conception of the *élan vital*? It would seem not. Just as in the case of time and motion, the intellect deals with life by

translating it into static and mechanical terms. Here again it falsifies in the interests of practice. (17)

Loy's poetry engages with space not only in its more abstract formulations in connection to imposition on movement, time and language, but also in its most literal sense in her earliest poetry on the domestic house—spatial constructs and their intrinsic proscriptions are thus a prevalent concern of Loy's from the outset of her career.

1.3 Marinetti and Futurist dynamism

Bergson's widespread influence on early twentieth-century literature has been increasingly acknowledged in modernist criticism,⁴⁰ and Italian Futurism revealed particular interest in Bergsonian thought. I have already argued that Loy distanced herself from Futurism's conception of movement as masculine speed; what affects her writing instead is their shared interest in movement's inextricability from the experience of real life. This inextricability in Futurism is apparent in "Futurist Painting: A Technical Manifesto," (1910) by Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla and Gino Severini, which posits that "all things move, all things run, all things are rapidly changing," rather than remaining "motionless before our eyes," and urges that followers of Futurism must "at any price re-enter into life" (27, 28). These claims closely resemble Bergson's assertion that our true, inner self is not an external projection in space, but can only be accessed "by deep introspection, which leads us to grasp our inner states as living things, constantly *becoming*" (*Time* 231, italics in original). The critical commonality between Bergson and Futurism here is the way in which movement enables access to life; indeed, Boccioni defines "Plastic Dynamism," (1913) as "the general law of simultaneity and interpenetration dominating everything, in movement" (94). This pursuit of an art that partakes in radical mobility renders art itself inextricable from *durée*; as Paul Atkinson describes, Futurism deployed Bergsonian *durée* in their conceptualisation of dynamism in order to demonstrate that art is an "expression of time"(57).

Moreover, movement for the Futurists is not merely the traversing of an "immobile body" across space (no matter how quickly it might travel), but like

⁴⁰ See notes 17 and 18.

Bergson and Loy, is inherent in the very fabric of the body—a “*truly mobile object*” (Boccioni 93, italics in original). Dynamism is therefore a celebration of absolute mobility and freedom, and as such, pits itself against a type of art that it identifies with the “poetics of immobility,” with artistic traditions, with the notion of the “finished” and complete artwork, and with *passéism* (Cianci 62-63). Consequently, *élan vital* (a result of both movement and *durée*, for it is the creative propulsion that occurs through time) has also been identified by Lisa Panzera as another key Bergsonian influence in Futurist depictions of “an object’s inner motion and force,” (225) and by Günter Berghaus, who proposes that Futurism’s “machine cult” is in fact a metaphor for *élan vital* (21). Berghaus argues that for Marinetti in particular, *élan vital* was embedded in expressions of war and revolution, although Marinetti replaces the term “*élan vital*” with “the instinct of courage, power, and energy” (Marinetti, qtd in Berghaus 56).

The exaltation of absolute mobility has critical consequences for spatial constructs, and thus offers Loy a productive alternative to the static spaces of the house. Giovanni Cianci argues that Marinetti’s manifestos are saturated in imagery of “unbounded spaces,” of summits, voids and the unknown; by contrast, the enclosed spaces of boxes, rooms, containers and frames appear in Futurist art and writings as symbols of immobility and repetition, places where life-force and vitality are suffocated (61). This results in a challenge to spatial boundaries that pervades Futurist artwork, encapsulated in the presence of distinct borders that fade and merge with one another; indeed, as Cianci contends, Dynamism entails “interpenetration which disperses with every kind of separation”. Cianci ties this to Futurist close readings of Bergson, and in particular to Bergson’s criticism of the encroachment of space upon consciousness—as an example, Ciani cites an excerpt from Bergson’s *Matter and Memory* that argues that the “division of matter into independent bodies having absolutely well-defined outlines constitute[s] an artificial division” (Bergson, qtd in 62). David Ohana detects similar continuances between Marinetti and Bergson and their shared position on the imposition of spatial frames on permeable matter, and compares Marinetti’s assertion in “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature” (1912) that matter is “a wonderful continuity of life embodied in a strong will, movement and dispersion” to Bergson’s claim that “True continuity of life requires an overlapping of principles

and an interpenetration of all with all” (Marinetti and Bergson, qtd in Ohana 46). This aesthetic of mobility in Futurist Dynamism is thus predicated on a jettison of spatial limitations and definite boundaries that is apparent in both Bergsonian metaphysics and Loy’s writing.

Yet, the Futurists had no place in their vision for women, whom they categorically viewed as antithetical to their purposes. Loy’s contact with the Futurists thus not only fuelled her distrust of immobility and the structures that maintain it, but underscored the threat that this posed to women in particular. Marinetti polarised “a new good, speed,” which he associated with modernity, hygiene and courage, and its counterpoint, the “new evil, slowness,” which embodied passivity and outlived traditions (*Selected Writings* 95-96). For Marinetti, this binary is gendered: his celebration of speed and the machine was thus associated with purely masculine energy. Stasis is associated particularly with women, whose “supplicating arms” risk coercing men to stay at home rather than pursuing heroic, masculine violence, and women are relegated by Marinetti to being “a mother, . . . a wife, and . . . a lover, a closed circle, purely animal and wholly without usefulness” (46, 75). This association of men with speed and women with torpidity and tradition is apparent in his 1909 Futurist manifesto, “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” in which he described his car rolling into a ditch, cutting short one of his joy-rides:

Oh! Maternal ditch, almost full of muddy water! Fair factory drain! I gulped down your nourishing sludge; and I remembered the blessed black breast of my Sudanese nurse. (*Selected Writings* 40)

This maternal factory drain contains the waste and discarded excess of masculine industry. It is a dark and wet abscess, a clear reference to female sex organs, and evokes Marinetti’s memories of being breast-fed. It is a double threat, enticing men with the promise of nourishment while thwarting their pursuit of speed—a bubbling cesspool that drags the technologically forward automobile under, choking it with maternal fluid. It is also an indication of Marinetti’s perceived self-entitlement, his claim of privilege over not only the gendered but also the racial

Other: yet another marginalization that characterizes much of Marinetti's writings.⁴¹

Indeed, Futurism relegated Woman to the very same enclosed spaces as the "Victorian" domesticity Loy was attempting to elude; for example, Cianci details how in Futurist theatre, the enclosed space of the room "is inhabited by mothers, women, old men, professors, servants: all of them functioning concretely and symbolically as the guardians of repetition and rootedness, entrenchment and crystallization" (61). More recent publications that explore Loy's debt to Futurism also argue extensively for Loy's ultimate disillusionment on these grounds. For instance, her increasing cynicism is attributed by Elizabeth Arnold to Futurism's misogyny, advocacy of war, increasing focus upon politics rather than art, and rejection of the "I" (83-84). Arnold argues that Loy's early poems that take the Futurists to task—such as "The Effectual Marriage," "Lions' Jaws" and "Italian Pictures"—simultaneously perform an acerbic self-criticism for her own involvement in the movement (104). The way in which Loy used the manifesto form in order to critique Futurism's inherent misogyny by using its rhetorical style as a weapon against it is similarly propounded by Janet Lyon, who additionally argues that Loy unsettles Futurism's "taxonomical constructions of 'woman'" and its "certitude about the ontologically gendered foundations of avant-garde poetics" (*Provocations* 154). In a different vein, Loy's Futurist plays "The Pamperers," "Collision" and "Cittabapini" have been read by Julie Schmid not as a wholesale rejection of Futurism, but rather as revealing a nuanced attempt to find a voice both with which to communicate her excitement about Futurism's formal innovations, and with which to comment on the movement's shortcoming by appropriating its rhetoric (6).

Loy portrays the perils of Futurist Dynamism for women, particularly in connection to women's exclusion from mobility, in "One O'Clock at Night," which enacts a late-night meeting between Futurists who are "arguing dynamic decomposition". The poem's speaker is the only woman present among the male

⁴¹ For instance, Marinetti writes about throwing the traditional and degenerate members of society "head over heels into Hindustan" in his manifesto "Let's Murder the Moonshine" (*Selected Writings* 51).

combatants, and is separated by “an interim of a thousand years” which allows her a “Beautiful half-hour of being a mere woman / The animal woman / Understanding nothing of man” (*LōLB* 15). Her association with “mere woman” is identified as “animal”—a component of Marinetti’s “closed circle”. The animal woman cannot understand the lofty talk of the men, and is sleepy and torpid in comparison to their dynamic fervour. However, this particular woman is permitted to take part in the dialogue—a position that Loy herself was familiar with as Marinetti granted her status of the “excepted” female for whom, as Burke details, “his scorn for women did not apply” (*Becoming Modern* 178). This engagement with “cerebral gymnastics” is disquieting not only because the speaker must forsake her identity as a woman, but further because she identifies their banter with the “self-indulgent play of children” (*LōLB* 15); in order to renounce her animalism, she abandons her sex and becomes complicit in a puerile display of philosophising. Loy is uneasy with the Futurist association of speed with a specifically masculine mode of being. “One O’Clock at Night” chronicles this by presenting the options available to women in a Futurist world: either she engages with it and in some way negates her existence as a woman, or ignores it and becomes languid and inert—a sloth-like body. Neither option presents much promise. In order to distance herself from their dialogue and view their intellectualising for what it is—child’s play—she must embody Marinetti’s “closed circle of femininity,” which circumscribes and limits woman in the same way as the perimeters of the domestic house. At the close of “One O’Clock at Night,” the speaker in the poem resigns from her place in the futurist dispute; she asks, “who am I that I should criticize your theories of / plastic velocity” (*LōLB* 16). This question is steeped in sarcasm, and serves to demonstrate that the speaker is aware that as she slips back into the position of the sleepy, stagnant woman, she is (according to Marinetti’s ideology) no longer qualified to question Futurist authority. However, this is not to suggest that Loy dismisses Futurist reverence for movement; rather she assimilates it to her own ends, associating it not with the modern Futurist man but with the possibilities for a modern woman, emancipated from traditions that kept her locked within the domestic household and characterised by her inherent mobility.

Futurism thus relegates woman to stasis, and indeed, this is attributable not only to their apparent misogyny, but also to their very conceptualisation of movement that renders the ostensibly motile as, at its core, an essentialised and stable object. In this way, Loy's conception of mobility is qualitatively different from that of Futurism, according to Stauder, for although the Futurists propound inherent and radical motility—or, to employ Boccioni's words, a "*truly mobile object*"—close consideration of Dynamism reveals that it conceives of motion in terms of energy that is centred upon a stable core:

[Futurist] aesthetic philosophy operates with a still point at the center of their work which guarantees the essential identity of the object as it travels the varying paths of movement in and out through time and space. A central, still nucleus or essence, forged by the projecting intellect, could not be further removed from Loy and is a mindset whose implications carry through all aspects of existence—artistic, political, social, as well as personal. (372)

Stauder argues that although Loy remains indebted to Futurism in many respects, her poetry reveals that Loy found the notion of a stable core essentialising, and consequently proffered a core that was "disrupted from within" (364). Futurist dynamism was thus conducive for Loy's poetic aims only to an extent, for it had underlying limitations. It was accessible only by a few privileged young men, and while it may have complemented her reading of Bergson insofar as it hinged upon the same criticisms of space and stasis, the efficacy of Futurist Dynamism in Loy's own aesthetic had very pointed gender limitations not present in Bergson's philosophy. Indeed, if we follow Stauder's meticulous comparison of the mobility of the irritant core in Loy and Futurism, it becomes clear that even Futurism's conception of movement was hampered by latent stasis in ways that Loy wished to overcome.

This chapter has argued that Loy's conception of space is articulated in response to her conception of the "Victorian" house, as well as her engagement with Bergson—both directly, through the work that she read with Dodge, and indirectly, through her contact with Marinetti and the Futurists. Indeed, both Futurism and Bergson offered modes of being that contrasted sharply with the claustrophobic stasis of domesticity and its tendency to preclude women from

artistic production. Yet, Futurism offered no recourse to feminine mobility, and although its captivation with Dynamism had a lasting effect on Loy's work, it perpetrated the same impositions upon feminine mobility as the domestic home, for speed and movement were accessible only to men. Bergson, on the other hand, offered a metaphysics that designated spatial restrictions as artificial without bombastic declarations about who his theories occluded. To be sure, Loy does not adopt Bergson's ideas in a strict way; as I qualified in this chapter, Loy's appropriation of Bergson is one that entails imaginative reworking of his theories, for Bergson writes particularly of the consciousness, and Loy is concerned additionally with embodiment, gendered mobility, and aesthetic experiment. Indeed, in the following chapter, I will explore what I contend is Loy's most notable divergence from Bergson: that is, the possibilities that she envisions for poetic language, the stasis of the abstract word (which Bergson asserts is irrevocable), and the space of bodies of text.

Chapter Two – “Absolute Demolition”: Testing the Limits of Extension

In this chapter, I argue that Loy’s underpinning aesthetic is predicated on her conception of space and its limitations, and as such, it is inextricable from her feminist vision. In response to Loy’s readings of Bergson, her entanglement with the Futurists, and her repudiation of the domestic household articulated in Chapter One, I propose that intrinsic motility comes to characterise not only the lived body, but her poetry and prose—the body of the text—itself. Thus the same trappings of immobility that threaten women’s freedom similarly impose artificial stasis upon language; particularly, Loy challenges the notion that meaning can be contained beneath singular, unassailable signs. She deploys experimental syntax in order to unravel the enclosed spaces of syntactical units, and produces texts that bleed beyond their ostensible boundaries, contaminating their margins, and implicating the world external to the text. In the same way as her depiction of the “space” of embodied restriction, the “space” of language connotes that which undercuts the flux of real life and casts it into stasis. Specifically, it is the distinction between internal and external that Loy unhinges here, for it is this dichotomy that enables artificial limitations on both feminine mobility and art. By unravelling the spatial constructions that limit the creative possibilities of language and bodies, Loy ambitiously pursues what Bergson describes in his metaphysics as free will.

As Loy’s endeavour to craft her own idiosyncratic brand of feminism is intertwined with her vision for a motile language, the two are often pursued in the same gesture. By this, I mean that Loy troubles the boundaries of enclosed spaces that she represents—for example, cages and domestic houses—and the boundaries that enclosed a given unit of “text” simultaneously, and indeed, the dissolutions of the two kinds of “space” are implicated in one another. Accordingly, this discussion opens with a consideration of intersections between restrictions on feminine mobility, assumptions that bodies of text need be closed off and complete, and the supposed extension of language in the “Feminist Manifesto” (1914). I locate Loy amongst contemporaneous writing concerned with women’s rights, including women’s suffrage, birth control, free love and eugenics, and examine how these sit alongside Loy’s manifesto, which deploys a

plurality of (often contradictory) feminist discourses while challenging the classification of women beneath containable linguistic signs. Examining how Loy engaged with concurrent feminisms helps to make sense of some of the incendiary statements that often overshadow her more nuanced manoeuvres in the manifesto, while also demonstrating precisely how original Loy's feminism, predicated on linguistic and embodied movement, was for its time.

I propose that "Feminist Manifesto" can be read as an early experimentation with the limits of language; written in 1914, it signals that these intentions were already beginning to form at the outset of her career. Loy's manifesto was only published posthumously, and so there is no printed version authorised by Loy. As such, this chapter examines the manuscript, rather than the posthumously published version, as there are minor differences between them that Loy cannot have overseen.⁴² Moreover, there is no explicit indication that Loy wished to have the manifesto published. Loy sent the original manuscript to Dodge, and despite her rather bold side-note at the top of her manifesto that this is a draft of what will become "an absolute resystematisation of the feminist question" ("Feminist Manifesto" 1), we cannot know for certain what the status of the manifesto is: that is, whether it is a serious declaration of Loy's ideas, or rather, whimsical experimentation that was intended only for personal correspondence. Yet, despite a later letter to Dodge that reveals wavering confidence about the manifesto—"that fragment of Feminist tirade I sent you—Flat?" ("Letters" c. 1914), I suggest that Loy quite likely took her experimentation seriously at the time of composition, for not only does the original draft state her intention of redrafting, and therefore polishing and finalising the manifesto, but ideas that she expresses here—particularly on women, traditional relationships, language, and spatial restriction over flux—are registered again in subsequent work, both published and unpublished. That is, the manifesto is an initial testing ground for ideas that are further developed through subsequent writings.

⁴² Throughout this analysis, I include references both to the manuscript draft and to the published version in *L&LB* where the material cited appears in both texts. Where material cited appears only in the manuscript, I cite only the manuscript.

This chapter therefore also examines how these intentions towards an aesthetics of motility in the manifesto are registered in other writing, and enacted through the dissembling of the text's boundaries that troubles any attempt of circumscription. Specifically, I discuss Loy's representation of domestic spaces in "Ladies in an Aviary,"—a rarely discussed chapter in her unpublished novel *The Child and the Parent*, (c. 1920–1930)—her published poem "Effectual Marriage" (1915) and the manuscript drafts for *Goy Israels* (c. 1930–1940).⁴³ These texts encapsulate what I contend is a career-long task of emancipating language from space, and as depictions of domestic space, they are productive examples of how multiple contained spaces—textual, architectural, and embodied—are undone in the same gesture. Accordingly, they reveal the intersections between embodied and creative freedom. Moreover, these texts reveal that this interest in the inextricability of gendered and creative space is sustained across Loy's career. The "Manifesto" was penned while Loy was still living in Florence, and as such, it was developed during a period when she was most actively negotiating the consequences of Futurism for women and the threat of the domestic house. Indeed, the same period that gave rise to the manifesto also saw the production of her "house" poetry, including "The Effectual Marriage," as well as her satires on Futurism.⁴⁴ "Ladies in an Aviary" and *Goy Israels*, on the other hand, were written in subsequent decades. Despite the lapse in time between her unpublished novels and her "house" poetry of the previous decade, "Ladies in an Aviary" and *Goy Israels* have much in common with the earlier poetry; "Aviary" exposes the same concerns about stasis, movement, and their connection to domestic spaces, and "Goy" explicitly interrogates an example of feminine circumscription to decorous and non-artistic pursuits. Moreover, experimentation in *Goy Israels* and "Ladies in an Aviary" continues to dismantle the unity of the body of text decades after her "Manifesto" first declared its assault on the limits imposed on language. Read in

⁴³ For a justification of the dating of *Goy Israels* and *The Child and the Parent*, see note 4.

⁴⁴ To cite only a handful of Futurist-inspired writing, "Giovanni Franchi," "One O'clock at Night," and "Sketch of a Man on a Platform" were published in 1915 (reprinted in *LoLB* 27-32, 15-16, 19-20), Loy's short plays "Cittabapini" and "Collision" were published in 1915 (reprinted in *LaLB* 78-79), and her play "The Pamperers" was published in 1916 (reprinted in *Performing Arts Journal* 10-17 in 1996).

tangent with one another, “Feminist Manifesto” can be seen to lay the groundwork for an aesthetic that continues to be expounded years later.

Loy’s unravelling of the containable spaces of language, and her insistence upon the necessity to instil language with mobility and instability, is read in this chapter as a radical extension of Bergson’s original metaphysics. The inherent instability of Loy’s language has been examined by recent scholarship. For example, the way in which Loy undoes binary structures in order to critique heteronormativity is interrogated by Galvin (1999), and the instability of Loy’s language in “Songs to Joannes” and the subject that utters is examined by John Wilkinson (2010). On the other hand, an analysis of the relationship between Loy’s language and architectural space in the context of its publication in *Others* is undertaken by Suzanne Churchill (2006), and a detailed reading of the role of doors, windows, frames and thresholds in Loy’s writing is performed by Laura Scuriatti in her doctoral thesis (2002). The operations of the unstable nucleus in “Brancusi’s Golden Bird” is concerned with the shifting space of refraction according to the scholarship of Stauder (1998), and the unstable nature of Loy’s intrinsically unfinished texts, and the way in which this is part of a project “move[s] away from all fixed concepts in order to advance” (*LaLB* 278), is argued for by Hilda Bronstein (2001). Yet, the possible connections between the “Manifesto” and Loy’s interest in troubling spatial boundaries in other writing have not been teased out, nor has this been read alongside Loy’s deployment of Bergson.

This chapter argues that Loy continues to draw upon Bergsonian philosophy to reveal how stasis engenders a misapprehension of real life for two ends: to uncover gendered power relations that aim to keep particular bodies literally locked inside domestic spaces; and to re-imagine the limits of poetry as that which can secrete beyond its own perceivable edges. Bergson argues that the intellect must render life discontinuous and immobile in order to make sense of it, and it is the discontinuous and the immobile that characterises the various spaces that Loy pulls apart (*Introduction* 50). She takes Bergson’s assertions that the intellect erroneously attaches itself to the solid and the static, and that these therefore encroach upon consciousness where they should not, and extends this in a radical way to both the experience of women and to her craft. This chapter

argues that Loy sees in language the potential for eschewing spatial constructs in a way that Bergson does not, and accordingly articulates the details of what I contend is one of the greatest divergences Loy makes from Bergson: Bergson resigns language to spatiality, albeit begrudgingly. He claims that the intellect has no choice but to externalise concepts and language, resulting in philosophical aporia (*Time* xix). Loy, on the other hand, builds an aesthetic based on the premise that the space of language can be wrenched apart—indeed, it must be wrenched apart if the poet aspires to artistic freedom.

2.1 Contemporaneous Feminisms

In the early twentieth century, feminist debate in America and Europe was polarised by advocates of “free love” on the one hand, who supported freedom of sexual expression, and social purists on the other, who cautioned against the perils that sex entailed for women, particularly in the forms of exploitation or disease. Loy does not sit on either side of this debate in any facile way. Her precarious and conflicted relationship with circulating feminisms has been critically acknowledged, in particular by Peppis and Natalya Lusty, who both argue for Loy’s difficult embrace of contradicting feminisms. Peppis proposes that Loy, like the activist Marie Stopes, amalgamates conflicting sexual discourses which results in the straddling of free-love, sexology, sentimentalism and eugenics all at once, while Lusty contends that Loy mingles and transforms both social purity and free love, and in doing so, transcends the divide between them (Lusty 253). Loy followed contemporaneous feminist movements closely, and her incongruity with predominant feminist discourses does not signify that she should not be regarded as a feminist in her own right, for Loy was clearly invested in women’s rights and is often invoked by critics as a feminist poet. What I articulate here is how Loy’s writing sits in relation to that of feminists of interest to her, and specifically, how her resistance to capitulate to any one “feminism” signals a double rejection to stasis: Loy will not be pinned down to any singular formulation, nor will she validate a line of argument that relegates feminine bodies to any nature of passivity. I argue that while her texts—particularly “Feminist Manifesto”—make contradictory and deeply disquieting statements about femininity as a result of her

variance with these movements, it simultaneously presents more nuanced and subtle propositions predicated on feminine mobility, linguistic ambiguity, and the destabilisation of established terms.

Loy famously rejected proponents of social purity such as the suffrage movement, asserting that “physical purity” was a “fictitious value” that forced unnatural constraints upon bodies (“Feminist Manifesto 4; *LoLB* 154). One social purist text that is cited as a particular object of Loy’s ire is suffragette Christabel Pankhurst’s *The Great Scourge and How to End it* (1913), which posits unrestrained sexuality as an inherent social evil. The “Great Scourge” of the title refers to the spread of venereal disease, particularly through prostitution, and Pankhurst argues that the consequences are especially pernicious for the unsuspecting wives of sexually depraved men:

Innocent wives are infected by their husbands. They suffer torment; their health is ruined; their power to become mothers is destroyed, or else they are become the mothers of diseased, crippled, blind, or insane children. But they are not told the reason of all this. Their doctor and their husband keep them in ignorance, so that they cannot even protect themselves from future danger (9).

In order to safeguard women from disease and to curb what she claims is the resulting decline in birth rates, Pankhurst argues in favour of “Votes for women [and] chastity for men” (vii); in doing so, she presumes that women are already chaste by nature and governed less by sexual impulses than men, and argues this is indicative of an inherently higher moral standard amongst women. Virtue, she proposes, is not only imperative to women’s emancipation, but is an inherently feminine quality.

The Great Scourge was not without its detractors who, like Loy, took exception to its essentialist claims about feminine embodiment and its ready assumptions about purity that relegated woman to sexual passivity. Notably, Dora Marsden published a searing riposte to Pankhurst’s text in *The Egoist* (1914), in which she quips that the real threat to health is a lack of vitality, and that more damage can be done by “the dull heats of virginity” than syphilis or gonorrhoea (“Views” 46). Marsden’s retort here is framed in terms of activity and movement as opposed to passivity, or “vitality” over “dullness”. She further proposes that the cult of virtue is responsible for a destructive attitude in marriage, wherein the

women give themselves for the satisfaction of others and feel that they have sacrificed so much that they expect a sentimental heaven in return; as a result, “they find themselves in the position of the remnants of a dinner after a hungry person has dined” (45-46). She thus cautions that the realities of Woman making a sacrificial object of herself engenders not a romantic fantasy, but a grotesque feasting in which she can only be the sloppy leftovers.

Loy’s reaction to social purity has much in common with Marsden’s vehement rejoinder, particularly insofar as she associates it with passivity and domestic disillusionment. Indeed, Marsden’s admonitions against the virginal women’s expectations of a “sentimental heaven” in marriage resonate with Loy’s “The Effectual Marriage,” in which Gina is trapped in an “Empyrean / from which no well-mated woman ever returns” (*LoLB* 37), as well as Loy’s manuscript for “A Certain Percentage of Women,” a chapter in her unpublished novel *The Child and the Parent*. In this text, Ada’s expectation of orgasm is cruelly usurped by disappointment, which leads Ada to wonder, “Of what lop-sided miracle has the bridegroom partaken?” (box 1, fol. 18). Even Loy’s correspondences reveal frustration with expected standards of feminine decorum and restraint: in a letter to Van Vechten, Loy responds to his request that she write “something without a sex undercurrent” by asserting that occluding sex from discussion goes hand in hand with a “reduction of the spontaneous creative quality,” embedding sexuality in vitalistic impulses and becoming (“Letters” n.d.). Like Marsden, Loy connects the repudiation of sexuality with inactivity; for Loy, however, this thwarted activity is specifically creative. Here, Loy appropriates the vitalist strand of Bergson that Douglass asserts reenergised modernist art—that life is a “constant process of renewal” (109)—but in a way that promotes feminine sexuality, artistic achievement, and mobility.

Loy’s “Feminist Manifesto” systematically challenges many of the key components of Pankhurst’s text, urging that they do little for political reform and nothing for feminine sexuality. She takes issue with *The Great Scourge* for its promotion of abstinence, according to Lusty (252-53), insisting that “there is nothing impure in sex—except in the mental attitude to it” (“Feminist Manifesto” 7; *LoLB* 156, underlining in original). Indeed, the manifesto’s opening line announces that “The feminist movement as at present instituted is Inadequate,”

with “Inadequate” written in handwriting larger than that of the title at the top of the page (“Feminist Manifesto” 1; *LoLB* 153, underlining in original). Additionally, the manifesto reveals profound mistrust in institutional politics, and in any feminist movement that would not seek to obliterate these institutions entirely; she demands instead that women “Cease to place [their] confidence in economic legislation, vice-crusades & uniform education” and demands to know (in large, underlined writing) whether that is all they want (“Feminist Manifesto” 1; *LoLB* 153). “[V]ice-crusades” evokes the suffragette’s emphasis on chastity, and “economic legislation” to changes in voting rights; Loy insists that these measures cannot support authentic development, for she claims that “NO scratching on the surface of the rubbish heap of tradition, will bring about Reform”. This “rubbish heap” refers, in part, to the institutions that suffragettes reify, but also to their tirades against sexual freedom that relegate women to the kind of sexual innocence that Loy condemns in poems like “Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots”. Instead, Loy rallies for the “Absolute Demolition” of both existing institutional structures and notions of feminine virtue.

Yet despite Loy’s apparent antagonism toward women’s suffrage, some of the tenets put forth in her manifesto trouble this oppositional stance, and so Loy’s position is ultimately mercurial. Take, for instance, Loy’s declaration that women must destroy the feeling “that it is a personal insult when a man transfers his attentions from her to another woman” (“Feminist Manifesto” 6; *LoLB* 155-56). Such a statement seems to hinge upon a surmise about women’s natural inclination to sex in comparison to men, an inclination which cannot compete with the multiple interests of masculine sexuality on one hand, and which renders women a replaceable object on the other. In this case Loy makes the same assumptions about women’s sexual impulses as Pankhurst’s text, and therefore destabilises the numerous other times in the manifesto when she argues vociferously in favour of embracing feminine sexuality. A similarly curious assertion is that “Woman must become more responsible for the child than man,” (“Feminist Manifesto” 6; *LoLB* 155) as this insinuates an association between women and the domestic sphere that she elsewhere contests. To be sure, such a contention operates counter to her argument for feminine mobility. Although this statement is, arguably, constitutive of the overall instability of the text and its

internal argument, it is nonetheless an awkward assertion of woman's circumscription to maternity within an otherwise compelling account of the importance of mobility. And while I argue that the mobility that the manifesto is concerned with is specific to textuality—that is, the stability of the word, of syntax, and of internal logic—the two kinds of mobility elsewhere in Loy's poetry are inextricable rather than contradictory. Thus, while the manifesto can be harnessed productively for a feminist project, it remains a text that is inherently slippery.

It is not only social purity with which Loy engages in the "Feminist Manifesto". Her interests in the relationship between creativity and maternity—including her more unsavoury comments about discouraging "degenerate" women, and encouraging "intelligent" ones, from maternity ("Feminist Manifesto" 5; *LoLB* 155)—are no doubt informed by concurrent debates around eugenics that were prevalent in both feminist and modernist circles. Ann Taylor Allen argues that eugenics were formative in feminism between 1900 and 1940. Particularly in Britain and Germany, women struggled to grapple with the desire to control the numbers of children that they had and the resulting backlash from governments who feared that declining birth-rates would cripple their future military strength (477). These two contradictory attitudes could be dovetailed through eugenics, which proposed strategic reproduction to produce supposedly superior children that would make up in quality what they lacked in number. However, while this insistence on birth control may conceivably support women's right to limit the number of children, it does little to mitigate what Allen calls the "harsh invective against women who, misled by feminist movements, had forsaken their maternal duties," placing the burden of reproduction back onto women by maintaining that motherhood is woman's responsibility to her nation (481). Indeed, similar sentiments are evident in the Futurist manifesto of Saint-Point, who commands women: "*You owe humanity its heroes. Make them!*" (34, italics in original). According to Aimee L. Pozorski, Loy mitigates her eugenic sentiments in later poetry that registers how "mothering must crucially confront inevitable imperfections in children's education, socialization, and health" (64). Nonetheless, the "Manifesto" grapples with these discourses in a way that demonstrates her negotiation with both feminist ideas and futurist polemical

statements in favour of “reproducing ‘pure’ babies offered up as the future of the Italian race” (43).

Whereas Loy’s evocation of social purity is largely characterised by a critique of its implicit designation of the feminine body as sexually passive, Loy’s particular engagement with eugenics is entangled in her specific interest in the active and creative role of the mother. In this way, her exploration of eugenics differs considerably from the eugenic sentiments of other modernist writers, which are characterised by a fear of the Other. The influence of turn-of-the-century eugenics debates on modernist writers was profound, not only in the Futurist manifesto of Saint-Point and the Futurist-inflected manifesto of Loy, according to Donald J. Childs. Childs underscores eugenicist strains in D.H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf, both of whom fantasise about exterminating the sick and the maimed: Lawrence envisions “a lethal chamber as big as the crystal palace” (Lawrence qtd in Childs 10), and Woolf writes in her diary that institutionalised “imbeciles” “should certainly be killed” (Woolf qtd in Childs 16).⁴⁵ Similarly, H.G. Wells, and T.S. Eliot support eugenicist means to control the proliferation of “degenerate masses” (Childs 9): Wells fears being “swamped in [the] fecundity” of the masses (Wells qtd in Childs 9), and Eliot wrote approvingly on Leonard Darwin’s essay for its promotion of reproduction among the “best classes” and its suggested methods for discouraging the “incompetent, thriftless, and pauper element” of the population (Eliot qtd in Childs 6).⁴⁶ Loy interrogates the value of maternity for aesthetic practices, rather than as an expression of fear for society’s outsiders in whom she saw aesthetic potential.⁴⁷ Loy’s eugenicist rhetoric disappears after the “Feminist Manifesto,” but she remains interested in the aesthetic potential of the maternal body and in the intersections between lived, corporeal experience and artistic practice (Lyon “Pregnant Pauses 387).

The thread that runs through Loy’s complicated and contradictory engagement with feminism in the manifesto, then, is mobility. Indeed, I locate Loy within a tradition of artistic production concerned specifically with female

⁴⁵ Original citations: Lawrence 265; Woolf *Diary* 13.

⁴⁶ Original citations: Wells 287-90; T.S. Eliot “Recent” 274; Yeats 425.

⁴⁷ See Jaskoski and Kouidis for Loy’s interest in the outsider, and Galvin for Loy’s rejection of the “us” and “Other” binary.

embodiment and mobility, as the centrality of the tension between embodied stasis and movement, imprisonment and freedom, in literature results in a “common, female impulse to struggle free from social and literary confinement through strategic redefinitions of self, art, and society” (Gilbert and Gubar xii). Yet, theorisations of feminine mobility have been plagued by associations with the “natural” feminine body; historically, this has led to a denial of the bodily in feminist writing. For instance, Mary Wollstonecraft viewed the female body with cynicism: it was a commodity used in exchange for marriage; it was disciplined and controlled; it was an obstacle to—rather than a vehicle for—movement. She laments that women are “[t]aught from their infancy that beauty is woman’s sceptre, [and that] the mind shapes itself to the body, and roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison” (64). The feminine body here does not enable movement: it occludes it. Preoccupation with maternal freedom by eugenicists and ascetic corporeal rejection by the Suffragettes reveal that the moment in which Loy was writing was still haunted by associations—both past and present—of the female body with essentialism and containment.

This haunting is played out in the writing of modernist women, whose interrogation of women’s artistic and political roles implicate movement as an expression of freedom. Indeed, if the suffragettes disavowed corporeality in a sexual capacity, writing on the castigation of women’s bodies as a consequence of political action brought the body back to the fore. In a piece of participatory journalism, Djuna Barnes subjects herself, in the manner of the hunger-striking Suffragettes, to force-feeding in order to be able to describe the practice from their point of view. Her article registers in detail the experience of the body:

[The doctor] took the loose end of the sheet and began to bind me: he wrapped it round and round me, my arms tight to my sides, wrapped it up to my throat so that I could not move Three of the men approached me. The fourth stood at a distance, looking at the slow, crawling hands of a watch. The three took me not unkindly, but quite without compassion, one by the head, one by the feet; one sprawled above me, holding my hands down at my hips. (Barnes “How it Feels” 149)

This too is described in terms of mobility. Restrained corpse-like in a shroud, Barnes depicts the horror of having stillness forced upon her body, of being

rendered a pliable and penetrable object whose movements in space are not only suppressed, but whose corporeal space is violated by an imposing other. Once the tubes are inserted and the feeding begins, the hands holding her fast tighten their grip, and Barnes is visited by “Unbidden visions of remote horrors . . . of being gripped in the tentacles of some monster devil fish,” by nightmarish images characterised by entrapment (150). Bodily space and mobility are very much at stake in women’s political agency, as objectification and containment could be inflicted for disciplinary purposes.

For modernist women writers, continuances between embodied movement and writing practices came into particular focus. For instance, a correlation is drawn between the gendered body and the literature that it produces in Virginia Woolf’s “A Room of One’s Own”. Woolf questions whether the novel, in its current form, is “rightly shaped for [women’s] use,” and postulates that “we shall find her knocking that into shape when she has the free use of her limbs” (72); embodied freedom is thus deployed metaphorically to stand for the freedom to write. Moreover, she asserts a connection between women’s physical containment and their ability to produce literature, hypothesising that if Tolstoi had been a married, cloistered woman who suffered the restrictions of traditional feminine domesticity, he would not have been able to produce *War and Peace* (66). However, the political currency of Woolf’s treatise is tenuous—ironically, perhaps, given the Feminist nature of her text; although her text is revolutionary insofar as it suggests ways to enable women to write, and insofar as it insists that literature would be made richer by the publication of female authors, Woolf denies that women’s writing should reveal disquiet with gender inequality. Citing Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* as an example, she argues that “indignation” over gender inequality results in texts that are “deformed and twisted”; Brontë desired to “wander free over the world” but could not, and so her “imagination swerved from indignation and we feel it swerve”. Although there is an explicit connection between literary production and unimpeded movement of the body, the political potential of Woolf’s assertions is thwarted by her insistence that when an author confronts her social situation in her writing, “[d]own comes her book upon our heads” (65; 68-69).

For other modernist women, however, traditional spaces of feminine containment could be converted into spaces of productivity wherein woman could, to use Woolf's words, have "free use of her limbs". That is, spaces of feminine containment in these instances no longer entailed the restriction of movement. Specifically, the literary salon transformed domestic spaces from tradition marital homes, entrenched in gendered and artistic restrictions, into a locus of artistic and intellectual activity. This was the case for some of the women writers who lived on the Parisian Left Bank, particularly Natalie Barney and Gertrude Stein. For both Stein and Barney, the salon transformed the home into a place where, for Barney, she could invite practicing women writers in order to support and foster their literary pursuits, and for Stein, a place to invite a very select ensemble of artists, among whom she could position herself as preeminent patron of the arts and literary mentor (Benstock 8-11, 15). Indeed, both salons operated in radically different ways, for while Barney endeavoured to further the careers of other women "on behalf of lesbian literature and art," Stein promoted herself as the "resident genius" among male artists, relegating the "'wives' to other rooms, where they . . . were entertained by Alice Toklas"; for Stein, rigorous writing was conceived of as a male activity to which she had special privilege, and she exclusively considered men as serious competitors (Benstock 15, 12). Nonetheless, for neither woman did the home portend gendered restrictions—for themselves, that is, rather the "wives" that Stein banished—as it was a place of intellectual and professional amelioration and of literary production. Moreover, it was a place of sexual freedom without the accompanying hazard of unwanted pregnancy; as Barney notes in *Scatterings*, heterosexual relationships risk making women "victims of a mistake," "wretched martyrs" or "one of nature's tricks," a risk that Barney could side-step by virtue of her lesbianism (Barney in Benstock 290). As a heterosexual woman (and one who gave birth four times), the space of the home for Loy offered no such freedom.

Loy grapples with these consequences of feminine containment in her "Feminist Manifesto". Indeed, one of the key problems that Loy identifies with feminine virtue in the manifesto is its tendency to render women "lethargic in the acquisition of intrinsic merits" ("Feminist Manifesto" 4; *LolLB* 154), couching the perils of virtue in terms of sedentariness and activity. Yet, while Loy is widely

associated with feminism, her “Feminist Manifesto” represents a peculiar sticking point for Loy scholarship, more frequently noted for its curious assertions regarding female bodies than for its ready amenability to any Feminist theory, no matter how idiosyncratic.⁴⁸ Loy’s grappling of a plethora of contradictory lexicons and ideas at once means that it is impossible to align Loy neatly with any contemporaneous feminist movement, and her attitude towards these movements is rather capricious. This refusal to be pinned down can be read as both a repudiation of fixed theoretical positions, and as symptomatic of an underlying frustration with feminist writing, which she found fascinating but ultimately unsatisfactory. Her letters from the period are particularly riddled with expressions of anguish at “feminism”; she bemoans that she is “rather hopeless of devotion to the woman-cause” for “slaves will believe that chains are protectors” (“Letters” to Dodge c. 1915). This alludes both to women in the domestic sphere shielded from the world by their husbands, and to the suffragettes, who insist upon the continued importance of institutions and virtue, and ties both to imposed feminine stasis parading as male or institutional guardianship.

Loy’s insistence on movement not only characterises her conflicted engagement with feminism, but is moreover what connects the “Manifesto” to her poetry. The continuities between the manifesto and the poetry—specifically “Parturition” and “Songs to Joannes”—have been critically attributed to Loy’s interest in maternity: all three texts reveal political potency for the sexual embrace and maternal aesthetics, because its “intersubjectivity and procreative afterlife” can lead to “unimaginable social redemption,” (Winkiel 117) and because the manifesto and “Parturition” cast the act of birthing as aesthetically creative as well as procreative (Lusty 255). Assertions of similarity have, in this way, been predicated on Loy’s reoccurring concern with maternity, creativity, and sexuality. I propose that underlying these interests is an investment in mobility and its

⁴⁸ Loy’s manifesto has incited particular disquiet from her critics; she is charged with relying upon patriarchal and racist defences of empire by Peppis (570), and as both casting women “squarely within reproductive ideology” and propounding eugenics by Lyon (“Pregnant Pauses,” 386-87). Loy’s proposal for the “unconditional surgical destruction of virginity” (*L&LB* 155) for Pozorski is, while theoretically fascinating, “unimaginably invasive and authoritarian,” (53) and additionally, as Lusty contends, “locates social aberrations within women’s own bodies” (254).

inextricability from aesthetic production. This is exemplified in both the shared subject matter (that is, feminine embodiment and creative process) and in the shared approach to language in the manifesto and the poetry. I read the manifesto as an announcement of artistic intention, an early experimentation that tests and performs the limits of language that Loy's poetry then enacts.

2.2 "Feminist Manifesto" and the spatiality of language

Loy's "Feminist Manifesto," can be read not only as a negotiation between multiple and contradictory feminist ideas, but also as experimentation with language and containment that is further developed in her poetry. This is not to suggest that Loy's less savoury comments, particularly those pertaining to eugenicist projects or invasive and violent propositions about surgically destroying female virginity, should be passed over on the basis of the manifesto's articulation of an aesthetics of mobility. Rather, I want to home in upon productive aspects of the manifesto—namely, the containability of language units—that are easily drowned out by the text's more belligerent declarations. The "Feminist Manifesto" both proclaims a breakdown of the boundaries between supposed "types" of women, and performs this breakdown itself on the level of concepts and syntax. It is not, accordingly, the content of the manifesto's explicit declarations which are central to this reading, but the way in which these are textually performed. Rather, I argue that it is the manifesto's embrace of modulation and incompleteness tests out a new bodily aesthetic that continues to be expressed in her poetry.

In this way, the manifesto can be read as a part of Loy's poetic project to unhinge language from its spatial fetters. Delivering language from restraint is critical for Loy: language reifies our experience of the world and, as Elizabeth Frost argues, shapes consciousness, and this is a key reason why Loy was so attracted by an avant-garde that deployed shock tactics in order to jolt their audiences out of their quotidian habits (*Feminist* 31). Frost examines the challenge to language enacted in Loy's "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose," arguing that it is language's power to modify consciousness in the poem that makes it a refuge and possible escape from forces of empire. However, at the end of the poem, the betrayal of Ova by Exodus signals the inadequacies of the symbolic language she

inherits, and this underscores the necessity of a new feminist consciousness that can survive in, or revolt against, patriarchal language (37). I argue that language is subversive in Loy's "Feminist Manifesto" through the promotion of a particular kind of mobility: by troubling the parameters of language structures, Loy posits on one hand that feminine bodies cannot be readily assimilated under a single, superficially stable sign, and on the other, that "*words-in-freedom*"—to use Futurist terminology (Marinetti *Selected Writings* 89, italics in original)—depend upon the creation of text that is not limited by the constructs of space. Thus while the manifesto as a genre is, according to Lyon, "always poised between the violence of the armed insurrection and the stasis of the written word," (*Provocations* 5) Loy reinvigorates the written word with movement and wrenches it from its previous designation as "static" and disempowered.

Unlike "Anglo-Mongrels," Loy's manifesto does explore the avant-garde shock-tactic, and it is this very violence of the word that obscures its more subtle mechanisms. In her introduction to *Modernism, Race and Manifestos*, Laura Winkiel argues that critics take manifestos too much at their "bombastic word" and fail to recognize the work undertaken by this liminal genre as the modernist form par excellence (2). The critical preoccupation with Loy's "bombastic word" has too often eclipsed productive readings of the "Feminist Manifesto" as a part of, rather than a resistance to, Loy's aesthetic project. In contradistinction, Wilkinson bemoans that Loy's manifesto is not bellicose enough. His examination of the way in which internal contradictions in "Songs to Joannes" operate is expressly uninterested in interrogating how contradictions are analogously enacted in the manifesto; indeed, he calls the manifesto's publication in the eighth edition of *Norton's Anthology of Literature* "more than irksome," claiming that its "flaccid prose" should elicit momentary "roars and gasps" but not critical attention (153). His primary grievance with the manifesto is what he labels its tendency for equivocation that undermines its "shock-value"; as shock is the sole reaction that a manifesto should provoke, this kind of equivocation is a serious flaw. The statement that he identifies as "much too reasonable" is: "The advantages of marriage are too ridiculously ample" (Wilkinson 153; "Feminist Manifesto" 4; *LoLB* 155). Given that Loy's statement occurs alongside suggestions that marriage is "parasitic" and that the demands it makes on woman's virtue occlude her from

“intrinsic merits”, and given, moreover, the fact that it is part of a formulation that argues that woman’s worth is speciously calculated by society in a way that is wholly contingent on the marriage that she makes and thus “depends entirely on chance,” (“Feminist Manifesto” 4; *LōLB* 154-55, underlining in original) I would contest that there is anything “too reasonable” about it. Rather, Loy’s assertion of the benefit of marriage seems to me deeply ironic, and that these “advantages” are held up for ridicule. Indeed, in the manuscript, “advantages of marriage” is preceded by the cancelled word, “professiona[ll],” which insinuates that the advantages that Loy had in mind here were commercial in nature, rendering women an object for exchange. Loy’s antagonistic rhetoric in the manifesto has too long eclipsed her more nuanced manoeuvres for either being too violent, or not violent enough. I refocus the discussion of Loy’s manifesto in order to argue that it articulates not only her political vision, but how this is intrinsically linked with an artistic endeavour: it lights one possible way for women to live in the world in a way that is inextricable from art.

In Loy’s “Feminist Manifesto,” spatial transgression occurs between labels assigned to “types” of women; signifiers become mutually exclusive when they are conceived in terms of extension, for like objects, no two words can occupy the same “space”. “Feminist Manifesto” can thus be read as a declaration of Loy’s objectives for the treatment of both gendered and linguistic containment; it is an overt challenge to the cultural compartmentalisation of women’s bodies beneath tidy, hermetically sealed labels. The manifesto launches an explicit attack against the mutual exclusivity of the concepts of mother and mistress:

The first illusion it is to your interest to demolish is the division of women into two classes the mistress, & the mother every well-balanced & developed woman knows that is not true, Nature has endowed the complete woman with a faculty for expressing herself through all her functions . . . the woman who is a poor mistress will be an incompetent mother—an inferior mentality—& will enjoy an inadequate apprehension of Life. (“Feminist Manifesto” 3; *LōLB* 154, underlining and change in lettering size in original)

Loy refers to the exclusivity of the terms “mother” and “mistress” as a “division,” which connotes a spatial separation that must be upended. I read “spatial” here as the containment of entities in a way that occludes flux: through the insistence

upon distinctions between concepts, women are contained beneath the sign of “mistress” or “mother,” and this reifies a distinction that is artificial. These distinctions originate not in women’s experience, but in terminology, and an attempt to transfer this linguistic division onto lived experience is illogical, and will result in an “inadequate apprehension of life,” a claim that resonates with Bergson’s assertion that “metaphysics must transcend concepts in order to reach intuition” (*Introduction* 30). Indeed for Bergson, the relationship between space and language is equally treacherous; the two establish each other reciprocally, for language demands that we “establish between our ideas the same sharp and precise distinctions, the same discontinuity, as between material objects” (*Time* xix). Loy’s refusal to keep the categories of “mother” and “mistress” separate enacts a resistance to the externalisation of ideas, to the notion that such ideas and the language that denotes them have “divisions” that keep them divaricate like objects in space.

The way in which spatial constructs shape language for Bergson, and how, in turn, language reifies a static misconception of authentic experience, thus has significant resonances in Loy’s writing. For Bergson, the impression that time consists of severable, immobile moments is perpetuated by the description of time in spatial language. Language is accordingly implicated in the misconception of time and movement in terms of space—words like “moment,” or phrases such as “a point in time,” used to depict a “section” of duration, connote time and movement as spatial. There is thus a certain trickery of language that encourages us to think of moments as isolated, for a “moment” evokes an isolated period of time that is distinct from the next. Indeed, space and language thus establish each other reciprocally, as in addition to our comprehension of the world in spatial terms, Bergson posits that the very operation of language depends upon discontinuity and distinguishability. Language demands that we

establish between our ideas the same sharp and precise distinctions, the same discontinuity, as between material objects. This assimilation of thought to things is useful in practical life and necessary in most of the sciences. But it may be asked whether the insurmountable difficulties presented by certain philosophical problems do not arise from our placing side by side in space phenomena which do not occupy space. (*Time* xix)

Yet this tendency to think of language in terms of extensity is not true to the experience of real life; our intellect and the language in which it expresses itself is “bewildered” when it turns to the living (*Creative* 161-62). This is particularly the case with abstract concepts, which, Bergson contends, are “outside each other, like objects in space; and they have the same stability as such objects on which they have been modeled” (*Creative* 160). If we pause here to reflect again upon Burke’s claim that Bergson enabled Loy to overcome “inner divisions,” (*Becoming Modern* 122)⁴⁹ it is this inclination to place concepts alongside and against each other in language, and to conflate this severability in language with a condition of being, that is at work.

It is the work of the artist, Bergson suggests, to deploy language in a way that momentarily suspends its power as a stabilising and spatialising force, to break through language’s utilitarian nature in order to reveal the inner workings of *durée*. Bergson argues that the “loftiest ambition of art . . . consists in revealing to us nature,” but to do so means to penetrate the solid crust that the intellect imposes upon the *durée* of real life using tools that, inherently, make solidity out of becoming. Thus a poet needs to deploy the “rhythmic arrangement of words” in order to suggest “things that speech was not calculated to express” (*Laughter* 76-77). One way in which this can be achieved is through the presentation of contrary images, and language in this way *suggests*, rather than denotes, *durée*:

No image can replace the intuition of duration, but many diverse images, borrowed from very different orders of things, may, by the convergence of their action, direct consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to be seized. By choosing images as dissimilar as possible, we shall prevent any one of them from usurping the place of the intuition it is intended to call up, since it would then be driven away at once by its rivals. (*Introduction* 27-28)

Nonetheless, language itself is relegated to spatiality, and a poet can only gesture towards *durée* and becoming and cannot, according to Bergson, encapsulate it in so static a medium. What the poet delivers is merely the “shadow” of *flux*, and not the thing itself (*Time* 133-34).

⁴⁹ See Chapter One.

Thus we are confronted by an impasse within Bergson's writing: he contends that the placement of ideas side by side artificially and erroneously circumvents philosophical inquiry by presenting us with "insurmountable difficulties," and yet he simultaneously proposes that the human intellect has no choice. Loy is rather more optimistic. Where Bergson does not attempt to undo the separation between concepts, Loy does. She takes Bergson's critique of extensity's hold over language and pushes it to its logical conclusion: if an understanding of language and concepts is limited by spatial terms, and if this understanding enforces spatially conceived restrictions upon bodies in a way that is spurious, then we must emancipate language from space. Her "Feminist Manifesto" performs such an emancipation; it reveals scepticism about language's tendency to make everything discontinuous and spatial in the creation of artificial dichotomies such as "mother" and "mistress," and tries to undo this by using words as a weapon against themselves. To be sure, Loy does suggest other binaries throughout the manifesto, such as "degenerate" and "intelligent" ("Feminist Manifesto" 5; *LolB* 155), and as I have noted, these encapsulate some of the more unsavoury statements that Loy asserts. Yet, although the manifesto does not successfully unravel all the binaries that it utters, it does signify the beginning of a more radical and effect breakdown that further developed in her poetry.

The sustainability of binaries, which the manifesto begins to query, depends upon a conflation of language with space, wherein two terms have an internal and external space of meaning—meaning which a word tightly contains, and meaning that a word unreservedly excludes. This distinction between internal and external spaces in relation to binaries is more fully realised in Loy's poetry, as Galvin and Goody argue. Galvin locates Loy within a tradition of modernist writers who challenge the logic of a literary heteronormative order. Following Audre Lorde, Galvin suggests that poets are the theorists who deconstruct binary thinking: the writers in her study elicit such a resistance to binary structures, and thus to heteronormativity. Indeed, those in the margins, Galvin proposes, are able to see multiplicity in place of crude oppositions (6). Although Loy's "Feminist Manifesto" would also lend itself to such a reading, Galvin focuses her

consideration of the collapse of oppositions in “Parturition”.⁵⁰ In the agony of childbirth, the poem’s speaker experiences a radical dissolution of binaries in which the antipodal terms “within” and “without” become subsumed within her consciousness, and thus “without” cannot be truly exterior. There is, accordingly, “no outside” (61-62). Similarly, the nexus between interior and exterior in the creation of binaries is examined by Goody. She reads Loy’s depiction of instability as a series of standings both inside and outside: in “Love Songs” and “Human Cylinders,” the bodies fail because they are easily distinguishable, essentialised, and binary (“To Who?” n.pag.). Indeed by evoking gendered binaries, woman is relegated in “Love Songs” to the same passive dependence as the old love myths. However, Goody—like Galvin—suggests that the body in “Parturition” is inherently creative because birth blurs the boundaries between the birthing and the birthed body, and because the mother rejects the autonomous “I”.

Indeed, Galvin’s and Goody’s perceptive comments about exteriority characterise a plethora of spaces that Loy interrogates, and have profound repercussions for the coherence of spatial constructs: with no “outside” against which a space can define itself, its very containability, the very notion of an “inside,” becomes untenable. It is similarly in this way that the manifesto proclaims that women are not locatable beneath the ready-made labels of “mother” or “mistress.” Loy’s claim at the beginning of the manifesto that the only means to bring about reform is “Absolute Demolition” therefore applies not only to existing gendered relations, but also to existing classifications of Woman (“Feminist Manifesto” 1; *LdLB* 153, underlining in original). Loy asserts that “women who adapt themselves to a theoretical valuation of their sex as a relative impersonality, [are] not yet Feminine,” revealing a doubled suspicion toward the “valuation” of Woman: first in terms of an assessment of worth, and secondly as

⁵⁰ Galvin also considers “The Effectual Marriage” and “Virgins Plus Curtains” in order to critique marriage structures, and argues that in “Curtains,” Loy grants her virgins with surreptitious aggression. She further contends that it is not only traditional marriage that comes under fire, but also the (heterosexual) movement of free love in “Love Songs,” and writes that “Apology of Genius” is a celebration of the outsider that could (according to Galvin) include the female sexual deviant. However, although these analyses may entail an implicit engagement with binaries and categories, it is in “Parturition” that Galvin interrogates the way in which Loy disrupts binaries explicitly and in detail.

the formulation of a definition (“Feminist Manifesto” 2; *LoLB* 154, underlining in original). Loy regards those who attempt to foreclose themselves in such a way as falling short of femininity altogether. A valuation of this kind, moreover, can only be “relative” to men. Loy admonishes us against “looking to men” in order to deduce what we are “not” (“Feminist Manifesto” 2; *LoLB* 154, underlining in original), underscoring an apparent danger in defining Woman in terms of her male counterpart via juxtaposition. However, these declarations are not without internal contradiction, for Loy’s initial assertion that Woman is not “the equal of man” compels us to consider her as precisely that: *other* than Man—a consideration and comparison for which we are promptly chastised. The manifesto thus not only refuses to say what Woman *is*, but will not acknowledge what she is not, and reprimands the reader for attempting either. Loy points to the way that language inevitably produces this kind of contradiction: to propose that women should “[l]eave off looking to men to find out what [they] are not” renders statements such as “woman is not the equal of man” rhetorically troubled precisely because the claim relies upon a misidentification with—and thus an inherent comparison to—the very men that they are instructed to ignore. Loy thus exploits the inherent contradictions of the language she employs in a playful disruption of the notion of categorisation.

Having negated what Woman is, and then having denied the possibility of the very negation she has just performed, Loy goes on to suggest that future harmony is dependent upon each individual expressing “an easy & ample interpenetration of the male & female temperaments—free of stress” (“Feminist Manifesto” 6; *LoLB* 155), contradicting her previous assertion that men and women are different and incongruous—are “enemies” (“Feminist Manifesto” 3; *LoLB* 154). Indeed, if one should ask what these male and female temperaments are, the only answer within the text that can be found is that femininity is that which cannot be contained, and masculinity is that which is not the same as, nor comparable to, the feminine. In our efforts to define what Woman is, we are lost in an impossible tangle of logic, and the suggestion that such an integration of “male” and “female” temperaments is “easy” or “free of stress” is aggressively ironic, as any attempt to define or foreclose the body or gender dichotomies is undermined through rhetorical experimentation.

The way in which Loy troubles both logic and the unassailability of the connection between word and thing, and the relationship this has to movement, is developed further in her poetry. In “Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose,” the dislocation of words from their “conventional meaning” elicits linguistic wandering that is analogous to the physical, or “human” wandering that results in alienation and restlessness not only for Ova, according to Potter, but for all homeless figures in Loy’s poetry, including the homeless in the Bowery, Jewish immigrants, the modern woman, and modernist artists (“Obscene Modernism” 58-60). Potter argues that the trope of wandering enables a “subtle meditation on the nature of limits,” and reveals the way in which the self is formed through identification with and dissociation from limits and structures (51). Loy’s deliberate implosion of logic in order to court movement is also evident in “Songs to Joannes”. Whereas the manifesto undoes logic in order to insist that feminine bodies cannot be rendered static beneath a singular signifier, Wilkinson argues that the various contradictions in “Songs to Joannes” do not cancel one another out, but rather, refuse one another such that “they transgress each other in the argument in which they participate, but do not erase or disfigure” and that the position of the poem’s speaker is therefore continually in movement (147-48). In the manifesto, these two things—logic and signification—work together in order to insist upon flux and test the limits of containment.

The manifesto enacts the negation of completion not only through its disruption of complete bodily categories and their very possibility, but even in the syntax itself by the obliteration of enclosed sentences. That is, Loy’s experimentation with the rules of punctuation is not only a challenge to accepted conventions of language, but is also expressive of Loy’s aesthetic and polemical principle first articulated in the manifesto: namely, bodies cannot be neatly and seamlessly contained. “Bodies” here do not exclusively refer to corporeal bodies (like those trapped within domestic spaces), but also to bodies of text; indeed, the dismantling of the distinction between “mother” and “mistress” is a challenge to the containment not only of women’s corporeal bodies, but to the language used to describe them. This is also enacted on the level of punctuation. The scarcity of full-stops in the manifesto results in the compounding of one sentence—a “body”

of language insofar as it is a coherent and sealed unit constituted by its words—upon others:

The fictitious value of woman is identified with her physical purity—is too easy a stand-by—rendering her lethargic in the acquisition of intrinsic merits of character by which she could obtain a concrete value—therefore, the first self-enforced law for the female sex, as a protection against the man made bogey of virtue—which is the principle instrument of her subjection, would be the unconditional surgical destruction of virginity through-out the female population at puberty—(“Feminist Manifesto” 4; *L&LB* 154-55).

“Feminist Manifesto” is constructed entirely through these kinds of troubled units of language. I employ the term “troubled” to depict a deliberate complication of the coherence and severability of each consecutive “sentence” to the point that each sentence can hardly be called a sentence anymore. At many points in the manifesto, dashes function as quasi-full-stops; in the above example, this occurs between the words “value” and “therefore”. In these instances, there is an indication that one “sentence” has ended and another has begun, as the dash becomes a replacement for a full-stop that separates two grammatically complete sentences. And yet, the dash also signals continuity and denotes that the sentence is not yet finished; the “sentences” here are both symbolically separated and literally connected, and thus they are neither one nor two as the dash renders each syntactical unit a kind of excess or adjunct to the other. Dashes also end paragraphs. In the above example, a dash, followed by a full-stop, marks the conclusion of the paragraph, suggesting both that the paragraph is finished—completed by the full-stop—and at the same time that something critical is missing, as the dash implies an omission or continuation. Once again, this depicts a unit of language that, like its sentences, is neither whole nor unfinished. Moreover, the appearance here of both the dash and the full-stop suggests that the dash is not to be understood as a mere symbolic replacement for the missing full-stops in other sentences, for if the two were interchangeable their coexistence at the end of this paragraph would be redundant.

The tension between the dual finality and continuity of the punctuation not only results in uncontainable linguistic units in Loy’s manifesto, but moreover splinters the meaning of the words themselves. It becomes difficult to distinguish

which “sentence” a particular phrase belongs to, for example the phrase “free of stress” in the following excerpt could belong to both its preceding and proceeding lines:

For the harmony of the race, each individual should be the expression of an
easy & ample interpenetration of the male and female temperaments—free of
stress

Woman must become more responsible for the child than man— (“Feminist
Manifesto” 5-6; *L&LB* 155)

A severance between the first two lines and the last is created both by the line break and the capitalisation of the “W” in “Woman”. Or is this capitalisation indicative not of a new sentence, but of “Woman” as a collective noun? And can this line break alone signify a new sentence in the absence of punctuation? Could we, rather, designate the dash before the words, “free of stress,” as the marker of separation between key ideas? Depending on where we decide the sentence ends and begins, the meaning of the words changes: “free of stress” could describe the interpenetration of female and male temperaments or, by contrast, the responsibility of Woman for their children. Or—as one sentence seems to bleed into the next—“free of stress” could be a description of both. The dismantling of the cohesion of sealed units in the manifesto thus extends beyond the conceptual categorisation of bodies to the linguistic construction of the text, and this breaking down of the severability of syntactical units proliferates possible meanings of the words themselves such that meanings cannot be contained. “Feminist Manifesto” is much more than its belligerent announcements—it is a complex announcement of an aesthetic principle that structures much of Loy’s writing, and that results in the internal refraction and permutation of meaning across multiple units of uncontained language.

It could be argued that Loy’s idiosyncratic use of punctuation here could be symptomatic not of experimentation, but of a messy first draft. I propose that this not only downplays Loy’s creative rhetorical play, but moreover does not take into account her close association with Marinetti during this period, whose insistence on “*words-in-freedom*,” as well as the valorisation of the “unsyntactical poet” in his own manifestos may well have inflected Loy’s experimentation in her manifesto (*Selected Writings* 88-89, italics in original). Further, this disruption of

language's containment persists, as this chapter demonstrates next, in later texts, both published and unpublished. Indeed, experimentation with slippage of meaning through punctuation—specifically through the use of dashes—appears in poetry published while Loy was alive.⁵¹ Other writing, then, reveals the same interest in linguistic containment and its consequences for meaning-making.

The manifesto is productive precisely because it announces that the body cannot be contained within a single word—indeed, language itself need not consist of containable units—and by performing an unravelling of the kind of logic that this pursuit entails. When writing on Loy's surreptitious use of puns in "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose," Marisa Januzzi asserts that a full appreciation of the transgressive power of Loy's language "almost always requires a certain amount of playfulness, faith in her intelligence, and sympathy on the part of the reader" ("Unerring Esperanto" 411); the same is applicable to "Feminist Manifesto," and while it is easy to be confronted and consumed by bombastic declarations of war against hymens and her railing against circulating modes of feminism, the real force of Loy's feminist vision lies within her performance of the dismantling of space. Terms like "mother" or "mistress" or even "woman" cease to refer to clear and uncomplicated signifieds, and are revealed as artificial constructs that are fraught with political trappings. Indeed, the same political valence of the refusal to classify women under a single label is argued for by Judith Butler. In *Bodies That Matter*, the inability of subjects to wholly classify themselves beneath a single, hermetically sealed label results in "*disidentification*". De-spatialisation of language motivates political action through our inability to wholly relate to the ideal constructs of these terms. In this way, identifying labels cannot sum up the bodies that they purport to classify; they promise a final unity that is perpetually deferred. Yet, as long as this unity remains deferred, the terms of the identifying label can be rearticulated (188-91). As such, "*disidentification*" through the de-spatialisation of language is a rallying point for political movement (221). Although Loy does not go so far as to claim that the signifiers "sex" and "woman" operate as ideal constructs, she does anticipate Butler to the extent that she troubles the coherence of "woman's" sub-terms: "mother," "lover" and "mistress". This underscores an inherent political currency of Loy's vision—

⁵¹ For an example, see my discussion of "Parturition" in Chapter Three.

despite its incongruity with other feminisms and its contradictory, peculiar, and even unsettling statements—that hinges upon Loy’s depiction of language as unstable and non-extensive. Loy’s text demonstrates the “Absolute Demolition” of any attempt to curtail the body through an effort to rationalise it, not through argument—for this would be implicated in the very process of argumentation that she is trying to upend—but through rhetorical performance.

2.3 Bodily space / bodies in space: The domestic house

2.3.1 “Ladies in an Aviary”

Loy applies Bergson’s challenge experimentally to the dominance of extensity in language to the perimeters of the domestic household in her writing. Like the manifesto, what is at stake in Loy’s “house” poetry is the dismantling of archetypes of women that are held in place through spatial imposition. In the case of the manifesto, this imposition is enacted through language, but the texts that I examine here straddle more than one manifestation of “space” or containment: “Ladies in an Aviary,” “The Effectual Marriage” and *Goy Israels* challenge not only the virtuous impenetrable spaces of women’s bodies and the imposition of the domestic house, but also the parameters that circumscribe the visual space of the text and the ostensibly severable spaces of fiction and biography. They therefore encompass a consideration of (and the leap between) differing manifestations of space that nonetheless are explored according to the same logic: to isolate their perceived boundaries and to reveal that they are artificial. Indeed, there exists a close, symbiotic relationship between the ways in which these differing spaces are dismantled, for disruption of these multiple layers of space is often achieved within a single gesture: by destabilising the boundaries that keep the internal severable from the external. This destabilisation is enacted by dissembling the walls that enclose the interior of the house and keep particular kinds of bodies locked inside, the distinction between hegemonic (visual) space of a central text and that which appears in the margins, and the boundaries between (ostensibly fictive) narrative space and a readily distinguishable external “reality”.

Although the space of the house represents, according to Bergson’s theorisation, extensive rather than intensive matter, Loy radically deploys his distinction between extension and intension to uncover the house’s operations. As

this entails an examination of a more literal space than that of the manifesto—that is, the house enclosed by its walls, the space of the world external to those walls, and the parameters that circumscribe a body of text—it requires a further leap from Bergsonian metaphysics. Where Bergson criticises the application of extensive qualities to conscious thought and *durée*, Loy questions whether this same criticism can indeed be deployed in order to free from existing strictures both gendered spaces and the poetry she uses to represent these. For while the house *is* a space with definitive perimeters, Loy suggests that a conflation of the parameters of the house with the experience of women is a misuse of spatial constructs: although a house can be contained by the larger boundaries of the outside world which casts both interior and exterior as extensive matter, to suggest that “feminine space” can be similarly contained by “masculine space” is to erroneously extend extension to incorporate woman’s movements. Thus when Loy dismantles distinctions between interior and exterior of the domestic house, it is precisely the notion that woman have an enclosed “place” that she is contesting.

Evocations of entrapment are therefore a prominent feature of Loy’s work that explores the relationship between women and domestic spaces. In Loy’s writing, disassembling spaces that contain women frees them from their previous stasis and bestows them with movement. And it is here that Loy most ambitiously pursues what Bergson describes as free will. Bergson takes to task Immanuel Kant’s assertion that freedom only exists outside of time and space by contending that time and space must not be conflated, for while freedom cannot be found in space, it is locatable in *durée*; there cannot be any juxtaposition or comparison of separate moments for they cannot be set next to one another like objects, and thus the very notion of causality is confounded. Loy’s idiosyncratic appropriation of this principle pushes it to more imaginative limits: what if space, when imposed upon gender through the house or upon art through literary convention, enacts similar constraints upon free will that are equally artificial?

Loy’s exploration of interior spaces is the object of much critical discussion that tends to trace the parallels between the structure of the domestic home and Woman, taking the house as a metaphor for her body and the consciousness. In her biography of Loy, Burke argues that the “image of the house evoked all possible modes of linkage between world and self”—it is the

“dwelling place of the soul,” but one that chokes upon remnants of the past (*Becoming Modern* 205-06). In particular, Burke identifies a continuance between the house and the female body in Loy’s poetry: the position of woman will remain unaltered unless her sexual currency before marriage is overturned and she no longer has to “house” her virginity. Both the walls of the house and the bodies of marriageable young women must resist pressure to remain “intact” if Woman’s commodity value is to be undone (*Becoming Modern* 199). An architectural reading of the way in which Loy’s work interrelates with other work published in the American modernist magazine *Others* is undertaken by Churchill in *The Little Magazine Others and the Renovation of Modern American Poetry*. Churchill examines the magazine not by looking at each constitutive submission in isolation, but as part of a dynamic whole in order to uncover the “artfulness of its spatial designs” (23). Churchill does not designate “spatial designs” to the terrain of mathematics, linearity and stasis in the way that Bergson does. Rather, she argues that space—in the wake of space-time relativity—changes “from an external fact to a subjective, changeable, internal state” (20). The spaces that these artists depict, then, are internal, and their poetic enterprise is thus a process of making the private public (19).

Churchill argues that the architecture of houses is formative of Loy’s feminism: the interior of the houses that Loy seeks to disclose are intimately linked with the interior of the female psyche, a psyche that is characterised by instability, permeability, and violent sexuality and that is intended to jolt the reader out of her “conventional mental habitations” (75). This is enabled through the wrenching apart of syntax and grammar, for it is language that imposes restrictions upon consciousness, and therefore, it is also language that can force it out of its “narrow quarters” (182). Churchill contends that Loy’s identification with the figures in the poem results in a collapse of the boundaries that separate the internal poetic fiction and the external artist; as such, Loy cannot extricate herself from the contextual restrictions of the poem and thus “fail[s]” to emancipate herself from restrictive gender limitations—although this failure is “spectacularly interesting” (181). In contrast, I argue that Loy’s supposed “inability” to dislodge herself from the workings of her poetry is not so much an inability—or failure—to do so, but a refusal. Such a dislodgment would hinge

upon the severability of the internal restrictions of the poem and its external reality. Rather, Loy both stands outside of the poem and is implicated in it, taking to task our attempts to readily separate interior and exterior, for such a distinction depends upon the hierarchical placement of Bergsonian extension over intension. Here, again, Loy expands upon Bergson's distinction by applying it to that which it would not ordinarily be applied to: in this instance, the separation between interior and exterior, and the severability between an artist and his/her art. Indeed, if space is truly "changeable" in the wake of twentieth-century science, as Churchill claims it is (20), and if this is registered in poetic expression, then the distinct spaces inside and outside the poetry would be mutable. Loy performs this by placing herself both within and outside of the poetry at once.

The ready opposition between internal and external facilitates the threat posed by the domestic house, for when the internal is characterised as a feminine space, women are relegated to the "inside" and are thus occluded from movement. The barriers that keep the internal and external distinguishable are explored in Loy's unpublished novel, *The Child and the Parent*, in which Chapter Seven—"Ladies in an Aviary"⁵²—portrays women as metaphorical birds kept in cages (box 1, fol. 15). Their confinement to the cage is permanent; kept on display for the visiting men, they "are so lovely and they cannot get out". The young bird-women are detained within the perimeters of a definite and unassailable space, whereas the men—external to their prison—come and go at will. The birds are restrained in every way: they are restricted to the confines of their cage, but they are also trapped by the demands placed upon their bodies. The narrator asks, "Why are these ladies kept in captivity with their bodies almost severed in the middle—they appear to be tame"? The answer here is twofold: firstly, the corseting of their bodies is "fashion". The binding of the birds is necessary so that they remain visually pleasing to their captors; indeed, the decision to corset themselves is not the birds' to make, for their "plumage is not their own". This sense that the birds' bodies belong to someone else suggests that they have a commodity value—like objects, they are owned. Secondly, the birds are restrained in their tight clothing for their own "protect[ion]". Constriction is a necessary

⁵² An excerpt of Loy's "Ladies in an Aviary" has been published in *LaLB*, 316. However, I refer to the full version found in the archives (YCAL).

“morality” required in order to safeguard them from their own “scourge”. In this respect, the birds resemble the kind of woman that Loy grumbles about in her letter to Dodge: the “slave” who believes “that chains are protectors” (“Letters c. 1915). Such a scourge moreover locates the potential for deviation and affliction within the bodies of women themselves—Loy warns that an endorsement of traditionally gendered spaces leads inevitably to the shifting of all fault to Woman. This reference to a “scourge” again calls to mind Pankhurst’s suffragette text, and reiterates Loy’s repugnance toward assumptions of natural feminine purity and the dangers of sexual “vice”. For Loy, any feminism cloaked in notions of virtue perpetuated the same limitations imposed upon women as the very traditions that the suffragette movement purported to usurp.

The loveliness of the ladies is tied closely to their captivity. They are bound to their cage so that they can continue to give pleasure to the men who watch them. Accordingly, the worth bestowed upon them as women is intrinsic to their sacrifice of movement in exchange for the impositions of domestic space. Yet their loveliness serves as a further mode of entrapment, as they only maintain their allure as long as they remain imprisoned, for “at every doorway lurks a downfall for virgins who go wandering”. For women who dare challenge their captivity lies the impending threat of an “ailment known as impurity”. Impurity here is figured as a disease. It is contagious, “incurable” and, most alarmingly to the beautiful birds in the cage, disfiguring. Impurity results in a “spiritual moulting” that “deprives them of their wings,” a warning that spiritual failings will be registered upon the body. The bodies of infected birds are ugly, deformed, defective, and yet still on display, and so private “failings” are made public and serve as a source of shame, admonishing other birds from tempting the same fate (and warning them to ostracise the inflicted bird—this disease is, after all, contagious). In this way, “Ladies in an Aviary” departs from Loy’s earlier “house” poetry; the cage is a more pernicious version of the house whose transparent walls enable their transgressions to be put on display. This punishment is severe, it disfigures and debilitates, for a bird with no wings is irrevocably damaged and can no longer fulfil its function: it cannot fly. Women who stray (in both senses of the word) are thus stripped of their femininity and become failed women. Further, the capacity for flight is also the capacity for movement; if a bird breaks out of her

cage, her recourse to mobility will be obliterated and she will become trapped not by the limits of the cage but the limits of her mutilated body.

In “Ladies in an Aviary,” the imposition of stasis upon the birds is thus closely related to the control of sexual impulses, and any transgression or appeal to movement (through either escape or sexual deviance) results in corporeal punishment. As is it the body which perpetrates such a transgression, the castigation of the body not only serves as retribution, but moreover occludes any opportunity for further movement. The public repercussion for one failed bird is portrayed as total bodily disintegration. She undergoes a sudden and uncontrollable dissolution:

A sudden tremor stirs her arms to motion, to graceless gesticulation in a down-pour of infinitesimal particals [sic] that fill the air; her arms are flung out before her to avert the assailment, or fall in consonance with her bowed back; to mow, in spasms, at something inimical that has surged about her feet.

For the Earth not only reclaims her offspring, but seemingly outraged at being inhabited, with the aid of the winds and the friction of her swarms, pulverizes her superficies and all waste products of like . . .

The engulfing corporeal experience renders the bird “graceless”—her erratic movements immediately differentiate her from the “slender sighs” of her fellow inmates. She fits and “spasms,” denoting both dysfunction and pain, as the transformation of her body is excruciating and total. Her bowed back and spasmodic movements suggest at once a seizure and, as Loy terms it in “Songs to Joannes,” a “seismic orgasm” (*LolB* 66, Song XXIX); sexual deviance thus promises not pleasure to the bird, but pain, as the difference between climax and suffering is collapsed. She has to endure a kind of bodily death, a pulverisation that collapses her into “infinitesimal particals [sic]”. Like the birds who try to escape their cage, her wings have vanished and in their place remain “arms . . . flung out”. Moreover, this punishment does not stop at the woman in question but extends to the illegitimate offspring of her encounter, who are figured here as “waste products” that are swallowed up by an earth enraged by the spoils of sexual aberrancy. It is of no consequence that the sexual act appears to be the result of an “assailment”. The woman’s body, and the body of her child, are fouled and must be destroyed.

Nonetheless, the rewards for obedience and chastity are menial and degrading and hardly compensate for a life behind bars. The male visitors bring cubes of sugar to the cage, but while this sugar may be momentarily “sweet,” it is also the “sugar of fictitious values”. The man withholds his gift—the birds must earn their sugar, and therefore ask, “What would you like us to be”? They are commanded to be “angels,” and so they sit quietly “as if on clouds, waiting, with wings sedately folded”. In order to receive their reward, the birds must perform for their visitors, demonstrating their obedience and their ability to alter themselves to suit the whims of their suitors; the sugar and the submission of the birds become commodity objects for exchange. Moreover, the birds engage in market-like activity and compete for their reward:

There is a tremor of ribbon, a nasty sweep of feathers as inquisitive ladies, running to eat out of his hand, agitate these tassels of the soul in their impatience to be satisfied; and it is very wistfully that they recompose their ruffles on retiring from the scene to gnaw a pocket-handkerchief or fall into a faint.

The birds turn against each other, and the silence and demureness of the angels-in-waiting gives way to tremors, gnawing, and the frantic flying of feathers. Contesting for an opportunity to “eat out of his hand” suggests at once the feeding of sugar, and the very submission of the birds who must figuratively eat out of this man’s hand in order to win the right to do so literally. And yet, the wild rush for the sugar proves too vigorous for the usually poised and restrained birds who either fall into madness (gnawing their handkerchiefs in the shadows of the cage) or into a faint.

The sugar is unlike the medium of exchange in regular transactions, as it cannot be reused once consumed. For their acquiescence, the birds only receive momentary satisfaction; in the long run, they are left with nothing tangible. The sugar is paralleled with the “even sweeter” offering of marriage. Both involve a transaction that involves the exchange of the birds’ obedience, virtue and freedom, and both “evaporate” almost immediately after “they taste of it”. In such a marriage, the initial sweetness rapidly gives way to emptiness, and yet the birds lack the foresight required to realise that their rewards (in the form of a sugar cube or a wedding) will yield only limited and transitory pleasure, and they

continue to perform their virtue for an immaterial end. Indeed, there appears to be no alternative, as the man holds up a piece of sugar declaring “Here is Love”—once again drawing connections between the sugar with the promise of marriage and love with a capital “L,” and setting up all three (sugar, marriage, Love) as objects of commerce—while asserting that this is “woman’s whole existence”. Having made a sacrifice of their freedom, these birds have nothing other than sugar and marriage to look forward to.

It would seem, then, that the trappings of the birdcage are inescapable; there appears to be little option for the birds whose escape will entail disfigurement or disintegration. And yet, “Ladies in an Aviary” is structured such that an escape must have successfully taken place, for the distinction between the internal fiction of the writing and the external reality of the author is collapsed. The chapter begins with an aside from the author: “These chapters come in as attempts of a woman constantly interrupted to begin a book she is too shy to write”. Loy thus inserts herself into the narrative of the chapter by making the writing of the chapter a part of the action itself. “Ladies in an Aviary” is at once an allegory about women waiting for marriage, and about women who dare challenge the gendered status quo by writing this allegory, and whose most significant obstacle is the demureness that they have been expected to cultivate. The author must conquer her shyness—a quality (or flaw) that is akin to the feminine coyness of the caged birds—in order to pen her narrative. The fact that this narrative has been written reveals that at least one bird has triumphed over her metaphorical birdcage. Escape, although difficult to achieve, is therefore possible.

This dismantling of the parameters of the narrative, when the author enters as a character herself, depicts a double escape that links textual and domestic spaces: through the writing act, Loy disassembles both the limits of the cage and the perceived boundaries of fiction itself. The author moves in and out of the prose, creating distance between herself and the birds in statements such as “They are so lovely and they cannot get out,” and collapsing this distance in the initial aside that points to the author’s own artistic and personal struggle. A similar shift in perspective is enacted in “Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots,” according to Scuriatti’s gender analysis of the way in which architectural metaphors challenge

the reification of constructs of femininity in the work of Loy and Woolf. In her doctoral thesis, Scuriatti contends that gendered identity is constituted through the existence of “frames,” particularly in the form of windows and doors. Rather than enact a liminal space that complicates the distinction between the interior and exterior of the house, these frames actualise their distinction by creating a visual economy in which women peer out and men look penetratingly in (“Negotiating” 51-53). Yet, Scuriatti contends that in Loy’s poetry, there is no “final” or all-encompassing frame, because everything (even the frame itself) is enclosed within another system, and as such there is no outside. In “Virgins,” it is the shifting personal pronouns of the speaking voice that uncover this (“Negotiating” 105). The speaker appears to be inside the house with the virgins throughout most of the poem. For example, the pronoun “our” is employed in a way that groups the virgins and the speaker together in, “Somebody who was never / A virgin / Has bolted the door / Put curtains at *our* windows” (*LoLB* 22, emphasis mine). The speaker has been locked inside, and she thus sets herself up in opposition to those outside who bolt the doors. However, Scuriatti argues that by the end of the poem, the speaking position has surreptitiously shifted to the outside of the house, for the “sudden threat—‘virgins who might scratch’—is difficult to explain unless considered from the point of view of the ones who have forced them behind doors” (“Negotiating” 105). This move risks placing the speaker in the same position as the men outside, as those who are free to traverse all space, and Scuriatti argues that the shifting position of the speaker exposes the difficulties of bypassing a sexual paradigm through text (107-08).

However, I would argue that the transgression that occurs between interior and exterior spaces is more radical than the kind that Scuriatti describes. According to Scuriatti, there is no “outside” proper, as the exterior of the virgins’ house is contained within further frames. There is thus no authentic escape from the system being criticised in the poem. Rather, she argues that the fecundity of “Virgins” is that it creates a space in which the virgins can vocalise their “critique from the inside” (“Negotiating” 108). How this “inside” is maintained without a possibility of a defining “outside” remains uncertain, or what “inside” in fact comes to signify once the outside is posited as yet another “inside” is not elucidated. Indeed, one could argue that Scuriatti’s analysis of the way in which

there is no overarching “frame” and thus no ultimate “outside” is more productive than she gives it credit for, as the very notion of interiority as a term in a spatial binary becomes untenable. In the case of “Ladies in an Aviary,” the narrator complicates the distinction between the internal and external spaces of the cage and text by critiquing their roles from the position of one who is neither trapped within, nor wholly extricated from, either: a woman who has been made to cultivate a sensibility that almost (but not quite) thwarts her ability to write, and whose criticism of the gendered structure of the aviary already transgresses a system that demands that she coo angelically. The narrator thus occupies a space and a subject position that is much more uncertain than that of the men outside the cage. That is, she does not simply occupy male perspectives with their privileges, nor does she objectify the birds in a straightforward way because she identifies with them through a shared sense of demureness that they have been compelled to garner. Rather, the text is the site of a battle in which the narrator launches herself against her own shyness: through the process of writing, she extricates herself from the cage and consequently throws the permanence of its limits into chaos, but does so through a kind of movement that is laden with more peril and characterised more by transgression than the movements of the suitors.

If the boundaries between inside and outside cannot be forced upon the text, then there must exist ways to disassemble the limits of space where they have been inappropriately enforced. One way that this can be achieved is through the practice of art. Loy’s ability to move in and out of her narrative is enabled at the outset by her struggle against the constraints on her writing; the act of writing itself offers one way to collapse her own spatial limitations and provides a means for her to escape the fate of the women in “Ladies in an Aviary”. It is therefore not only the space inside a cage or domestic house that must be dismantled. In order for artistic freedom to be achieved, the body of the poetry cannot have unassailable perimeters. In “Ladies in an Aviary,” this entails the movement of the poet and her reader between the interior and exterior of the poem: a transgression of the boundaries of the textual space itself.

2.3.2 “The Effectual Marriage”

In “Effectual Marriage,” bodies cast off their containment by unsettling the distinction between internal and external. In doing so, Loy challenges the

coherence of subjectivity by depicting egos and bodies that cannot be circumscribed. At first, the containability of Gina's house, and Gina's severability from the poem's narrator and author, are seemingly affirmed. The walls of the house appear impenetrable; although the poem opens with a reference to a doorway that "They quotidianly [sic] passed through," (*LoLB* 36) neither Gina nor Miovanni are actually depicted exiting the house. Both bodies are ostensibly trapped inside, and in this sense the doorway is indeed "an absurd thing," (*LoLB* 36) for while it should signify a possible exit from the house, the couple who pass through it nevertheless remain indoors. Moreover, the division between the narrator, poet, and poetic object appear deceptively stable at the opening of the poem. Initially, the speaker is located outside of the house looking in from the street such that she can only see what "anybody could see" (*LoLB* 37). The speaker's position outside of the house, and Gina's inside the house, creates the illusion that the separation between them exists.

In contradistinction to the narrator and Gina, the division between the poet and her poetic fiction is troubled at the outset, for a continuance between Loy and Gina is implied in the poem's title. The ready identification of "Gina and Miovanni" with Mina and Giovanni—the futurist Giovanni Papini with whom Loy had an affair while living in Florence—complicates the distinction between the "Gina" trapped inside the house and the poet standing outside of the poem. Loy often names her characters in a way that implies, but does not denote, connections to her own name; for instance, in "Lions' Jaw's," she appears as the anagrammatic Nima Lyo, Anim Yol and Imna Oly in a way that makes the woman writer's presence "visible yet elusive" (Gilmore 273). Loy appropriately labelled this self-referential work "automythology" (Schaum 258). Her terminology here is critical, for "mythology" signifies the deliberate slide towards invention between autobiography and fantasy. Even Loy's own name undergoes permutations (from Lowy to Loy, and later from Loy to Lloyd), which Burke proposes is an attempt to mark herself as modern by virtue of perpetual reinvention ("What's in a Name?" 31). In this way, Loy's self-invention extends beyond her self-referential work to the fashioning of her own projected mythology of herself as an artist and "modern" woman: by writing automythology, Loy writes herself. The breakdown between the fictive and the real therefore becomes a site of creative play, and through this play, Loy

proliferates versions of herself, confounding the perimeters that enclose a single, pretextual identity. For Churchill, this simultaneously asserts and subverts the conflation between “the narrative ‘I’ and the biographical author, forcing her readers to question whether she speaks for or as a woman and to interrogate what constitutes a woman’s position, place, or space” (206).

The poem’s abrupt end further complicates the distinction between “Mina” and “Gina,” and in the same gesture, complicates the severability of the narrator from both author and character and dismantles the distinction between the interior and exterior of the house. The verse is suddenly curtailed by the statement: “This narrative halted when I learned that the house which inspired it was the home of a mad woman,” (*LoLB* 39) suggesting that the horror in discovering Gina’s madness is at once the identification of madness in the poem’s narrator. And yet, it is difficult to definitively ascertain whether this interruption signals the voice of the narrator, or the poet herself—for is it not the poet who ultimately decides when no more writing will take place? Whose identity is it, then, that collapses into that of Gina? The three different women—poet, narrator, and character—now overlap in a figure that is both singular and multiple. Moreover, the opposition between internality and externality in both the house and the text are compromised: if the character, Gina, is locked within a house that the narrator stands external to, and if both Gina and the narrator are situated within the textual space of a poem that the poet is external to, what becomes of these distinctions when all three—Gina, narrator, and Mina—begin to bleed into one another? Churchill contends that at this moment in the poem, Loy realises that she is not gazing through a window, but looking into a mirror (206). However, I would argue that Loy is doing both; she stands both inside the house as “Gina” and outside as speaker, looks in through the window at a distance to view the figures in the house and looks into a mirror to see herself. Thus the structures of the poetry itself come to represent the structures of the house; by standing both within and outside of the poetry, within and outside of the house, Loy dismantles the boundaries of both and reveals that they are not hermetically sealed. As a result, the splintering subjectivity of the trapped Gina offers her a passage out of her marital home at the instant of the final lines, as these engender a rupture in the fabric of the poem’s text that facilitates movement in and out of its permeable interior. Like the narrator in “Ladies in an Aviary,” it is the act of writing itself

that has the power to confer mobility and freedom upon a seemingly impermeable space.

The diffusion between Gina, Mina and the narrator further entails a proliferation of poetic meaning. For example, Miovanni's centrality to Gina's life can be read differently depending on which Gina/Mina we attribute the poem to:

Miovanni remained
Monumentally the same
The same Miovanni
If he had become anything else
Gina's world would have been at an end
Gina with no axis to revolve on
Must have dwindled to a stop. (*LolLB* 39)

For Gina—the woman in the poem who dotes and depends upon Miovanni—the removal or transformation of her “axis” would indeed entail tragedy, for her “world” would “dwindle to a stop”. Yet for the narrator, who stands at a critical distance outside the walls of the house, this passage is pregnant with the same irony that permeates the tone of the poem as a whole—if Miovanni could cease to be Gina's oppressive axis, she may have a chance of escaping his kitchen where “he so kindly kept her” (36). For Mina the poet, Miovanni is a necessary muse and object, and so any alternation in his character would result in a different text; Mina depends upon the stable figure of Miovanni for her creative material. When the three bodies overlap, so do the attitudes of dependence and condemnation, and the poem thus becomes a satire not only of Futurist misogyny, but also a self-deprecating examination of Loy's own acquiescence to Futurism's treatment of women, implicated in her relationships with Futurism and in the generation of her own poetry in response.

The challenge that “The Effectual Marriage” presents to the coherence of subjectivity is therefore radically productive for meaning. One could argue that the poem's end signals an ultimate breakdown of not only the three figures—who cannot be both separate and united without being infected with madness—but also of creative meaning, for the poem can progress no further. However, this reading can only be enabled by considering the final line as an unexpected short-circuiting. Rather, I see in these lines a deliberate close to the poem that reiterates

the undesirability of separating each figure (character, narrator, poet) through recognition of their overlap. The poem may not be able to continue after this interjection, but this does not entail the end of poetic production, for the closing lines imbricate Mina, Gina, and narrator, and this enables the layered meanings produced throughout the poem. That is, these lines continue to propagate poetic meaning rather than signal its collapse.

The way in which bodies, subjectivities, and poems exceed themselves therefore enables their motility and is productive of meaning. Productive excess, specifically of subjectivity in Loy's prose, is similarly considered in Christina Walter's "Getting Impersonal: Mina Loy's Body Politics from 'Feminist Manifesto' to *Insel*". She argues that Loy postulates that subjectivity cannot be contained by personality—that it is therefore *impersonal*, though not in the same detached sense that Pound declared Loy's "logopoeia"⁵³ impersonal—and that it is instead a series of discontinuous bodily and mental states, thoughts, perceptions, memories, and automatic bodily reverberations (664). Subjectivity is thus discontinuous, is constituted by differing excesses, and only appears to be an "autonomous singularizing essence" as a result of its embodiment (670). Loy's project challenges the notion of a stable and completed identity, Walter concludes, and yet this resistance to stability and wholeness takes a very different form from my own reading (685). While Walter registers the impact of physiological vibrations on subjectivity—vibrations that are unpredictable and thus permanently motile—the discontinuity of subjectivity that she describes is rather at odds with a sense of flux; that is, it casts subjectivity into the realm of space. Instead, I suggest that Loy's vision of embodied existence can be read as a rejection of such externalisation. Subjectivity may not be coherent, but it is not discontinuous either, for this would render its mobility mere illusion. Rather, its instability is enabled because its boundaries—its spatialisation—are never actualised.

2.3.3 *Goy Israels*

Loy's writing is intrinsically experimental, and she habitually conceived of projects that experimented with the visual space of the page, testing the limits of what

⁵³ Defined by Pound as "a dance of the intelligence among words and ideas and modification of characters and ideas" ("Others' Review" 57).

could practically be published. Loy's terms for the publication of "Songs to Joannes" are a case in point: she stipulated in a letter to Van Vechten that "if you wanted me to be a happy woman for five minutes or more, you would get Songs for Joannes published for me—all together—printed on one side of each page only—& a large round in the middle of the blank reverse of each page" ("Letters" c. 1915). Indeed, not only does this reveal Loy's penchant for experimentation with the visual text, but this also both asserts and complicates the distinction between parts of the poem. On one hand, the poem was to be published as a unified whole "all together," and yet continual page breaks and the printing of a large, empty round between each page, would insert visual severances dictated not by breaks in meaning within the poem, but by chance, depending on where the text spills over to the next page. The logic of the poem and the sequence of the Songs, therefore, would belie the breaks that are visually enforced, and the poem would be both internally fractured and united. Similar experimentation with the visual presentation of the page can be found in her manuscript for her unpublished novel, *Goy Israels*, a work that literally seeps outside of the typed body of the text into the margins and the spaces between lines in a way that surpasses the process of revision. As Parmar notes in her discussion of the manuscripts for *Islands in the Air*, Loy was well-rehearsed in the presentation of typographical space, and as such, to disregard marginal asides as mere edits risks "privileging the authority of conventional textual space" (*Reading* 7).

While Loy's supplications for the visual presentation of "Songs to Joannes" went unfulfilled, the unpublished manuscripts for *Goy Israels*, like *Islands in the Air*, are not bound by the strictures of printing and consequently lend themselves to greater visual experimentation than Loy's published works. *Goy Israels* collapses the distinction between the central, hegemonic text and marginal writings through the presentation of text that is written, but then scratched out and written over, through the presence of words etched in the margins around the main body of the typescript, through notations that are not merely the marks of the author editing her own drafts, but a radical performance of the characters' voices. In doing so, Loy enacts the possibilities for dissembling and troubling the parameters of bodies of text: the borders of the central text cannot be kept intact

and the margins become sites of resistance where previously silenced voices can be articulated.

As automythology, *Goy Israels* perturbs the ready distinction between autobiography and fiction, and does so in order to comment on the racial experiences of its characters. It depicts the childhood of the eponymous Goy, who struggles for self-expression beneath the stifling but opposed forces of her parents: Mr Israels, a Jewish immigrant like Loy's father, who obsesses over the potential genius of his daughter, and the evangelical Mrs Israels, whose affiliation with her Jewish husband and half-Jewish daughter brings her a continual sense of shame. The name "Goy" suggests continuances between the "fictional" character and the author, not only because it rhymes with Loy, but moreover because it echoes Loy's own interracial heritage, reflected both in the meaning of "Goy"—the Yiddish word for someone who is not Jewish—and by the choice of a name that is only comprehensible in Yiddish. Mrs Israels's name, in contrast, imposes upon her the very identity that she is desperately trying to hide. Loy's renaming here forces Mrs Israels to publicly display her shame, punishing her prejudice by branding her with it. As Amy Feinstein notes, the novel is a series of fragments and character sketches that explore the relationship between child and parent, and the nature of "Jew and non-Jew"; poised between these contradictory identities, Goy's subjectivity is "an ever-interrupted wholeness" that is both plural and partial (339).

Textual restrictions are further troubled by the text's visual layout, which works to depict how spatially conceived limitations inhibit the aesthetic development of young girls, and conversely, how the demolition of these limits is in itself a site of resistance. Specifically, the scene in which Goy is writing a poem on the marriage of "The Gnat and the Daisy" experiments with the way that voices spill into the margins of the text as they vie for articulation (box 2, fol.28, 49-50). Any aesthetic endeavour made by Goy in the novel is chastised by her ascetic and exacting mother: the "filthy stuff" of literature is a playground for girls of questionable morality (box 2, fol.28, 50). Mrs Israels finds her daughter writing the poem and snatches it from her, and it is in this context that the poem is narrated to the reader, inserted into the body of the novel in fragments and interwoven with Mrs Israels's reprobations. At first, these fragments are several

lines in length; however they become shorter and shorter as Goy's mother's words increase in intensity and belligerence. Goy's poem is thus progressively silenced beneath her mother's reproaches.

The visual presentation of the voices of Goy and Mrs Israel's make them appear severed, and yet, syntactically they bleed into one another. Goy's poem is typed in red ink and scratched out in pen, while the central text of Mrs Israel's admonishments is typed in black, and so the two voices are readily distinguishable by their colour despite the layering of lines of poetry within the prose. However, the interposition of fragments of Goy's poem with the rebukes of her mother results in the overlapping of the two separate voices, as Feinstein contends, and they are thus not as severable as they appear. As a result, Goy's poem syntactically coheres with, and thus forms a part of, Mrs Israel's complaints, and therefore "proceeds to interrupt the prose, functioning as a textual Trojan horse that provides an unexpected commentary on Mrs. Israel's accusations" (345). For instance, in the beginning of the "Gnat and the Daisy" sequence, the second "Ever so high" is a part of Goy's poem, but also follows on from Mrs Israel's words "You think you're so devilish smart writing poetry to get..." to form the sentence, "you think you're so devilish smart writing poetry to get Ever so High Round your Father":

~~On a warm afternoon in June~~
~~A Gnat [sic] in the air did fly~~
~~Ever so high~~ - - **And I'll have you know that you won't get the better of**
me, if I have to kill you you little fiend. You think you're so devilish smart
writing poetry to get
~~Ever so high~~
Round your Father; a pretty thing I declare for a child your age to write
about a wedding (box 2, fol. 28, 49)⁵⁴

By disrupting the spatial severance between the voices, Goy is able to deploy her poetry in order to surreptitiously undercut her mother's admonitions.

⁵⁴ The typescript of Goy's poem can be distinguished from that of her mother's as it is struck out (as it is in the original). I have placed Mrs Israel's commentary in bold to make the distinction clearer: in the original, however, her text is in black and Goy's text is in red.

However, Feinstein does not account for the fact that the poem is scratched out. On one hand, if Loy intended to edit this poem out of her novel completely, the text becomes incomprehensible: it ceases to be clear that Mrs Israel's is reading the poem as she is chastising her daughter, and the clever syntactical play between the two voices evaporates. On the other hand, we cannot pretend that these deletions do not exist, for to do so would be to disregard Loy's notations. Rather, I contend that we must consider Loy's edits to be an interactive part of the text rather than straightforward "corrections". This reading demands that we take seriously all notations made upon the page, and that we suspend our natural inclination to view revisions of a text as a replacement—rather than an organic part—of earlier drafts. Indeed, if we examine the notations, we detect that there is a difference between corrections made with the typewriter by typing an 'x' over an erroneous letter and the handwritten corrections. When Mrs Israel's says, "to be as evil as you will be," an erroneous word is deleted using the typewriter: x's are typed over the word "are," and visually, this more anonymous typescript is quite different from the colour-coded and affective markings inscribed by hand. The handwritten notations leave clearer traces of what was written before and suggest that, in contrast to the typed x's, we are meant to follow the process of writing, scratching out, silencing. There is thus a clear distinction between corrections that are a meant to replace text altogether and corrections that are a part of the text itself.

Arguably, the two kinds of notation might be said to be not qualitatively different edits, but edits that occur sequentially; that is, that the x's may have been initial deletions made as Loy was typing, and other notations made by hand at a later stage. All notes on the page, in this case, would be manifestations of the drafting process, and nothing more. Yet, to assume that all changes to the original typescript are of equal status—that all are errors that must be corrected and replaced—would too hastily downplay the creative power of Loy's writing. Indeed, the poem "The Gnat and the Daisy" in this case would be removed entirely, and Mrs Israel's's admonishments would cease to make sense. Rather, to maintain the full force of Loy's intricate weave of voices, handwritten notations must be considered as performed, rather than genuine. Further, as I have noted, Parmar demonstrates that marginal asides play a critical role in other manuscripts

too (7). Experimentation with the boundaries of the “central” text is therefore not an anomaly limited to *Goy Israels*.

Lastly, rather than the notes of a single author, the different edits and marginal notes around “The Gnat and the Daisy” appear to be either that of Mrs Israels, who scratches out the “devilish” artistry of her daughter, or that of Goy, whose silenced voice covertly reasserts itself through pencilled-in edits. Indeed, the visual presentation of the voices takes on the idiosyncrasies of different characters; the lines that the authoritative and censoring Mrs Israels draws through the words of the poetry are neat and singular at the beginning of the sequence, but they rapidly develop into an energetic scrawl as her irritation with her daughter’s poem escalates. In contrast, notes on the poem and suggestions for additional lines are etched in the margins in blue pen and in pencil, differentiating it from the red ink of Mrs Israels and textually reflecting the process of marginalisation that Goy’s voice is subjected to, its displacement beyond the borders of the central text which is typed in thick black ink. The consequences of this are two-fold. Firstly, by taking on the voices of the characters, the edits enact a battle between ascetic mother and artistic child. This battle is a key theme not only in *Goy Israels*, but in much of Loy’s writing, including her long poem “Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose” and her unpublished novel *The Child and the Parent*. The notations around “The Gnat and the Daisy” therefore visually extend upon one of the central ideas of the novel and of Loy’s writing more generally. Secondly, as the edits appear to represent opposing characters, different notations are not commensurate. For example, pencilled in the margins of “The Gnat and the Daisy” is the inscription: “the poem is OK but not the interpretations” (box 2, fol. 28, 49). And yet, it is not the interpretations of the poem’s immorality that are cancelled, but the poem itself; the various “edits” do not cohere. Indeed, as Parmar asserts, “if the poem is ‘OK’, then why was it crossed out?” (*Reading* 120). Parmar concludes that the various notations appear to side either with the mother or with Goy, and that as a result, the manuscript pages cannot be left as they are: one text must win and “cancel” the other. However, by choosing a side, the interweaving between “The Gnat and the Daisy” and the main text collapses. Neither text makes sense without the other, and the deletion of one would not only make either the poem or the reprobations incomprehensible, but would

moreover evaporate the fierce textual battle between creativity and evangelicalism that characterises the rest of the novel. I propose that these scribbblings can thus be read as the inscriptions of Mrs. Israels and Goy as they attempt to silence each other or write themselves back into articulation from the margins of the page. Not only are the notations not sequential edits made in the process of drafting, but they further do not represent sides of a debate that Loy will choose between, and must be considered as an integrated whole.

Viewed not as Loy's corrections but as interactive components of the text, the different notations become performative inscriptions of the characters' motives, their authority, or their marginalisation, further destabilising the hegemony of the main body of text. Indeed, the margins provide the means for Goy to continue to write back against the space of her mother's hegemonic text once her voice has been exiled from the central text. By the end of "The Gnat and the Daisy" sequence, the reproofs finally succeed in cutting off the poem, as Mrs Israels's cancellations become more fervent, and the poetry fragments get shorter and shorter and eventually disappear beneath the belligerent railings of Mrs Israels. As Goy's poetic refrains trail off, Mrs Israels announces that Goy will grow up to be "a lost woman," a double reference to both the hopelessness of her already debauched daughter, and to the voice of Goy that is "lost" below the more aggressive tone of her mother. Yet, as Goy's poem fades from the typescript, another handwritten note appears in the margins:

the poem continues
 our friend the cat
 stole from the kitchen
 a lovely iced bun
 to serve for the wedding cake
 and the bees brought much honey, the best they could make— — —
 I forget the rest (box 2, fol.28, 50)

It is as if Goy is whispering back; having been initially silenced by her mother, she uses the margins—her ability to write from the outside—in new and innovative ways to reinsert her voice in order to evade her mother's control. However, the disruptions have gotten in the way of the poem's completion, for Goy cannot remember exactly what she was going to write, except, she later notes, she does

recall that the daisy's petals all fall off on her wedding day and so the gnat lies down to die beside her. In this way, then, Mrs Israel's interruptions are successful, for they disrupt Goy's writing process for long enough to force her into forgetfulness, and what she does remember entails not romance or sexual consummation but wilting and death. Nonetheless, although Goy's voice finally trails off completely, its assertion through and around the central body of Mrs Israel does radically dismantle Mrs Israel's authority. It splinters the textual body into many decentred parts, inflicting chaos on the tidy print of the manuscript, even forcing Mrs Israel's complicity by compelling her to respond with her own edits; every time she furiously etches out a line of "The Gnat and the Daisy," she furthers Goy's endeavour to dissolve the parameters of the authoritative body of type. Goy launches a spectacular textual battle within the margins of the text, and although her voice is finally silenced, its splintering and destabilising effects cannot be erased.

The visual layout of *Goy Israel* further challenges the coherence of textual, fictional bodies, and pretextual, authorial bodies, amplifying the effect of its status as automythology. Marginal writing ostensibly appears to be the hand of the writer—for are corrections on a draft not usually made by the author, a proof-reader, an editor, or some other "real world" body and not by the voice of the fictional character?—but can alternatively be read as that of fictional characters. And yet, perhaps this is also too ready a designation, for division between Loy and Goy is an uncertain one. As such, textual markings obscure their own authorship: at first glance they appear to belong to the author; close examination reveals that they are in fact those of the character; but as the author is implicated in her own automythological weavings, they become a curious entanglement of both. Thus the image projected of Loy/Goy is both mutable and multiple, and poet and poem birth each other and are intimately entangled.

This chapter has argued that Loy radically extends Bergson's theories of extensity to entities such as abstract concepts, linguistic units, textual space, fiction and its author, and the gendered spaces of domesticity. She proposes that to consider particular spaces "gendered" is an erroneous imposition of spatial constraints, for

gender is not an extensive quality and thus cannot be contained. Her interrogation of gendered “space” is inextricably bound up with dismantling the spaces of language and art, for it is the very trickery of language that compels us to misconceive real experience in terms of extension, and it is through the pursuit of art that seemingly impenetrable spaces can be uncovered and transgressed. Language, therefore, can be deployed against itself in order to be freed from spatial constraints. And it is here that Loy departs most radically from Bergson, for rather than consign language to the artificially constructed realm of the spatial, the stable, and the static, Loy reinvigorates the written word with motility.

Churchill laments the shift in Loy’s poetry away from her early writing on gendered spaces and toward the “alienated” and “superior” tone of her later works, such as “The Dead,” “Apology of Genius” and “Brancusi’s Bird”—that is, her poetry written after 1919. She cautions critics who wish to revive interest in Loy’s work in order to reclaim “the feminist, sexualised, and contextualised dimensions of modernism” radically intervene in the poetry in a way that requires “wishful thinking,” for Loy’s poetry post 1919 upholds the “myths of high modernism we seek to dismantle, representing the artist as alienated, superior, and aloof from the masses, and portraying art as timeless, pure, autonomous” (216). In contrast, I identify not so much a break in Loy’s artistic methods between her earlier and later work as an enduring continuance; attending to the ways in which language is implicated in these messy realities reveals how Loy’s “house” poetry and her “Feminist Manifesto” explore an aesthetic principled on movement over stasis that remains central to her later works, including her unpublished novels of the 1920s and 1930s discussed in this chapter. Throughout her career, Loy envisions poetic bodies that are best understood not spatially—and therefore statically—but temporally, for it is the temporal through which motile bodies travel. Chapter Three will take up the temporal body—the body whose spaces cannot be contained, and which is disposed to decay—and examine the way in which it inhabits time, life cycles and evolution.

Chapter Three – Evolution and the Body in Time

Chapter One and Two argued that Loy explores movement in a way that uncovers the inherent stasis in spatial constructs; this chapter contends that Loy's engagement with temporality informs the way that she imagines the poetic body in terms of intrinsic movement. This insistence upon movement in time may appear tautological, for movement is generally conceived as a function of time and space, and thus time is a part of movement's very definition. However, the kind of time in which Loy anchors her poetic bodies is not mathematical—that is, it is not a function of time and space—but unified, rather than constituted by dislocated “moments”. In this way, Loy's conception of movement through time is deeply inflected by Bergsonian *durée* outlined in Chapter One. Time, for Loy, is not a geometrical abstraction, but an incessant force inseverable from embodied movement and critical to artistic production, as the body dislocated from temporality has no access to process and therefore no access to creativity.

Temporality, enabled by an engagement with the external world, is imperative to Loy's vision of embodied movement. Critically, then, there is a difference between the body that is inextricable from the world and moves through duration, and that which trembles on the spot and turns away from duration and its external reality. In order to clarify this, this discussion opens with an examination of Loy's unpublished poem, “Sunlight Somnambulist,”⁵⁵ which depicts a man whose vision is fixed on the microscopic workings of his body. The man's inward gaze dislocates him from the outside world and renders him disembodied and motionless. This reveals that it is not sufficient to home in upon the body's trembles; rather, embodied movement must be entangled with temporality and the external world.

⁵⁵ “Sunlight Somnambulist” is an unpublished draft that has not previously been accounted for by critics. It is not officially titled, and so for the purposes of clarity, I refer to it throughout by the words of first line. Moreover, it is not classified as its own poem in the YCAL catalogue—it is, after all, scrawled on the verso of a draft of the unpublished poem “Brain,” and so is located in that folio (box 5, fol. 80). However, it has no resemblance to “Brain”. Consequently, I consider the poem to be a separate entity that has thus far gone unrecognised.

Additionally, this chapter demonstrates that time for Loy is bound up with *élan vital*, with forces that compel creativity. One manifestation of *élan vital* is in Loy's conception of "the irritant," akin to a spark or an unstable nucleus that launches the consciousness and the body into a creative state of perpetual change. The irritant is intrinsically temporal: it dissembles seemingly static and spatial limits, agitates continual movement through time, and is a precondition for the continued evolution of aesthetic production. By embedding the irritant in *élan vital*, Loy accentuates the interrelation between continued change and movement, the pulse of temporality, materiality, and art. Time bound up with the body and *élan vital* is not, however, without its own structure; the destabilisation of the spatial parameters of time does not result in a kind of time that is incompatible to forward movement. Indeed for Loy, time is analogous to Bergsonian *durée*, which always progresses forward. In order to demonstrate how this is registered in Loy's writing, I interrogate time's depiction in *Insel* and the consequences for art. Under the sway of Insel's *Strahlen*—invisible and almost imperceptible rays that emanate from his body—time becomes wild: it loops upon itself and unfolds in a non-linear way. For both Insel and Jones, the annihilation of time results in a dislocation of the body from the world that it inhabits, occluding them from both authentic experience and artistic production.

The body's inseverability from time is also apparent in Loy's depictions of its decay. In this chapter, I argue that her imbrication of allusions to life with images of decay not only further betrays time's inextricability from *élan vital* through the evocation of life cycles, but also casts temporality as a means to further dissemble the bounds of spatiality. Indeed, a consideration of the interrelation between temporality and the decaying body confounds the notion of a point of origin. That is, the temporal body does not traverse spatial points, endings or beginnings, but rather participates in a process or an unfolding. This is particularly the case in her poem, "Parturition," which casts the act of birth within grander life cycles. "Parturition" moreover unsettles the spatial confines of the body by exploring the way in which the body splits apart in time. Importantly, the poem casts the act of bodily fission not in terms of an originary body that jettisons a secondary one; this would entail the clear severance of one body from the next, a spatial distinguishability that Loy's poetry writes against. Rather,

“Parturition” enacts a complex proliferation that obscures the spatial perimeters of the bodies, which obfuscates the “original” body, and that does not resolve the complication of space by refusing to enact the final separation of mother from baby. Loy’s correlation between birth and aesthetics is certainly not singular; indeed, the rhetoric of childbirth is appropriated particularly by modernist men in order to describe their own creative acts. But, Loy’s depiction of childbirth and its inherently aesthetic nature reclaims birth—and in the same gesture, aesthetic production—for feminine bodies.

Indeed, framing the body in terms of cycles of birth and decay results in a heightened capacity for artistic production. This is true in “Parturition,” in which the maternal body is supremely aesthetic. Similarly, I identify the same process of implicating birth with death, *durée* and spatial dissolution in Loy’s long poem, “Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose,” and this too bestows the subject with creativity. Yet, references to birth and death are not sufficient for artistic production; they must be embedded in the temporal. Loy’s short story, “The Stomach,” (1921) clarifies this difference. For although “The Stomach” references decay and birth, the two are isolated from one another. The story is cast into stasis: actions become repetitive and cannot progress, and although the story portrays a woman’s creation of art, this art is treated ironically. Without access to time, her art is frozen into a series of repetitions and becomes laughable. In order for a body to be unequivocally motile—and therefore creative—its participation in time cannot be spatialised, time cannot be fractured into origins, endings, and static moments in between, but must be unified. Moreover, an interrogation of the repetitions enacted by the body in “The Stomach” qualifies a difference between three kinds of temporal “looping” that this chapter explores: that of “The Stomach,” which connotes the tedious replaying of a single event that circumvents further creativity; that of *Insel*, the wild abandon of which throws bodies into a vertiginous experience of time dislocated from forward progress; and the re-inscription of the “origin” through time, which is not a repetition, but rather the reappearance of the “beginning” in order to undermine its spatially defined position in time—that is, the reiteration of a “beginning” through time such that its very definition is no longer coherent..

3.1 Static atoms: “Sunlight Somnambulist”

Representations of the body’s workings must, for Loy, uncover its inherent movements as inextricable from the external world, as the body’s dislocation from the external world risks dislocation from temporality, and indeed, disembodiment. Loy’s “Sunlight Somnambulist” reveals what such an representation—one that merely zooms in upon the ego without taking into account the way that this close-up uncovers the body’s embeddedness in the pulse of time and the outside world—entails:

Sunlight somnambulist
The sage of ambiguity
through decades of silence
Coerced his eye,
inwards, in avoidance
of a myriad aspects
to perceive the infinitesimal
focus of the absolute
in the ego—⁵⁶

As a somnambulist, this body walks; he is not a static body. Yet his movement occurs within a slumber, and therefore occludes the external world. Indeed, the first line suggests that the body’s sleepwalking prevents him from an authentic experience of living; although he walks in the sunlight, he is impervious to it as his eyes are turned only “inwards”. Experiences of the real world—like the sunlight—offered to him in “myriad aspects,” are not only missed by the somnambulist, but are actively averted. Ironically, the very to action and perception encompasses the most vibrant activity in which the torpid body partakes. The somnambulist thus trains his vision to turn away from the external world and focus on its own most

⁵⁶ This poem is handwritten twice on the one page: the first draft at the top of the page is messier, and has some lines added in between others as if to modify the lines written first (for example, “inwards in avoidance” in the first draft of the poem is added above “in avoidance of myriad aspects”). The poem is then written out a second time, and these changes are accounted for and included in this draft. As the second version appears to be a tidier, more final version than the first (as it is re-written with corrections taken into account), I quote here the second version. Note that underneath the final line, “in the ego—,” Loy has written “his” below the word “the”. Yet “the” is not crossed out. It is therefore likely that Loy was still deciding which word to proceed with. See Appendix A.

“infinitesimal” workings. This is not to suggest that the somnambulist’s endeavour to focus in upon the body’s inner vibrations is an unworthy one; indeed, it is these very bodily mechanisms that arguably constitute the objects of Loy’s most compelling writing. Rather, it is his method that is troubling, for it precludes an on-going engagement with the world: the somnambulist does not participate in lived experience.

Moreover, the poem renders the somnambulist paradoxically disembodied, for although he tunes in upon the body, this internalised focus renders him as body parts—his eye, his ego, the infinitesimal particle—named in isolation from the body’s organic whole. To be sure, the only moment in the poem in which he is alluded to as a whole body is in his designation as a somnambulist. And although the body moves through time while the somnambulist is undergoing the process of turning his vision inward (which occurs “through decades”), the closer he gets to perceiving the “absolute,” the less effect time seems to have: by the final three lines, references to time and the outside world have vanished, and the somnambulist sees only his own ego. In this way, the somnambulist resembles Miovanni in “Effectual Marriage” who, located as he is “outside time and space,” is similarly disembodied, for his attention to Gina has shifted away “From the palpable to the transcendent // Mollescent irritant of his fantasy” (*L&LB* 36-37). On one hand, it is Gina here who suffers the consequence, for she is reduced to the wavering object of Miovanni’s intellectual fantasies. And yet by retreating into his own ego, Miovanni unwittingly renders himself disembodied and asexual. For both Miovanni and the somnambulist, access to real experience, and consequently temporality, is effaced.

It is the body’s inextricability from time that enables authentic movement, and not a mere shuddering in place. This is also a key difference between the organic body and the machine-body in Loy’s poetry, as I will argue in the following chapter. Clearly, though, it is not only the machine-body which is occluded from time and movement, but also those of the somnambulist and Miovanni, who may have agency in a way that the machine body does not, but who nonetheless cannot participate in embodied movement and are therefore trapped in stasis despite their ability to will their own movements. Authentic

movement is only actualised and purposeful when its reverberations occur through time and in connection to an external reality.

3.2 The irritant, materiality, and *élan vital*

The temporal body's inextricability from the external world and creativity is also apparent in Loy's interest in the irritant and its manifestation of Bergson's *élan vital*. In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson argues that species differentiation is driven by a creative impetus—by *élan vital*—that compels organisms towards increasingly complex forms. It is an evolutionary power that explains the increasing complexity and protean nature of the world in a way that finalism and mechanism cannot. The presence of *élan vital* makes inherent change and creativity a condition of existence; it is because of it that “we are creating ourselves continually” (7). But the motility of *élan vital* is both creative and destructive—it compels further complexity at the same instant as it continually “unmaking itself” (245), and so we are continually caught in the opposing ebbs of generation and decay. Indeed, this calls to mind Loy's layering of terms of birth with those of decay and detritus in her exploration of creation and life force, which I consider later in this chapter.

Loy reveals interest in ideas central to Bergsonian *élan vital* throughout her oeuvre. For instance, her concern with evolution is apparent in “International Psycho-Democracy,” which outlines a political vision for “consciously direct[ing] evolution” (*LdLB* 277), and in “Feminist Manifesto,” in which she rails in favour of the “race-responsibility” of intelligent women to procreate, revealing a deep-seated concern with the evolutionary movement of the human race, despite the unsettling nature of eugenics embedded in this claim. Even her repudiation of marriage in the manifesto is steeped in a vision of human evolution:

Each child of a superior woman should be the result of a definite period of psychic development in her life . . . spontaneously adapted for vital creation in the beginning but not necessarily harmoniously balanced as the parties to it—follow their individual lines of personal evolution— (*LdLB* 155)

There are multiple evolutionary lines being traced in Loy's statement: there is the personal evolution of each of the parents and the resulting development of the child—evolutions that are predominantly psychological—and the evolution of the race enabled through spontaneous vital creation. Loy's specific use of terminology

arguably reveals her close reading of Bergson: “vital creation” ostensibly refers to the moment of conception, but given its close resonance with both “*élan vital*” and “Creative Evolution,” she may also be suggesting a way to facilitate the free movement of the vital impulse between generations through a revolution of traditional relationships, and to therefore enable a kind of *élan vital* through rewriting gender roles.

Élan vital is particularly imbricated within Loy’s conception of the irritant. To be sure, the materiality of the irritant marks a substantial deviation between Bergson’s articulation of *élan vital* and Loy’s poetic adaptation. For Bergson, *élan vital* continually attempts to overcome matter and materiality, and it is materialised only when entropy pulls the body toward decay. That is, the destruction that pulls against the creative impulse of *élan vital* results in the descent of spirit into matter (*Creative* 245). Loy’s employment of *élan vital* is rather more materialist than metaphysical. For her, materiality is everywhere present: it is, no doubt, the manner in which we decay, but it is also that in which change and creativity is realised. Additionally, entropy does not signal a failure, or “descent” of the vital impulse for Loy, but its manifestation: it points to the body’s participation in process, evolution and temporality. As Andrew Roberts argues, the body’s processes are characterised by formation and disintegration, both of which entail movement through time that does not begin or ends in a body that is “complete” (123). Understood in relation to Bergson’s *élan vital*, the temporal body’s capacity for disintegration gestures not to a failure of the vital impulse, but the body’s close connection to time and its inherent processes.

The irritant, as conceived by Loy, is intrinsically tied to materiality, even when it does not take a physical form but embeds itself in consciousness as a propellant that agitates continual creation and change. In “Aphorisms on Futurism,” the irritant takes the shape of a “new form” offered up by aesthetic genius:

CONSCIOUSNESS cannot spontaneously accept or reject new forms, as offered by creative genius; it is the new form, for however great a period of time it may remain a mere irritant—that moulds consciousness to the necessary amplitude for holding it (*L&LB* 151)

The irritant thus need not take any particular physical shape; in this instance, it is specifically artistic newness that operates as an irritant, spurring consciousness toward change. My account of the irritant here is indebted to the scholarship of Stauder. In “The Irreducible Surplus of Abstraction: Mina Loy on Brancusi and the Futurists,” (1998) Stauder contends that the presence of the divine irritant in Loy’s poetry is a nucleus of being that is not static but self-generating, “constantly disrupted from within by its own difference” and thus “always giv[ing] rise to further creation” (364-65). It is, therefore, not only that which guarantees inherent and perpetual movement in other things, but that which, by its very nature, guarantees change or disruption in itself. However, although Stauder identifies the consciousness *as* the irritant, I would suggest that the irritant is that which embeds itself within the consciousness and agitates it towards change (363). In the above excerpt from “Aphorisms on Futurism,” for instance, the irritant is not the consciousness itself, but the new aesthetic form, and consciousness is its substrate. Moreover, Stauder suggests that Loy appropriated the irritant from Futurism, and yet, she argues, there are fundamental differences that further point to its inherent materiality; while the irritant—or nucleus—is stable in Futurism, for Loy it is ever-transforming, and is therefore conducive to Loy’s poetics that incorporates “the politics of love and human relationships as well as art” (359). Loy thus critiques the Futurist tendency to consider the irritant as pure abstraction and redirects it towards her own poetics of embodiment and materiality. Indeed, in Loy’s essay “Brancusi and the Ocean,” Loy argues that in Brancusi’s works there is “no abstraction coerced to the domain of form,” insisting that his art does not entail some unnatural compulsion of non-material abstracts into a material form, but a form in which ideas themselves are material (*Stories* 222).

As a consequence of its materiality and capacity for internal self-disruption, the irritant can be understood in terms of Loy’s larger project of unsettling traditional understandings of space. Loy’s poetic treatment of Brancusi’s art in “Brancusi’s Golden Bird,”⁵⁷ reveals how his sculpture—and by extension the irritant—evades spatialisation in surprising ways. Moreover, it represents how the irritant can be productively deployed through an artistic

⁵⁷ First published in November 1922 in *The Dial* 73, opposite a photograph of Constantin Brancusi’s *Golden Bird*. Reprinted in *LoLB*.

medium in a way that undermines the stasis of an object. The apparently solid metallic form of the bird belies its constant shifting relative to surrounding light. Stauder undertakes a detailed reading of this poem, and demonstrates how the sculpture's constant shifting is depicted in an analogous way to the irritant's self-disruption. The bird "constantly reshapes itself through the emanation and return of light," and the same refraction and patterning can be located in the sound play of Loy's poem. In both the poem and the sculpture, the refraction of light and sound create a series of unstable internal relationships that continually refer back to themselves and their intrinsic changeability (Stauder 367-68). As the irritant is that which agitates change, in this instance, the irritant does not exist outside of the changing matter: it is the matter and brings about change in itself. That is, the sculpture is its own irritant, affecting perpetual change of its own material form, just as the play of sound in the poetry behaves as an irritant that causes sonic refraction across its own lines.

Loy's essay on Brancusi, "Brancusi and the Ocean," further explores the inextricability of the irritant from evolution, which, following Bergson, is a nexus of creative movement through time. Loy describes the evolution of which Brancusi's work is a part as "a certain *élan* of primary embodiment" (*Stories* 222); both "embodiment" and "*élan*" link the artwork back into a process of bodily change (via evolution) and bodily movement through duration. Further, Loy's deployment of the term "*élan*" recalls Bergson's *élan vital*. Bergson posits that biological evolution and creativity are reciprocal and intertwined: not only is *élan vital* a creative force, but also the more compelling the effect of *élan vital*, the more complex and conscious the organism, the more creative the organism's impact upon the world, and the greater the organism's propensity for taking unorganised matter and shaping it in unlimited ways (*Creative* 139-40). The presence of the term "*élan*" in Loy's text has multiple reverberations that situate art within biological and thus corporeal transformation: it suggests that the impetus that compels embodied subjects towards increasing complexity can manifest itself in the art object; it draws a parallel between both kinds of evolution (artistic and biological) and implies that in order to be successful, both undergo continual physical change; and it casts both in terms of intrinsic movement—that is, not a movement imposed externally but one which is always, already occurring. Yet, this

impetus is also potentially destructive. The irritant is portrayed as white hot, and Brancusi consequently as exemplary: “Brancusi is one of the few moderns—whose art has survived its own impetus—” (*Stories* 222). The irritant’s dual capacity for destruction and “a certain *élan* of primary embodiment,” suggests that this destruction, tied to embodiment, also involves entropy, just as Bergson’s *élan vital* entails both creation and entropy. However, for Loy, neither life-force or death-force is divorced from materiality and time, and here again, entropy evokes not failure but a sense of awe at the irritant’s inherent power.

Embodiment as an expression of time evokes a past of permutations that are incarnated in the present moment in Loy’s writing. Indeed, this is the very nature of Bergson’s *durée*, as every “feeling, however simple it may be, contains virtually within it the whole past and present of the being experiencing it” (*Introduction* 31). In drafts of her chapter “The Will” in *The Child and the Parent*, Loy embeds the irritant in the body’s history, for the irritant is not only first ignited within the body, but also persists through evolution. Early in “The Will,” a “spark” is discharged within the child, and foreshadows the birth of consciousness to come:

For, being by nature an evolutionary phonograph record, the child reincarnates not only the biological stages, but also the sequence of ideas peculiar to its race; those sparks emitted from the depth of being to illustrate reactions, of which the first were the physiological myths of Rise and Fall that, inspired by the unconscious effort of breathing, align the sacred and profane concepts with paranoid alteration in the human past. (Box 1, fol. 13, 25)

The child is inscribed with its evolutionary history—a history that is biological, that charts physical changes that have occurred across generations, and which is infused with ideas and creativity. The child becomes a “microcosm,” a “seedling of all evolution” that is “not only the reflorescence of the past, but also a germination of the ultimate blossom of consciousness” (31). The irritant is thus infused with movement both in the particular body in which it occurs, and with the movement of evolution over generations. To be sure, Loy’s association of “ideas” with “race” is, to at least some degree, essentialist. In light of this, this passage is an unusual one for Loy, for it more than once evokes a sense of determinism, and hints that the child’s life is somehow predestined: it is merely a

“record” of what has come before, and its ideas—although they appear to arise spontaneously—are in fact already cast by the history that it evokes. Moreover, by figuring the child as a “phonograph,” Loy invokes the same mechanical discourses that she so fervently resisted in poems such as “Human Cylinders,” “Eros of Offices” and “Brain”.⁵⁸ However, Loy’s meaning here is rather ambiguous. The “evolutional phonograph record” might depict that the child plays evolution as if she was a phonograph record: her evolutionary path has been deterministically pre-recorded. Conversely, it may also portray either a machine that records evolution, such that the child’s evolution is inscribed upon her like a recording, or a machine that curiously evolves, and which does not operate quite as normal machine would for it is not externally directed, but rather changes in and of itself. Embedded in the suggestion of determinism, then, is the hint that this determinism itself is ironically subject to mutation. What is ambiguous, then, is the status of the child’s “reincarnation”. Is this reincarnation a replaying of that which has been lived before, therefore mere repetition, or is it a rebirth, a beginning again inscribed with change?

The history that passes into the child’s biology has its roots in physiology. Mythologies, such as that of the “Rise and Fall,” are thus neither distinct from, nor external to, the body; instead, they have bodily origins, inscribed as they are upon “the unconscious effort of breathing” and the rise and fall of the lungs and chest. Indeed, these mythologies are both caused by the “spark” of the irritant,” and “inspired by” the act of breathing. As both breath and the spark agitate the awakening of mythology in the body, I would suggest that the irritant, or spark, might be the breath itself. What suggests itself at the outset as a religious reference to the fall of humankind in the Garden of Eden, which would trace the genealogy of the child back to a particularly biblical origin imbued with notions of sin and the repudiation of the flesh, are in fact located in that very flesh and in the “unconscious” movements and undulations of the body. This is not to suggest that Loy necessarily attempts to renounce religious mythology by entangling it in the very sin that it rebukes, for although original sin is at odds with Loy’s bodily poetry and her aphorisms in “Feminist Manifesto” that rally woman to embrace sex without long-term emotional commitment, Loy remained throughout her life

⁵⁸ See Chapter Four.

a devout Christian Scientist, both repudiated by her mother's Puritanism and drawn by Christian Science's mysticism. What the figure of the fall might imply, however, is that to deny the body—even through the lens of her mother's self-abjuring Christianity or Christian Science's renunciation of the world's materiality—is paradoxically to deny the very means by which such mythology is intuitively known.

The idea of an origin in Loy's writing is a slippery one. Here, it is further undermined by the multiple moments in time signified by the word "first". Loy writes that the irritant takes the form of "sparks emitted from the depth of being to illustrate reactions, of which the *first* were the physiological myths of Rise and Fall" (box 1, fol. 13, 25, italics mine). "First" could refer to either the sparks here, or the reactions. If "first" refers to the sparks, then the status of the "Rise and Fall" is obscured, for the mythology appears to be the spark itself, rather than the reaction (the first sparks emitted were that of the rise and fall). However, if "first" refers to the reaction, then the reaction is the rise and fall, which occurs in response to the spark. The mythology's location in time in relation to the irritant is mercurial: it could be subsequent to the spark, or it could be the spark itself. Perhaps it is more likely that the spark causes the awakening of mythology. In this case, "first" is still an unstable concept. It might refer to the child's first reaction to the irritant; that is, the appearance of the irritant in the child firstly sparks the mythology of original sin. Alternatively, "first" could refer to a moment in the child's genealogical history: as evolutionary history is reiterated through the figure of the phonograph, perhaps "first" refers to the first reaction to the irritant in one of the child's ancestors. The ambiguity of the reference of "first" and the possible oscillation of "first" between different readings undoes the sustainability of origins by splitting the word "first"—the very sign of the origin—into multiple temporalities: it is a condition for the present body, and also a past, ancestral body. It also muddles the temporalities of spark and "Rise and Fall," making them either unified, occurring as one, or severed, occurring causally. Multiple temporal references undo the notion of an origin and deny the severability (and thus externality) of "moments" in time.

The irritant in Loy's writing facilitates a kind of evolution that is particularly congruent to that which Bergson envisioned, that is, one that is driven

by *élan vital* and which agitates increasing complexity. Only *élan vital*, Bergson asserts, can explain why life continues to complicate itself in dangerous ways: if the only motivation in adaptation were survival, the process would have halted at elementary organisms (Goudge 17). This increasing complexity is played out in Loy's poem "Evolution" (*LaLB* 256, quoted below in full), which focuses on species' development. The irritant, in this instant, is the sun ray that agitates the single cell and spurs it on to become complex life forms:

Sun ray
 Shines on gelatinous cell
 sets it aquiver

 ensues a feeble agitation
 in an ocean

 Since—
 through aeons
 life dons

 increasingly
 complex organisms
 streamlined for survival

 evolution's
 exasperation of nervous systems
 sharpens our wits,
 expedites our improvement—

 what, in infinitude,
 will be our contour,
 our density,
 our potency?

The lines of the poem undergo a gradual movement towards complexity, beginning with the two monosyllables "sun ray" and with stanzas consisting of two to three lines that build up to the consistent use of polysyllables, longer lines, and culminate in the final two four-lined stanzas. Yet this development towards complexity is not marked by uncomplicated breaks: there are no full stops, only commas and dashes, and the line breaks between stanzas constitute only visual

breaks in the poem's layout, and not between sentences or units of thought. As a result, modulations resulting from the irritant (the sun ray) occur through a temporality not readily constructed by discrete moments; analogously, when evolution occurs as a result of *élan vital*, it happens through time in what Bergson terms an indivisible act or "undivided moment" rather than an accumulation of spatialised events (*Creative* 94). Indeed, in Loy's "Evolution," both of these temporal modes—geometrical and durational—play against each other. The apparent spatial distinction between lines and stanzas—created by arranging words in space on the page—is only superficial, for the poem is articulated in a single, almost unpunctuated breath. The process of reading the poem occurs as a single movement, the bleeding of one idea or one state of complexity into the next. Differentiated moments in evolutionary history are thus ostensibly distinguished through line spacing and organised visually into discrete units, and yet this spatial mode is revealed to be only surface, for the poem's real meaning is stretched across these spatial gaps, undoing the separation of one state from the next. The poem thus consists of a single question, dispersed across the page in a series of enjambments. The irritant, and the movement that it provokes, can thus be read as entwined with the experience of duration and the rejection of the limits that externalised time imposes.

This insistence on time as continuation, rather than geometry, further serves to query the legitimacy of an originary point in time. "Evolution" seemingly posits the sun ray as an origin point, a gesture at odds with Loy's more frequent suggestion that there are no real origins. However, the persistent employment of the present tense undercuts this; the past of the sun ray endures into the present moment. This troubles the position of the origin as one located firmly in the past. Moreover, every subsequent moment is written in the same tense as this supposed "origin," and therefore every moment along the trajectory of evolution is inscribed, in language, with the mark of the origin. As all moments in the distant past, recent past, and present are described in the same tense, a clearly definitive beginning in time is unsustainable. As Loy writes in her poem "Continuity," (*LaLB* 255) "Continuity / renews / precedence"; the precedence of the cell in "Evolution" is, similarly, constantly renewed in the present moment.

How, then, does this rejection of the origin sit alongside Loy's pursuit of aesthetic originality, and is there a contradiction in her pursuit of artistic originality and her elision of origins in her texts? In texts where Loy unpacks her aesthetic principles, we find that her valorisation of experimentation is not entangled with a preoccupation with being "the first," but is characterised instead by a tendency towards movement. For instance, in "Mi and Lo," she writes that "the creative man is one whose consciousness travels farthest" (*Stories* 272), and in "The Logos in Art," she compares the artist to an acrobat (*Stories* 260). Moreover, movement involves duration, a continuation of things that have come before, and Loy—despite her reputation for rejecting tradition—takes this into account. She specifies in "The Metaphysical Pattern of Aesthetics" that the creation of art is not merely the liberation from convention wholesale, but the deliverance from facets of convention that are no longer viable, for example, the pictorial convention that she argues artificially tethers individuality in aesthetics (*Stories* 264). There is an implicit suggestion, therefore, that original art forms entail a concomitant rejection and continuance of tradition that results in an evolution over time. This evolution, or movement, is similarly propounded in Loy's treatise, "Modern Poetry". Here, she contends that modern poetry has gained fresh impetus from contemporary life because of a gain in "precipitance of movement," and that the structure of successful verse is "the movement that an active individuality makes in expressing itself". This tendency to movement "vindicates" the artistic rebellion against tradition. And yet this rebellion is not an indiscriminate dumping of all literary past, a staking of itself as an uncomplicated origin point; rather, it involves the evocation of tradition in order to propel itself in new directions (*LolLB* 157). The poetic past can thus successfully manifest itself in the new; indeed, it is this very amalgamation that often results in effective modern poetry. Loy argues that where other poets fail for being "too modern," e. e. cummings is "more modern still" and yet writes brilliantly, for he has "united free verse and rhyme which so urgently needed to be married," resulting in verse that is "quite fresh" (159-160). Thus when Loy writes in her essay on Stein's genius that Stein has her fingers pressed to the very "pulse of duration" for her deployment of reiterated phrases, it is not only reiteration and change through duration that is significant, but also the progression that Stein's writing has enabled, which takes its place in the flux of artistic practice (*LalLB* 289).

3.3 Insel: “To interfere with time”

The correlation between the dissolution of the spatial measurement of time and aesthetic production needs qualification, for not all manners of flux are fruitful. This is particularly evident in Loy’s novel *Insel*, in which the experience of time is radically warped, and this has a detrimental effect on Jones’s and Insel’s capacity to work—it renders them sedentary, lethargic, and dislocated from authentic experience. Time is distorted under Insel’s influence. Indeed, at the close of the novel, Jones notes that Insel appears finally as his “ultimate self,” the man that can interfere with time (173). The diffusion of his *Strahlen* alters time and severs consciousness from temporality:

when Insel shut the door infinitesimal currents ran out of him into the atmosphere as if he were growing a soft invisible fur that, when reciprocal conditions were sufficiently suave, grew longer and longer as the hair of the dead, it is maintained, will leisurely fill a coffin until it seemed with its measured infiltration even to interfere with Time. The mesmeric rhythm of a film slowed down conducted the tempo of thought and sentience in response to his half-petrified tepidity (*Insel* 50-51)

The “tempo of thought” is disrupted, and the emanation of the *Strahlen* “interfere[s] with Time”. This temporal distortion threatens Jones with annihilation. Insel’s control over time is so formidable that Jones can only rely on the clock to retrieve her “from nonentity—thrusting its real face into [hers] as reminder of the temporal” (95). Not only does Jones require mathematical time in order to haul herself out of her temporal vacuum, but her sense of self is so obliterated that even the clock’s “face,” a trite personification of a mechanism, feels more real than her own.

Time defies all logic under Insel’s sway; it ceases to be measurable, for it is opposed to the clock that Jones depends upon, and yet it does not resemble *durée* either. *Durée* inevitably pushes forward, “unfolds itself gradually” and cannot be “contract[ed] or protract[ed] as I like” (*Creative* 9, 10). In contrast, Insel’s time is wholly unpredictable. For example, time in Chapters Seven and Eight appears to be on a loop. Chapter Seven is set in a café in which Insel and Jones are speaking. During their conversation, Jones notes that “Man Ray came up and sat with us and went away” (60); this entire episode is elliptically condensed into a single,

brief sentence. Its sharp contrast with the rest of the scene, the events of which are narrated leisurely, portrays the way in which the experience of time for Insel and Jones can be condensed. In Chapter Eight, Insel and Jones are sitting in the cafe again. As there is neither an indication of time at the outset of the chapter, nor any given temporal relation between this chapter and the one previous, the separation of the two chapters gives the illusion that, although the scene is similarly set in a cafe, the occasion is different. This is however, misleading, for at the end of Chapter Eight, the following dialogue ensues:

We had been sitting outside the Lutetia for six hours.

‘Now,’ laughed Insel, ‘Man Ray should pass again.’

‘To conclude, we have no use for time.’

‘That is not what I mean—’

‘You mean that eternity spins round and round?’ (70)

It becomes apparent here that neither Jones nor Insel have moved, and that time has swelled and engulfed the subject of two full chapters. When Jones asserts that they “have no use for time,” she initially suggests that they have no need to watch time, for they have nowhere else that they need to be (Insel is unemployed, and Jones’s current employment is to write the biography of Insel). Insel’s correction draws Jones toward the second implication of her statement: they have no use for time because it does not progress. Insel’s peculiar and unpredictable effect upon time is reiterated throughout the novel: time protracts, time condenses, and sometimes time collapses entirely and grinds to a stop. Yet while Insel can distort time, this power cannot be aesthetically productive, for it creates a disjunction between body and world. Despite the artistic promise he initially reveals, by the end of the novel, Insel’s painting has come to a halt. He is paralysed by indecision and cannot see his art’s progress in any one direction over another, and is left, consequently, staring at a blank canvas (174).⁵⁹

3.4 “Mother I am”: Time and the splitting body

In “Parturition,” Loy depicts a body that is interconnected with the forward propulsion of *durée* precisely because its spatial parameters are undone. That is, the birthing body is one productive example of the way that the obliteration of

⁵⁹ For further discussion on Insel’s capacity as an artistic producer, see Chapter Four.

contained bodily space—enacted here through corporeal proliferation—unfolds in time. The body that splits apart in “Parturition” is not resolved into either one or two bodies, but remains somewhere in between, and its/their bodily space(s) is/are thus uncountable. This process of proliferation unifies the body with time, and embeds the body/bodies within an evolutionary process not only of procreation, but decay too. And by casting the body into this larger, ongoing process, Loy portrays the body—and its ongoing birth cycles—not as beginnings themselves or as having beginnings, but as part of a larger flux of time in which there is no origin and no end-point.

The maternal body is in many ways an intuitive example of a body that resists spatial circumscription, as it complicates the singularity of the body by its very nature. Indeed the female body is always already both multiple, according to Irigaray, and therefore cannot be readily quantified; its sexual organs constitute two lips, always in contact but neither distinguishable as subject or object. The woman’s body is therefore not only multiple inherently, but is indivisible into each of its component “one(s)” (*This Sex* 24). This multiplicity makes the female body incomprehensible to culture that desires

to count everything, to number everything by units, to inventory everything as individualities. *She is neither one nor two.* Rigorously speaking, she cannot be identified either as one person, or as two. She resists all adequate definition. . . . And her sexual organ, which is not *one* organ, is counted as *none*. (*This Sex* 26)

It is culture’s insistence upon counting bodies as units that results in the psychoanalytic designation of the female body as “lack”. This multiplicity is particularly embodied for Irigaray by the maternal, wherein the foetus becomes a “part of a whole that is the mother’s body,” but which is at the same time distinct from it, severable by the “gap, an interval between the body that is in the envelope and the envelope itself” (*Ethics* 46-47). Moreover, Irigaray takes issue with Freud’s insistence that the woman must “turn away from her mother” in order to participate in heteronormative relationships; rather, woman retains that connection through a complication of the distinction between herself and the mother by interiorising the maternal, such that she becomes both an embodiment of her mother and of herself, a “container-mother in herself-as-container,” an infinite unfolding of self and other (41-42). And it is through the body, and

through bodily memory, that this unfolding takes place. The tactile relationship between the maternal body and the foetus is thus a particularly productive embodiment of that which is neither one nor multiple and that cannot be divisible, for subject and object relations are negated. Reasserting a maternal mode of being is critical, Irigaray insists, for a metaphysics of tactility; the maternal body permits the multiplicity of the body through the collapse of subject and object positions, and enables the opening up of the closed circle of circumscribed possibilities. The body whose spaces are fluid cannot be perfectly coherent and circular: it is unstable, always in the processes of making and remaking itself, and allows for a “puncture in the tissue” that facilitates new possibilities for speech (*Ethics* 178-79). It is a similar impulse that renders the maternal body for Loy a productive embodiment of spatial dissolution and proliferation that wrenches open not only the “closed circle” of woman that Marinetti affirms (*Selected Writings* 75), but the parameters of poetic meaning, for the birthing mother is not only procreative but aesthetic, and her labour not only physical but poetic, such that in “Parturition,” birth facilitates the experimental poetic speech act.

Loy’s “Parturition” depicts how the experience of a woman in the throes of labour complicates the severance of bodies, and accordingly unsettles the perimeters of the body’s space. Indeed, as Schuster points out, the etymological root of the word “Parturition” (the Latin, *partutio*) suggests parting both through leave-taking and through splitting (126). But what the mother is splitting, or taking leave from, here is herself. She is both self and other, both singular and multiple, and yet, while her process of splitting apart may suggest a resolution of the unquantifiable space of the pregnant body (for the bodies become severable), this is not the case in Loy’s poem. Quite the opposite: the speaker reports that in the height of labour pains, “intensifying sensibility” results in a “Blurring [of] spatial contours,” for she cannot identify with her own corporeal movements:

So aiding elusion of the circumscribed
That the gurgling of a crucified wild beast
Comes from so far away
And the foam on the stretched muscles of a mouth
Is no part of myself (*L&LB* 5)

Her consciousness disassociates with the part of her body where the “split” is taking place. And yet at times, it is difficult to ascertain precisely which body/bodies is/are engaged in the severance. On one hand, this passage can be read as the separation of mother and child, and the realisation of the maternal consciousness that the baby’s body is becoming distinct from her own: by associating her vagina with a mouth, the birth process is likened to a vomiting or expulsion of a foreign body; the foam that appears in the process could be the emergence of the baby’s head, and the gurgling noises “from so far away” may belong to the baby. Conversely, the gurgling and the “foam” could equally pertain to the mother’s own bodily processes, and by employing an indefinite article when referring to her own genitalia as “*a* mouth,” (emphasis mine) she casts her own body not as a particular but a generalised other. Or, once again, the mouth could be that of the baby, stretched open in a “gurgling” cry. The body’s limits are troubled by its own processes. It seeps (or foams) beyond its borders, and distance loses its measurability and thus its coherence, for her own body’s severance from the baby’s is depicted as “so far away” even while it is the very centre of the poem’s action. Thus while the two bodies are pulling apart from each other, this entails not a clarification of corporeal boundaries, but a complication.

Moreover, this splitting is formally enacted on the space of the page. The way in which the layout and spacing of the words throughout the poem echo the rhythms of the woman’s contractions has been noted by literary critics such as Burke (*Becoming Modern* 96), Galvin (62), Armstrong (*Modernism* 118) and Peppis (571); the lines of the poem pulse and contract like the uterine muscles—both the body and the work are intimately linked as creative processes as the mother births a child in the same moment as the writing contracts and births itself as a poem:

| | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| Locate an irritation | without |
| It is | within |
| | Within |
| It is without | |
| The sensitized area | (<i>LōLB</i> 4) |

Yet these lines also mirror the process of the body as it is pulled apart. The text along the right margin is still connected to that on the left margin (they are not

only part of the same poem but depend upon each other in order for their words to be coherent), but they are also severed, stretched across the page, tugging at the column of white space that now separates them, and are both intertwined and discrete.

This splitting and creative body is inseverable from *durée*. Loy alludes consistently to a kind of internalised time, writes Winkiel in her analysis of maternity and creativity in Loy's work, that is oppositional to Marinetti's masculine time characterised by phallic mastery and the clock (115-16). This evocation of a bodily, internal time that is at odds with the public time of the clock suggests Bergsonian *durée*, even though it is not labelled as such in Winkiel's argument. In contrast, Schuster suggests that the experience of reproduction is inconsonant with *durée*. Schuster considers Kouidis's claims that the speaker in "Parturition" partakes in both intension (for she experiences *durée*), and extension,⁶⁰ (for pain is located within the body); ultimately, however, Kouidis asserts that the speaker's being is unified, and it is with this point that Schuster takes issue (Kouidis 45; Schuster 124-25). Rather, unification is only possible if the speaker can embed herself into *durée*. But according to Schuster, the shock of giving birth exposes the fact that this is impossible, and instead the self is splintered, resulting both in his revelation that Bergson's metaphysics excludes the role of women in evolution and that "Parturition" elides the unification that Kouidis describes, as the poem is characterised by the splitting of the body and its consciousness (124-25).

Schuster is right to assert that Loy adapts Bergson's philosophy in "Parturition" in service of an understanding of feminine, bodily being. However, what this adaptation reveals is the possibility precisely for the kind of eradication of space that Bergson alludes to in his articulation of *durée*. To be sure, the birthing body does not enter into *durée* in any easy way, and therefore does not inherit the kind of miraculous unification that Kouidis identifies. Rather, such a "blurring of spatial contours" results in the confounding of the spatiality of the body, producing creative (reproductive and aesthetic) power. It is thus the very

⁶⁰ However, as I argued in Chapter One, this depends upon a misapprehension of Bergson's terms.

moment of splintering that ironically points to the possibilities for *durée* and thus unification, that is, the unification of the body with creative forces and not its unification into a single, geometrically defined entity. Whether Loy's poetry is an extension of, or rejoinder to, Bergson's metaphysics thus hinges upon what is signified by "unification"—for Schuster, it denotes a physical or psychological "wholeness". Such an understanding would ignore Loy's own reference to unification in the poem: "the ego succeeds in unifying the positive and negative poles of sensation / Uniting the opposing and resisting forces" (*LoLB* 6). Here, unification points to a process of "uniting" resistant forces through the collapse of parameters that once kept these forces oppositional. Poles of sensation can thus no longer be considered in binary, or spatial, terms. The unified ego is not a single ego with unassailable borders; it is the site of concurrent splintering and amalgamation that makes spatialisation impossible.

The kind of procreativity that Loy envisions is a far cry from the mechanical reproduction of her poem "Human Cylinders," or Marinetti's closed circle of wives, mothers and lovers, the bearers of strong futurist men—it is both bodily and artistic fission and creation. The connection between birthing and creativity, between biological fertility and aesthetic prowess, is certainly not unique to Loy, as many modernists employ reproductive imagery in this way: Pound, for example, asserts that the brain is a repository of seminal fluid, casting male sexual fluid as exemplary creative substance ("Translator's Postscript" 169-70). Similarly, Marinetti—in a claim that characteristically conflicted with his delegation of procreation to a closed circle of women—lamented that childbirth required women at all in his novel *Mafarka the Futurist: An African Novel*, in which he fantasised about the possibility of conjoining man and machine in a gesture of autogenesis, circumventing reproduction in order to exclude women altogether and claiming creation as strictly masculine terrain. The novel's protagonist gives birth to his own son and triumphantly announces: "it is possible to procreate an immortal giant from one's own flesh, without concourse and stinking complicity with woman's womb" (*Mafarka* 169), thus demonising the woman's body as a grotesque aberration.

Indeed, male modernists revealed a characteristic anxiety about their inability to procreate without women, and as such, re-imagine the artistic process

as an internal “otherness” that is akin to pregnancy, according to Rachel Blau DuPlessis (“Propounding” 390). Marinetti’s fantasy of mechanical birth exposes latent disquiet about what he perceives to be woman’s unfortunate indispensability, and his own desire to take control—through technological genius—of that from which he has been occluded. Similar anxiety looms over the philosopher in John Rodker’s “God Bless the Bottle,” as he becomes aware that man is little more than a “laborious ant appurtenance of an indubitable egg”. Only the “strange intoxication” of the bottle and the deployment of language of scientific detachment—of “equal-relative density” and the “whirring of the dynamo”—provide transient relief in the form of distraction and “sudden contractions” that exude “new and never before envisaged possibilities,” thereby allowing Rodker’s philosopher to claim a metaphorical process of reproduction for himself (61).

Where the mother is not a locus of anxiety about masculine lack, she becomes a target of aversion and revulsion. For Marinetti, this is the womb that demands “stinking complicity” or the “maternal ditch” that swallows his automobile (*Selected Writings* 40; *Mafarka* 169).⁶¹ In Rodker’s “Chanson on Petit Hypertrophique” the event of childbirth is portrayed from the perspective of a begrudgingly trapped foetus. The foetus begins the poem *in utero*, and cannot perceive much except for faint blurs of colour and the distant thumping of “systole and diastole,” (62) or the pulsing of blood. It is “unable to seize the knowledge of [its] identity,” but nonetheless recognises the presence of its mother, although in pragmatic rather than affectionate terms, for she is merely “the tool of [his] life” (63). As the baby develops and approaches the time of birth, it becomes increasingly distanced from its mother, and the growth of its nails and teeth appear to tear at the “primeval darkness [that] enwrapped me” and that claustrophobically reeks with “the smells of steaming savannah”. The foetus wraps itself in “cloaks” in order to “shut out the irrelevant world of [his] mother and her thoughts” (63). The moment of birth, then, is a triumphant jettisoning of the maternal body, the baby’s final claim over its own separate identity. In contrast to Loy’s poetry, severance and distinguishability between bodies here entails not maternal poetic creativity, but the end of a dulling and suffocating

⁶¹ See discussion in Chapter One.

force that stifles the self's (read: male child's) individuality. Here, severance is critical for repelling the mother.

Loy's "Parturition" thus reclaims the woman's body from its designation as the muddy, maternal pit by writers like Rodker, Pound and Marinetti, and recasts it as a temporal body overlaid with creative potential rather than a reprobate and regrettable vessel. It ties the procreativity of the woman to aesthetic creativity, such that the maternal body is not merely a metaphor for women's poetic pursuits, but actually "involves no less of the spiritual and intellectual absorption that pertains to aesthetic creation" (Lusty 255). In "Rewriting Sex: Mina Loy, Marie Stopes, and Sexology," Peppis argues that "Parturition" uncovers the connection that Loy makes between a celebration of maternity so fervent that it borders upon eugenics, and a "modernist celebration of aesthetic creativity". That is, the poem not only portrays reproduction, but is itself a collision between biological procreation and the aesthetic moment such that the "woman poet births herself as mother superior even as she births a new maternalist free verse" (570-71). The poem thus pursues the same dissolution between categories of women as the "Feminist Manifesto," for it is not only the distinction between "Mother" and "Mistress" that must be abolished, but also that of Mother and Poet (572).

Maternal aesthetic productivity is particularly enabled through Loy's reference to the cosmic, Peppis writes, as the birthing woman displaces the figure of "God the Father," the creator of the universe. Her claim, "Mother I am" rewrites and transcends that of the male creator's "I am that I am," and this is enacted formally in her deployment of free verse that usurps the rhythms of patriarchy, the "hegemony of iambs" (571). This play upon woman as God is reiterated in the final lines of "Parturition" through the eschewal of punctuation:

I once heard in a church
—Man and woman God made them—
Thank God (*L&LB* 8)

Without punctuation to guide us, the sense of "Man and woman God" is mutable, and we can read this equally as "Man and woman: God made them," (man and woman are made by God) or, alternatively, "Man and woman-God made them,"

(people are made by men and women-gods) which confers the status of a deity upon the birthing woman. Who the narrator is thanking in her final words is therefore similarly ambiguous; it may be the heavens, or alternatively, woman-kind. The uncertainty of meaning achieved through Loy's choice of syntax formally mirrors the oscillation of the woman's being between a particular female body and a cosmic type reflects the breakdown of clear and distinct boundaries between bodies, and represents the proliferation of meaning that such a breakdown can enable.

This collision between the fecundity of the birthing woman and the woman poet, together with the resulting proliferation of meaning in language, is also explored in Loy's unpublished poem, "Biography of a Songge Byrd". The poem, written about Isadora Duncan and Edward Gordon Craig, tells of the experience of conceiving, birthing, and losing a child. The moment of conception coincides with the ecstatic release of the bird's song:

of the love that did spring
up between John Silence
conceiver of Opera Houses
for Marionettes voices

and Songge Byrd
who, upon seeing him,
loosened her girdle
without a word.

to work their pleasurable wills
they drifted in a floral boat
upon the Boden See [sic]

as from her subjugated throat
the sounds of love
lifted a singing dawn
above
the opal hills

and in that way
conceived the babe

of Songge and Silence (4)

The sequence of lines that describe the sexual encounter result in the suggestion that the baby was conceived through song: Songge Byrd and John Silence first “work their pleasurable wills,” then the Songge Byrd begins to sing, and it is “in that way” that the baby is conceived. The song does not merely occur concurrently to the conception; rather, it causes it. By dwarfing the sexual act with the song, Songge Byrd manages to displace John Silence despite her “subjugat[ion],” for the baby becomes less a result of their union than it is of her music. Moreover, “Songge and Silence” in the last line of the quoted passage could refer to the parents (Songge Byrd and John Silence), or to that which the babe represents, or else to the means by which the baby was conceived (through the musical interplay of song and quiet). The meaning of these lines is thus characteristically plural: they signify both that the baby is the product of the parents, Songge and Silence, that the baby is Songge and Silence, and that the baby is conceived through the mother’s music, and through the very act of musical creativity and performance.

3.5 Decay, detritus and art

Loy embeds the splintering body not only within *durée*, but more specifically within *élan vital*, such that it is inscribed with continual evolution. This is enacted through the implication of forces of death within life cycles. In “Parturition,” the woman’s struggle with birth is inseverable from the spectre of death. Proliferation does not only occur in the severance of the mother and her baby, but also manifests within the mother’s subjectivity: that is, the body is both the object of struggle and the struggling subject. For example, when Loy alludes to the conglomeration of opposing forces, she is referring at once to her body as the site of pain and to the “resisting force / Pain calls up in me” (*LōLB* 4). As both of these conflicting forces emerge from the same body, the body is split as it is both the battling subject and the very object against which it must pit itself. The same split is evoked in the metaphorical casting of the birth as a mountain:

I am climbing a distorted mountain of agony
Incidentally with the exhaustion of control
I reach the summit
And gradually subside into anticipation of

Repose
 Which never comes
 For another mountain is growing up
 Which goaded by the unavoidable
 I must traverse
 Traversing myself (*LōLB* 5)

As this passage progresses, it becomes clear that the sprouting mountains that herald so much “agony” for the speaker are, in fact, tropological representations of the speaker herself. She is both the subject that “traverses” and the object being traversed: “I must traverse / Traversing myself”. A split thus occurs within the birthing body as it makes itself its own object and subject, resulting in what Winkiel calls an orientation of the self “both within and without” (118). Here, she is not merely her own object, but her own obstacle—she is both her own protagonist and hurdle—and in order to succeed she must conquer herself. This suggests that as she overcomes these mountains, the speaker—as both conqueror and conquered—undergoes a metaphorical defeat precisely in the moment of her own triumph.

The process of birth thus signals both renewal and death at once, and is not figured as a goal to be achieved, but a part of continuous, evolving life-cycles. This can be held in counterpoint with Loy’s “Songs to Joannes,” in which the desire for a child as a final product results in the cataclysmic and abortive “NOTHING” (*LōLB* 64, song *XXVII*), and the disappointment that characterises the poem’s caustic tone. It is fitting, then, that in “Parturition,” aside from noting the trembling between her thighs, the speaker does not refer directly to her child—the product of the labour—but only to the process of birth and its part in the larger cyclical process of generation and decay. As one contraction relaxes, the woman remembers watching “A dead white feathered moth / laying eggs,” (*LōLB* 6) alluding at once to her sense of her own death, and also to a grander scale of biological processes that is larger than herself, to the inevitable decay of which she and her labour are a part. Between allusions to seizing pain and the movements of new life there are references to death, to an “animal carcass” swarmed by insects, but also to regeneration: below the cloud of “blue-bottles” feeding on the decomposing dead pulses is an “undulation of living”—the stirrings of “evolutionary processes” (*LōLB* 6-7). Childbirth is not a means to

an end, for by intertwining birth and death in the poem Loy circumvents the possibility of a final product; rather, everything is a part of a cycle of decomposition, fertilisation and renewal.

In “Parturition,” the woman in labour experiences a dissolution of corporeal boundaries so profound that it threatens her with a peculiar kind of cosmic death. In the minutes when her contractions relax, she senses an impending obliteration, the “negation of myself as a unit / Vacuum interlude” (*LōLB* 6). This negation is intimately tied to the process of her body splitting apart, for indeed she is no longer a single “unit,” but an indeterminable number of units between one and two. And she muses upon this treacherous balancing act between life and death that arises from the dissolution of corporeal boundaries in the lines, “Death / Life / I am knowing / All about / Unfolding” (*LōLB* 7). Moreover, even when the space between the mother and the child appears to be stabilised, the body is thrown once again into spatial turmoil that is similarly characterised by the cosmic. The moment of birth is described in terms of the baby acquiring its own, independent movements:

LIFE
A leap with nature
Into the essence
Of unpredicted Maternity
Against my thigh
Touch of infinitesimal motion
Scarcely perceptible (*LōLB* 6)

The stirring of something foreign against her own body reveals the fact that sensation is splitting off between two bodies. Yet rather than restoring the body’s limits, the woman now has to contend with the forces of cosmic maternity and is suddenly “absorbed / Into / The was—is—ever—shall—be / Of cosmic reproductivity (*LōLB* 7). Like the insinuations of death throughout the poem, this also places the woman within the midst of larger life-forces. At the instance that she recognises her absorption into universal motherhood, there

Rises from the subconscious
Impression of a cat
With blind kittens
Among her legs

Same undulating life-stir
I am that cat (*LoLB* 7)

In the pulses of a more universal “life-stir,” the woman’s being collides with that of a cat, as both participate in the same bodily processes. There is therefore a concurrent splitting apart and fusing together that takes place: the body of the woman in labour is fused into the universal type and with the cat of her subconscious, and yet at the same moment, her subjectivity is wrenched in two so that she can see herself from a distance. Lyon argues that it is the act of parturition itself that results in this vacillation between the individual “I” and a cosmic maternal “type,” and that this results in a “modern double consciousness” for the poem’s speaker watches herself embrace her own cosmic motherhood. Moreover, this “signals a Bergsonian moment of *durée*—the ‘death of time and space,’ as Marinetti would call it—in which she preserves her individual ego-I-eye” (“Pregnant Pauses” 389). Although the point is not elaborated upon further, Lyon is surely referring here to the nature of the universal, for it is not only space that Loy suggests has collapsed, but time too, and the nature of the universal “type” is one that is not bound by time or space. In contrast, I would suggest firstly that despite its reference to a maternal type, the poem ultimately casts the birthing body as temporal, as a process itself inseparable from evolution. Secondly, I would argue that the collapse of both time and space is, in any case, decidedly not characterised by *durée*. In his discussion of Platonic Forms, Bergson argues that the universal “as a reality of the conceptual order occupies no more of extension than it does of duration,” and so it is “stationed outside space as well as above time.” As such, becoming is erroneously conceived of by Plato as something that is flawed and diminutive, the crumpling of a perfect concept (*Creative* 318). The universal is therefore the antithesis of *durée*, and so Lyon’s connection of *durée* with “the death of time and space” is a curious move. Bergson’s footprints are to be found, rather, in the implications of the oscillation between subject and object, and the material and the cosmic, for the woman’s experience of her body. She ceases to be a single, uncomplicated unit in space: she vacillates between an existence tied to both her own body and the body of the child that she is birthing, her own body and the universal, and her own body as both subject and object. Bergson is also present in the poem’s insistence on the creative nature of evolution, and the inseparability of this from time.

The entanglement of decay and renewal, and the consequent undermining of the origin, pervades Loy's writing. For instance, she grapples with the collision of life and death in the chapter "An Intimation of Death" from her unpublished novel, *The Child and the Parent*: the adult, when trying to explain the world to a child "on the threshold [sic] of life," finds him or herself at an impasse, for it is as if the consciousness of the questioning child is "a visitor" to a world in which "the thread of death [is] tangled in our every explanation". The two logics—one that knows that death is intricately woven into everything living, and one that refuses to believe that death is an inevitability—cannot be reconciled by the child:

While death to our experience is inevitable, the absolute inability of the child to accept it makes this absence of presence appear impossible, to deny existence itself; until our failure to justify the necessity for it in the face of the child's conviction that it could do without it, brings us to the point of wondering whether all death's terror and enormity may depend merely on its being an event taking place beyond the range of our apprehension, except for its beginning that thus seems like an ending; in exact opposition to the cosmic continuity the child is so loath to let go. (Box 1, fol. 11)

It is thus not the case that the collision of paradigms occurs because child is imbued with life and the adult with death, for this would cast birth and decay as binary oppositions; rather, the contradiction of the two paradigms is a result precisely of the close connection between life forces and death. The adult understands that the world is constituted by the close marriage of life and death, but the child maintains that death can be done without and therefore cannot grasp life itself. Indeed, what makes death appear so terrible is not its finality, for it is a beginning that only "seems like" an ending, and is therefore only a kind of beginning *again*. Its horror lies in our inability to grasp the idea of it: it is our child-like refusal of death that gives it its ominous quality.

The shadow of death in Loy's poetry thus signifies not finality, but process, just as birth represents not an uncomplicated beginning, but a beginning again into continuity. As beginning and endings are not oppositional but closely entangled, the very notion of origins in Loy's work is subverted, and her writing depicts—like Stein's "continuous present"—the processes of "beginning again and again within a very small thing" ("Composition" 32). In Loy's long poem "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose," "New life" marks not a clear point of origin, but

rather “inserts itself into continuity” (*LaLB* 153). By tracing the beginnings of the poem’s heroine in her birth, her conception, and the story of her parents, Roberts contends that “Anglo-Mongrels” represents the search for origins, but like *Tristram Shandy*, the search for the origin before the origin tends to unsettle rather than confirm it (104). To the same effect, allusions to birth are imbricated with references to decay; here again, professed creations carry with them the mark of their entropy. For instance, references to the womb are not limited to the portrayal of birth and the beginning of life, but also bring about decay, for its cosmic presence radiates towards the newborn and “erodes her / with psychic larva” (*LaLB* 146-47). “[L]arva” suggests at once the corrosive substance that eats away at the child and also a new life-form, the psychic spawn of the womb that paradoxically embodies a parasitical beginning while causing the womb’s physical offspring to decay. Indeed this destabilisation of the origin is also inscribed in the heroine’s very name: “Ova”. Ova, whose name alludes to the moment of her conception, depicts not a point located firmly in the past but a living and ageing person (the poem narrates Ova’s coming of age) who lives in the continuing present.

Moreover, Ova’s private adventures are embroiled with metaphorical references to birth—to eggs and contractions and beginnings—as well as death. In this way, Ova’s life is depicted as a series of multiple beginnings. For instance, the section titled “Contraction” depicts not a spasm of childbirth, but the jolting experience of a child struggling to come to terms with adult society: “She is contracting / to the enveloping / spasm of uneasiness / in which she is involved with the big bodies”. This struggle climaxes with a most violent symbol of death, for while Ova is standing in the garden, “An egg is smashed / a horrible / aborted contour / a yellow murder / in a vicious pool” (*LaLB* 164). The egg echoes the protagonist’s own name and also the ovum, the cell from which life springs—a beginning. And yet the smashing of the egg confronts Ova with death, not only of the egg, but with the spectre of her own demise, since through the close association of the meanings of both “egg” and “Ova,” she recognises the symbol of her own violent smashing. The irony of both the association of “Ova” with the destruction of an egg, and the title of this section—“Contraction”—with its

subject—the witnessing of one’s own metaphorical death—suggests an inextricability of life and death.

The first stirrings of Ova’s consciousness or self-identification are similarly described in terms of birthing, and therefore signal a kind of beginning again imbued in decay. In “Ova Begins to Take Notice,” Ova’s awakening consciousness becomes aware of the self as she watches with curiosity the play of prismatic light against her father’s physic bottles: “Her entity / she projects / into these sudden colours / for self-identification / is lost in recurrent annihilation” (*LaLB* 137-38). The beginning of her consciousness thus marks a continual death—an ending that is ironically “recurrent” and therefore incessantly starts again every time she locates an image of herself in an inanimate other (in this instance, refracted light). The entanglement of beginnings and endings—and also with spatial splitting—is further enacted in the structure of the lines themselves, for one line of logic ends with the same phrase that another begins with: “her entity she projects into these sudden colours for self-identification” and “for self-identification is lost in recurrent annihilation”. The meaning of “for self-identification” is therefore wrenched in two, and it begins and ends two different lines of logic. This double meaning further suggests that as Ova isolates an image of herself (a tropological birth of self-consciousness), this image undergoes annihilation.

Loy’s short story, “The Stomach,” similarly depicts the productive power of the entanglement of birth and death for the generation of art. Yet, while terms of death and life are both eminently present in “The Stomach,” they do not achieve the same level of entanglement as they do in “Anglo-Mongrels” or “Parturition,” but rather remain distinct for most of the narrative, and therefore do not create a sense of the cyclical but instead examine how the reification of boundaries between life and death stultifies artistic production. As in “Contraction” in “Anglo-Mongrels,” connections to childbirth here are implied and symbolic rather than literal. Although both the title of “The Stomach” and its opening line (“[t]here sat the mother”) suggest a literal connection to birth, the mother in question is aged—“twitching,” “wheezing” and with a “blind eye [that] floated like a decaying fish”—and is approaching death (*Stories* 104). The initial expectation of a maternal body is thus supplanted by a rapid sequence of death-

like imagery, and in the opening passage of the text, birth and death are not intermingled. Rather, one replaces the other. The art that emerges from “The Stomach” is therefore not characterised by process and temporality, but rather stultification and monotony.

Indeed, the stomach of the title does not belong to a mother at all; while there is a mother in the narrative, the stomach belongs to her daughter, Virginia Cosway, and the reproductive processes that are generated from her stomach are metaphorical—her stomach produces art, not babies. This metaphorical connection is reiterated throughout the text. Virginia is chosen by a sculptor to be his model, and it is in this context that her stomach takes on its protruding, rounded form: she poses with a “tilted pelvis,” (105) and her pose thereby deliberately emulates the bodily contours of a pregnant woman. Moreover, the moment in which the pose is conceived is underscored with the suggestion of a sexual interaction, for the artist “had taken her fingers between two of his own and slid them further down and apart upon her hip” (105). This results in a continual birthing and re-birthing of art; Virginia performs her “Hispano-abdominal ceremony” for functions (at auctions, birthdays, or for private viewings) “as if enticing aesthetic culture into her womb to be reborn for her audience” (106). Armstrong argues that “‘The Stomach’ demythologizes modernism’s myths of sexual conquest and bodily origins,” myths centred upon “the male aesthetic which founds itself on the objectified female body” (*Modernism* 117-18). Yet, this dismantlement of bodily origins is not straightforward and demands further unravelling; although the stomach becomes “an arbiter of aesthetics,” (*Stories* 107) and these aesthetics are born again and again through the repeated performances of the pose, the aesthetic value of these performances and the obscure nature of their origin are embedded in a tone of irony. Both artist and art object are presented as caricatures, as ludicrous mimics of aesthetic production that thrust their stomachs out at birthday parties, rather than authentic, creative entities. There is, accordingly, a difference between the kind of beginning again through time—that which cancels the origin, is embedded in continued progress, and does not entail a temporal looping—and mere repetition in the case of “The Stomach,” or the negation of time, as occurs in *Insel*.

Moreover, while the origin—the moment of quasi-sexual engagement between Virginia and the sculptor—becomes increasingly distant (through redeployments and reiteration) it is nonetheless clearly identifiable in the text. And each reiteration of the pose is identical; rather than colouring every performance with evidence of artistic development (that is, of something *new*), which would result in a concurrent citation of a past series of performances and generation of new art that obscures the origin by being both originary and reiterative at once, each performance remains a precise replication of the first. Thus Virginia and her stomach represent artistic laziness, the stagnant and habitual rehashing of the same performance, rather than aesthetic production, for her art does not develop over time. For Bergson, habit, the “automatic setting in motion of a mechanism adapted to the circumstances,” is similarly unproductive (*Matter* 87). There are two kinds of memory for Bergson, the first located in duration, called upon voluntarily in order to apply representations of the past intelligently to present circumstances. Conversely, there is habit, characterised by its mechanic and automatic nature, “stored up in a mechanism which is set in motion as a whole by an initial impulse, in a closed system of automatic movements which succeed each other in the same order and, together, take the same length of time” (89-90). The mechanism that Bergson refers to here is the body; when the body operates according to the logic of habit, it is rendered a machine. Virginia’s art, rather than invoking the memory of the past in order to confront the present moment in a new and intelligent way, is a closed circuit of automatic movement. Armstrong is right—“The Stomach” does demythologise origins, but not because it affirms the usefulness of this kind of repetition; rather, it represents the solidification of a body into stasis. Virginia’s stasis is twofold: not only is her performance unable to progress or evolve, but her very body is also stiffened through repetition, and the “stomach in its age was become fibrous and rigid” (*Stories* 108). She embodies not an evolution that elides origins and finality, but a reiterated immobile moment that fails to offer anything new.

Like her formulation of the irritant, Loy’s exploration of life’s impulses casts the motile body as one that is inextricable from the propulsion of time. Like her evocation of space, Loy does not follow Bergson in any strict way in her

exploration of *élan vital*; although allusions to decay enable her to embed birth within a sense of process rather than reproduction, to colour her depiction of birth in terms of life-forces and continuity that pushes every experience onward in a progression, Bergson himself rarely mentions death in *Creative Evolution*. The deathly is more often invoked as a counterpoint to *durée*, where Bergson denotes how the intellect resists the experience of real life by finding refuge in abstraction and an “eternity of death” (*Introduction* 49), or as oppositional to the energy of *élan vital*, that is, when the vital force entropies and descends into matter (*Creative* 245). Loy’s writing is thus singular divergent insofar as death is not merely a metaphor for that which is oppositional to *durée*, but is a powerful incarnation of temporality’s pervasiveness and its entanglement with the bodily: she litters her poetry with the traces of corpses and detritus in order to portray the inherent movement of life that is “the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances” (*Creative* 4). Her depiction of the embodiment of renewal and death reveals the way in which productive bodies move through a kind of time “which gnaws on things, and leaves on them the mark of its tooth” (*Creative* 46).

The first three chapters of this thesis have thus set up “mobility”—both across space and through time—as a principle that organises the representation of bodies in Loy’s writing, as well as the operations of language. The final two chapters consider how this aesthetic is inscribed upon specific representations of the “modern” body. Chapter Four build upon this chapter by arguing that Loy’s response to the presence of mechanical bodies in modernist art is deeply inflected by her understanding of time and movement, for while the machine body might have access to movement, this is not movement through duration but, like Loy’s “Somnambulist,” a shuddering in place. Moreover, it is movement that is not intrinsic, but which is directed by external controls. Thus, Loy’s engagement with representations of technology in modernist art can be read in terms of her articulation of the inherent nature of embodied, temporal movement.

Chapter Four: Manipulating Bodies, or, The Woman that Ticks

The ability to move is a defining feature of freedom in Loy's poetics, and it is movement that both women and aesthetics must therefore demand in order to break free from controlling forces. I have thus far set motility up as an aesthetic intention, charted how it is understood by Loy in a way that is in complex negotiation with Futurism, Victorianism, and most notably Bergsonism. I have proposed that mobility operates in the very space of the text, marking it as a site of resistance against limitation and stasis. Moreover, I have demonstrated that this motility is not dislocated from temporality but embedded in it, and that this is a condition of the body's access to creative production. These final two chapters will interrogate how this aesthetic is inscribed upon particular representations of the modern body, and specifically, how her engagement with technology clarifies what kinds of embodied motility are the most productive.

This chapter examines how technology's presence in Loy's writing complicates the productivity of "movement" in her poetics. Loy identifies dangerous similarities between the domestication of bodies in conservative, traditional spheres, and those of modern artistic movements, which—although dressed up in the discourses of modernity and technology—equally sought to exercise control. Particularly at stake in this chapter are representations of the machine-woman: she is, outwardly, a powerful embodiment of the "new" woman, and yet as Loy's poetry reveals, neither the machine-woman's power nor her movements are her own. Rather, she is directed from the outside, and her capacity for movement does not bestow her with lived or artistic freedom. Further, mechanical movement in Loy's poetry is trapped in a temporal loop, unable to progress through time, and is, accordingly, not productive at all. Thus, although the machine body does not appear to be literally confined in space like Loy's "Ladies in an Aviary," its occlusion from subjective and temporal movement amounts to the same nature of entrapment.

It is therefore not sufficient that a body merely moves: it must do so through *durée* and with agency. The machine-body permits neither of these, and is therefore inherently static. Indeed, Loy's understanding of temporal movement, argued for in Chapter Three, is critical in the navigation of Loy's complex

engagement with technology. Mechanically altering the body or manipulating its plasticity to effect bodily change does not fall under Loy's definition of embodied "movement". As such, neither the female body figured as machine, nor the surgical and prosthetic renovations of the body, engender authentic movement or action, but instead cast the body as dislodged from time and as an object to be acted *upon*. This chapter argues that for Loy, the body is restricted—and freedom accordingly thwarted—when it is rendered mechanical, as it becomes inherently incapable of motility. With the amalgamation of body and machine, freedom for movement and action becomes, for Loy, an intrinsic impossibility.

While Loy's exaltation of movement, cultivated first during her early adult life in Florence, is imperative to the development of her aesthetics. This aesthetic continues to be articulated in response to technological advance and its manifestations in New York Dada. Loy worked closely with Dada while she lived in New York in 1917. Within days of her arrival, Loy was introduced to the Arensberg Salon by Frances Stevens, through which she became acquainted with key Dada figures such as Marcel Duchamp, Henri-Pierre Roché, Francis Picabia, Man Ray, and the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven (Burke *Becoming Modern* 213-14). Loy's involvement in their activities was extensive: in addition to her regular attendance at the salons, she participated in the Exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists (in which Duchamp displayed his infamous *Fountain*); wrote for both issues of *The Blind Man*, including the second issue which launched an impassioned defence of *Fountain*; and accompanied the Arensberg group to *The Blind Man's Ball* (to which she arrived dressed as a lampshade), ending the night squeezed into Duchamp's bed with three others (245-46)—an event that was memorialised in Loy's "O Marcel . . . Otherwise I Have Also Been to Louise's" (*LaLB* 84-85).⁶²

Like Futurism, Dada had a profound impact on Loy's artistic practice. Her interest in masquerade, with the concurrent creation and destabilisation of a public persona, has considerable continuances with Dada, according to Marissa Januzzi. She argues that although the "embrace between Loy and Dada" was "short-lived," Dada had a lasting impact on Loy's career, which is evidenced in

⁶² Originally published in *The Blindman* 2.

Loy's interest in contemporary fashion, her tirade against female virtue in "Feminist Manifesto"—which, Januzzi points out, was written before Loy met any members of Dada but nonetheless has shared interests in troubling feminine decorum—and her resistance against traditional poetic verse ("Mina Loy's Objective" 597, 592-93). Most notable, however, is Loy's and Duchamp's mutual interest in the constructed nature of public image. Januzzi suggests that "of all Duchamp's productions, none assimilates his theoretical and aesthetic interests closer to Loy's own than the documented antics and multiple appearances of *Rose*" (600).⁶³ Indeed, concern with identity construction pervades the salons with which Loy was associated; as Susan Fillin-Yeh contends, the Stieglitz and Arensberg circles were both "predisposed" to viewing artistic identity not as solid, but as "of the moment" (34-35). The assertion that Loy's public image is both carefully assembled and destabilised is now familiar. Conover details how in Paris in the 1920s, rumours circulated that Loy the woman was a constructed fiction. Her self-erasure, he suggests, was "Duchampian" ("Introduction" xii-xiii). To the same effect, Januzzi locates continuances between Loy and Freytag-Loringhoven. The composition of Freytag-Loringhoven's *memoires* between 1923 and 1925 coincided precisely with the serialisation of Loy's "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose," and both, Januzzi contends, "announce their subjects in the paradigmatic moment when the creative daughter escapes the rigged seductions of paternal design". As such, both artists are interested in the birth of their own image and in aesthetics that are centred upon "self-production" ("Mina Loy's Objective" 595).

Yet, while Loy found much in common with New York Dada and its insistence on the instable and mutable nature of public identity, she did not share its enthusiasm for the female machine. As technology rapidly advanced at the beginning of the twentieth century, artists and scientists alike began to experiment with the possibilities for merging human and machine. In modernist artistic practice, this included the work of New York Dada, and technological

⁶³ *Rose Sélavy* was the name of one of Duchamp's pseudonyms, but *Sélavy* represented more than simple renaming, for Duchamp and Man Ray collaborated to produce and circulate photos of *Sélavy* (Duchamp in drag). Fillin-Yeh argues that these photos were not merely portraits, but "agents in the construction of new artistic, cultural and sexual meanings, even of personal narrative" (33).

experimentation can be identified not only in new technological mediums—such as cinema and photography—but also in representations of the mechanical in visual art and poetry. Loy’s vision of the embodied woman evolved with, or rather against, the new direction in which these conceptions of the body were moving; namely, the transition of the bodily towards the mechanical and the plastic. In retort, Loy portrays a series of machine bodies in her poetry whose existences are vacant of meaning and agency, and that are temporally dislocated. Some of these poems were written while Loy was still in recent contact with Dada, for instance “Human Cylinders” (1917), “Der Blinde Junge” (1922) and “All the Laughs in one Short Story by McAlmon” (c. 1923).⁶⁴ Others, in particular *Insel* (c. 1930s), “Brain” (c. late 1930s–early 1940s)⁶⁵ and “Impossible Opus” (1961) were written significantly later. Therefore, while Loy’s depictions of the mechanical body may have been initiated by her contact with Dada, they were not circumscribed to this period. Rather, they span four decades and reveal an ongoing interest in the way in which the mechanical body precluded volatility.

The mechanical body in Loy’s writing is restrained and unproductive. In her cultural studies analysis of the role of technology in twentieth-century literature, Goody proposes that the mechanical “confines and defines those who fall outside the privilege of normative subjectivity” in poems like “Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots,” “Magasins du Louvre,” and “Crab Angel”. In “Songs to Joannes,” the occurrence of mechanical references takes on a different function, according to Goody, as it figures a kind of lopsided modern (technological) romance that is set against a mechanical backdrop—sky rockets and lanterns rather than moons and stars—wherein the man is a clockwork mechanism to which the woman is not paced. The results are dismal. The relationship is a spectacular failure, and the speaker is burdened by loss and melancholy brought forth by her inability to have a child. Goody argues that the “barren conclusion” of the affair is reinforced by mechanical references and a “vocabulary of sterility” (145). Nonetheless, she reads Loy’s position towards the machine-body as ambivalent overall (*Technology* 145–46). For instance, *Insel* represents for Goody a less reproachful portrayal of the technological, as its eponymous protagonist is

⁶⁴ For details on composition date, see note 5.

⁶⁵ See Conover’s “Textual Notes” to *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, 327.

not pure automaton, but rather is a communicative subject infused with technological power akin to electromagnetism (146). Viewed in terms of a dialectic between stasis and movement, I argue that Loy's stance towards the machine-body is condemnatory rather than equivocal, but where Loy's censure of the technological is complicated (including within *Insel*), it is because the technological nature of the body is not mechanical but rather atomic. The atomic, unlike the machine-body, enables motility and temporality, a point that will be taken up at length in the final chapter.

Critical to my analysis is the parallel between Bergson's account of the operations of habit and reflex, which are performed automatically rather than consciously, and the directed and unconscious movements of the machine-body. Yet, while there are significant differences between Bergson's and Loy's interest in the mechanical—Loy portrays bodies that are literally mechanical, whereas Bergson employs the mechanical as a metaphor for an unthinking existence—there are nonetheless striking affinities between them. Specifically, Bergson's account of habit connotes not only unconsciousness, but also, by extension, the tendency of the intellect to force spatiality and stasis upon intension, and to accordingly misapprehend experience:

Must we then give up fathoming the depths of life? Must we keep to that *mechanistic* idea of it which the understanding will always give us—an idea necessarily artificial and symbolic, since it makes the total activity of life shrink to the form of a certain human activity which is only a partial and local manifestation of life, a result or by-product of the vital process? (*Creative* xii, italics mine)

Bergson's incessant references to the machine, like Loy's machine bodies, depict that which is wrenched out of the flux of time and thrust into the stasis of repetition. For Bergson, "mechanistic idea[s]"—that is, non-spatial experiences that are understood in spatial terms—are artificial symbols of life, divorced from "vital process". Loy thus takes what is an abstract philosophical deployment of the terms "mechanistic" and "automatic," and pursues their consequences for embodied freedom by depicting them as concrete images of the mechanical body.

Loy's criticism of the mechanical is not limited to the machine body, but extends to the prosthetic body: the organic body that is technologically

“ameliorated” and consequently becomes an amalgamation of awkward and disjointed parts. Loy’s engagement with the machine thus encompasses a scathing assessment of the toll of the war that revokes her earlier, Marinettian enthusiasm for technological violence. In order to expose Loy’s cynicism towards the capabilities of surgical amelioration to stay the body’s time-bound, inherent and volatile movements, this chapter examines her representations of prosthesis in parallel to her poems on old age. Loy’s attitude towards prosthesis as expressed in her poetry is inconsonant with her commercial designs that purport to reshape the body in a way that defies the effects of time. Indeed, I argue that “Auto-Facial-Construction” and similar product designs diverge markedly from the body that Loy offers up in her poetry because of their purpose: proposals for body-shaping products reveal discrete, momentary attempts to make a living, each of which are quickly abandoned, rather than sustained efforts to propound an aesthetic belief that underscores the breadth of her writing. Intrinsic and temporal corporeal motility remains beyond the reach of commercial body-shaping products, such as “Auto-Facial-Construction”.

4.1 Modernism’s machines

Technology’s radical import for modernist art has long been acknowledged.⁶⁶ Its impact on artistic production was theorised by Walter Benjamin as early as 1936, and it was made art’s object by Futurism, Vorticism and Dada. Technology also

⁶⁶ For example, Danus (2002) argues that “modernist aesthetics from Marcel Proust to James Joyce is an index of a technologically mediated crisis of the senses” (1). Sawelson-Gorse’s edited collection *Women in Dada* (1998), considers the implications of the technological body of Dada for gender: in particular, see essays by Morgan, Turner, and Zabel’s. Armstrong’s *Modernism, Technology and the Body* (1998) argues that modernism viewed the body as a “locus of anxiety” in which technology could productively intervene (4). Duffy (2009) evaluates how speed, particularly in the wake of the automobile, was first conceived of as a pleasure, and the way in which this was politically motivated. Goody’s *Technology, Literature and Culture* (2011) contends that technology is inextricable from human culture, and that it “makes us just as much as we make it” (1). She interrogates the way in which Anglo-American literature—including modernism—has engaged with technology over the last century, arguing that its increasing impact on literature has resulted in technological representations in text, but also a necessity to consider texts not as a “natural” expression that is severable from the machine, but as “firmly inserted into the machinic interconnections of a technological world of production, destruction, replications, malfunction, communication, transmission and reception” (2).

offered up new artistic mediums in the form of photography—artists such as Alfred Stieglitz and Man Ray were instrumental in photography’s aesthetic legitimisation—and cinema, propounded particularly by Man Ray, Luis Buñuel, Fernand Léger and Eisenstein. The impact of these new technologies was not restricted to new media; as Susan McCabe argues, the methods of cinematic technique can be traced in avant-garde poetry. She draws similarities between cinema’s deployment of fragmentation, montage, and the “subordination of plot to somatic, disjunctive rhythms” in poetry, and designates Gertrude Stein, whose use of “succession and variation, amnesia and movement” mirrors that of early experiments in film, as an exemplar (431, 430).

Out of modernist investigations of the technological age arose questions into the relationship between the machine and Woman. While for the Futurists, Woman foils the new advances of the machine, other avant-garde works are pervaded by the image of the mechanical woman. This feminine mechanisation is portrayed to varying degrees. In some cases, her mechanisation is total, as for example in Francis Picabia’s *Fille Née sans Mère*, an illustration of a component of a steam engine. The figure in the painting has no human semblance, and its title denotes that her origins are technological rather than organic or maternal. However, not all representations of the mechanical woman erase her human likeness so completely. For example, Léger’s film *Ballet Mécanique* forges connections between female bodies and the mechanical objects, and yet unlike Picabia’s *Fille Née sans Mère*, the women clearly resemble women. Rather, the mechanical is evoked through movement, rhythm and repetition. Katherine Murphy’s movement on the swing at the film’s opening pendulates repetitively back and forth in a way that mimics the ball that swings across the screen minutes later. This association is further emphasised by the shots that cut between the swinging ball and the woman, whose image is turned upside-down. The woman’s swinging becomes dizzying, and any ties that her (already mechanical) movements had to a realistic portrayal in the film’s opening are undermined: it is no longer the picture of a woman that is most prominent—for she is rendered somewhat alien by the flipped image—but the movement itself. That is, the woman in the film becomes pure mechanical motion. Indeed, this automated quality of movement is

radically different from the kind that Loy venerates, for it renders the body an object to be controlled, and relegates it to repetition.

Loy resists the reduction of woman to the machine, and her poetry depicts the marriage of body and mechanism as a macabre one divorced from authentic movement. Her articulation of the machine-body responds in part to her engagement with New York Dada. Dada was profoundly influenced by new technologies and investigated the intersections between the machine and the body in their art. From Picabia's portrayal of women as mechanical objects, to Man Ray's photography of fragments of female bodies and their superimposition on the mechanical (for example, the photograph of Lee Miller's eye stuck to the end of a metronome in *Object to be Destroyed*) and Millie Wilson's *Pipette*, the soft interior of which is lined with fur and invites the onlooker, according to Margaret A. Morgan, to "insert a finger or three," (60) mechanical representations of the female body permeate Dada. Barbara Zabel argues that while New York Dada embraced the machine partially in order to assert the modernity of its art, this mechanical work was specifically masculine and its objects female:

In order to validate their art—and to valorize themselves—artists embraced a machine aesthetic whose attributes of efficiency, structure, and construction derived from the engineered environment, from structures like bridges, factories, and skyscrapers. Artists accommodated themselves to this changing environment and to new myths of American identity by appropriating basic principles from that manmade environment. My use here of the term 'manmade' is intentional, for although individual machines were often characterized as female, the engineered environment was largely masculinized.

(23)

Like Futurist art, these exaltations of the machine were typically gendered and reductive for women, as the female body became the penetrable object of the modern, technological metropolis, and yet was largely excluded from participating in its production. The machine may have marked a work as modern, but its terrain was circumscribed to masculine imaginings. Indeed, as Elizabeth Hutton Turner shows, articles written in the early twentieth century in response to Dadaist artworks express recognition of this double tendency: describing Picabia's *Portrait d'une Jeune Fille Américaine dans l'État du Nudité* (a woman portrayed as a spark-plug with "Forever" inscribed along her side), the *New York Evening Sun* wrote that it

depicted the hard, unchangeable reality of the American girl without possibility, while another article claimed that it bespoke Picabia's enthusiasm for the scientific spirit of America (Turner 13). Mechanical representations of femininity thus embraced a modern technological environment while rendering the body objectified and disempowered.

In contrast, it could be argued that women's participation in New York Dada challenges any straight-forward relegation of woman to art-object. For instance, Zabel asserts that the androgynous shape of the "New Woman" (26) in Picabia's *Jeune Fille Americaine*, with its straight-edged figure devoid of conventional feminine characteristics, signals a breakdown of gendered positions and thus represents a threat: this liberated machine-woman may be out to seize control. Yet I propose that the "New Woman," stripped down to her functions, is not liberated in such a ready manner. Although she can be read as the harbinger of modernity, wielding the threat of technological control and ruthless efficiency, she is equally vulnerable to being controlled—or *used*—as a tool by her inventor; she is at risk of being commodified for male consumption. Like Zabel, Goody also complicates the assertion of latent misogyny in Dada's female machines. In "Cyborgs, Women and New York Dada," she cites the involvement of both Loy and the Baroness Else Von Freytag-Loringhoven as proof that Dada, at least to a certain extent, affirmed women as active subjects who produce art rather than as passive muses. Goody's article focuses particularly on the Baroness, whose representation of the denaturalised and prosthetic body "mockingly enacts and undermines the phallogocentric folly of discrete and original being" (94). However, she also notes that male participants of New York Dada sought to reify this original being, and that the Baroness thus uncovers the limits of the feminine cyborg; her male contemporaries endeavoured to contain the machine-woman's potential and thus used her "as a vehicle for their fears about their own gendered identity in the modern technosphere" (95). As such, the Dadaist feminine cyborg came to embody an acceptable rewriting of modern femininity that was "frozen in a pose of un-becoming" which did not threaten masculine individuation (96). Goody does not examine Loy's representation of the mechanical and prosthetic body in her paper, but I suggest that Loy deploys images of the artificial body in a different way to the Baroness, for while she similarly exposes the limits of the

technological body, she reveals less optimism for its subversive effects. Whereas the Baroness productively performs her embodiment of “a desiring machine,” (94) intersections of the bodily and the mechanical for Loy result in stasis, boredom or horror. Despite the possible fecundity of the female machine, its status as an object of masculine production renders it a cog devoid of agency.

Indeed, even the machine-woman who brandishes violence and control may prove to be merely a component part in larger designs over which she has no authority or knowledge. One such example of an early twentieth-century machine-woman who appears to embody terrible power is Maria the *maschinenmensch* in the 1927 silent film, *Metropolis*, and yet, she is merely a tool to be deployed in larger plans over which she has no control. The film depicts a dystopian future in which the oppressed working classes struggle against an autocratic elite led by an unsympathetic Frederson; he envisions the construction of a prototype for a female robot that will eventually replace the proletariat and more efficiently complete their work. Born in the darkest recesses of the city, in a windowless house with only a single wall separating it from Metropolis’s catacombs, the gynoid first appears, tall and harrowing, beneath an inverted pentagram scrawled on the wall behind her. Frederson sends his robot to flood the workers’ city in order to incite them towards a more violent revolution that would justify their extermination. However, although the *maschinenmensch* may be capable of unleashing violence upon the city’s residents—indeed she even appears to enjoy it—without agency or self-awareness, this power cannot be properly attributed to her: the gynoid is an instrument of Frederson’s insidious manipulations. Nonetheless, it is she who is figured throughout the film as demonic. In addition to recurring images of pentagrams, the *maschinenmensch* ascends Frederson’s party atop an alter adorned with statues of serpents and dragons in a moment that is prophesised as “*die apokalypse*” she is hailed as an embodiment of biblical evil, “*an deren füsse sich alle sünden heften*”;⁶⁷ and she, rather than her creator or the man who plotted the actions in which she was a part, becomes the object against which the citizens retaliate, and is burnt at the stake.

⁶⁷ “who is responsible for all this sin”.

The female machine might therefore be powerful, but this power is often not her own. Paul Haviland's description of the machine in a 1915 edition of *291* is another such example:

Man made the machine in his own image. She has limbs that act; lungs which breathe; a heart which beats; a nervous system through which runs electricity. . . . She submits to his will but he must direct her activities. (7-8)

The machine for Haviland is gendered female, and is to be appropriated and directed. Viewed through this lens, the woman-machine hybrid does not engender a threat, but rather is rendered devoid of agency. Loy registered the potential perils of imagining the woman as machine, and she admonished against such a ready equation. Moreover, the dissolution of feminine attributes in the machine was not a subversive quality for Loy, and in this respect, her understanding of the androgyny was fundamentally different from other modernist women such as Virginia Woolf, who viewed the androgynous mind as imperative to effective writing in *A Room of One's Own* (91-92). Instead, woman's sexuality is inseparable from her body, and the suggestion that it can be displaced from the body and transplanted into the machine leads Morgan to ask sardonically: "What . . . constitutes the beautiful woman? Is she functional? Does she tick?" (68).

For Loy, woman does not "tick," and thus Dada's impact has tangible limits. In 1917—the year after she arrived in New York and joined the Arensberg Salon—Loy published "Human Cylinders" (*L&LB* 40-41). The poem depicts mechanised humans in coitus, a dismal event that amounts to no excitement. The couple themselves are devoid of human feeling: they eat "without tasting", talk "without communion," and fail to understand the significance of their "two miseries". The bodies are two identical components in a machine; whereas Picabia's machine is at least titled "*fille*," the female machine-body in "Human Cylinders" loses all traces of her femininity, and becomes indistinguishable from the machine-man. To be sure, Loy traps the machine-man in the same cycle of objectification and monotony as the machine-woman, and one could argue that she therefore undermines the gendered hierarchy of female machine and male controller. Nonetheless, the stripping of femininity in "Human Cylinders" does not represent the menace of liberated woman; rather, her movements are predictable and cyclical. The monotonous tone of the poem and its descriptions

of repetition suggest that the machine-body does not win for herself agency—only boring sex. Intercourse is merely the collision of particles, a process of “human cylinders / Revolving in the enervating dusk” and the “lucid rush-together of automatons,” and it has nothing to do with flesh. It is figured as an empty space—an “abyss”—where there should be a “Concordance of respiration” but where there is only “conception” without “expression”. The future of this couple is endlessly repetitive; as the poem circles upon itself with the regular repetition of “enervating dusk,” the machines similarly procreate over and over, without reflection, merely to further the species. Goody reads the bodies in “Human Cylinders” as a “mechanical union between two ultramodern bodies,” a modern relationship minus sentimentality. Read in this way, the two bodies “resist entropic decline” by persisting in their revolutions despite their enervating backdrop (*Technology* 145). In contrast, I propose that the machines embody this entropy, and that the enervating dust (and dusk) of the poem symbolises not that which the machines conquer, but an appropriately regressive background that is reflective of the machines’ being. To be sure, Goody does note that despite the promise of the cylinders’ mechanical love, Loy “ultimately rejects the ‘solution’ offered by science”; written against the backdrop of World War One, science has the ominous capacity to “Destroy the universe / With a solution” (Goody 145; Loy *LoLB* 41). Nonetheless, I read “Human Cylinders” as a far more acerbic portrayal of the hopelessness of the technobody.

In response to the representations of women in Victorian and Florentine domesticity, Futurism, and Dada, Loy is faced with equally unsavoury choices for representing the body, none of which embody real motility: she is either corseted woman, vehemently safeguarding her virginity while she waits for a husband; a maternal ditch—the foil to Futurism’s technological leaps and defined by stasis; or the machine, operated and controlled, devoid of human feeling, sexuality, and femininity. But “Human Cylinders” isolates a problem—one that connects the mechanical to finality—and thus begins to point to a solution, a way for bodies to leave aside their corsets without becoming mechanical components. Like machines, the bodies in the poem are only valuable for what they produce: in this instance, a child. In his manifesto, “Against *Amore* and Parliamentarianism”, Marinetti dreams of “of one day being able to create a mechanical son, the fruit of

pure will, a synthesis of all the laws that science is on the brink of discovering” (*Selected Writings* 75). However, the child in “Human Cylinders” is a “little whining beast” trying to “slink back to antediluvian burrow”. Rather than the modern man of speed and violence envisioned by Marinetti, this child whimpers and skulks; it crawls back to the safety of a “burrow” and to prehistoric time. Here, Goody reads “little whining beast” as an exemplar of human flesh that represents evolutionary regression from the machine (145), but I would argue that it is precisely the monotony of the machine bodies that results in such emaciation; indeed, the “whining beast” is the offspring of two machines. The machine—unlike the biological body with its ability to secrete, bleed and surpass its own limits—is not a process but a static object, and is meaningful only for the results it achieves and not the processes of actualisation. In this respect, the Futurist woman operates in the same way as the machine: her meaning is derived from her ability to beget strong Futurist sons, and outside of this primary function she is useless and obstructive. When the child of the “Human Cylinders” is born spineless and whimpering, the bodies of both parents are proven meaningless. Thus rather than look to function (an action which produces a planned and measurable result), Loy turns to process and movement itself.

The mechanical is evoked metaphorically by Bergson in order to stage a resistance to determinism and the occlusion of free will. Specifically, this occlusion hinges upon spatiality. In his discussion of determinist philosophy, Bergson argues that the presumption of a path that can lead to only one outcome is “puerile” and “clumsy,” for the very question of a path is only possible in retrospect (*Time* 182). The deployment of the “path” as a symbol for destiny is, moreover, fallacious because it depends on spatiality that renders it “mechanical”:

All the difficulty arises from the fact that [determinists] picture the deliberation under the form of an oscillation in space, while it really consists in a dynamic progress in which the self and its motives, like real living beings, are in a constant state of becoming. The self, infallible when it affirms its immediate experiences, feels itself free and says so; but, as soon as it tries to explain its freedom to itself, it no longer perceives itself except by a kind of refraction through space. Hence a symbolism of a mechanical kind, equally incapable of proving, disproving, or illustrating free will. (*Time*)

The lapse into spatial symbols that results in determinist arguments is therefore not a reflection of experience, but an imposition of space necessitated by the process of retrospective reasoning. The “mechanical” here refers both to the spatiality of the symbolism which cannot attend to the flux of experience, and also to the way that it operates; that is, the path functions to direct an action toward an inevitable consequence in a mechanical way. To be sure, the mechanical is conceived of differently by both Bergson and Loy; Bergson engages the trope of mechanism to refer to a description of human tendencies, and not to the artistic replacement of organic bodies by machine bodies. Thus, whereas Bergson evokes the mechanical in order to denote a particular kind of reactionary behaviour, Loy’s critique of mechanical tendencies takes a more literal form; it takes what is deployed in philosophy as a metaphor for unthinkingness, and draws out its implications through concrete images of machinery. Nonetheless, for both poet and philosopher, it is a recurring image that connotes negativity, artificiality, and a misapprehension of time. In both instances, it also occludes access to freedom.

Indeed, references to the mechanical, to mechanism, and to automatons pervade Bergson’s works, and these have predominantly negative connotations that are anchored in loss of freedom. For example, In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson uses the mechanical to posit that dynamism, which “starts from the idea of voluntary activity, given by consciousness,” is opposed to mechanism, which “never gets out of the narrow circle of necessity within which it at first shut itself up”. He further argues that when space usurps the heterogeneous inner life of a person, “automatism will cover over freedom” and that the transition from *durée* to clock-time results in a shift “from free activity to conscious automatism” (140, 277, 239-40). Bergson uses the mechanical to describe the errors of determinist philosophy, for free actions, when conceived of in terms of geometry (that is, alternate *paths*), do not “satisfy common sense, because, being essentially a devotee of mechanism, it loves clear-cut distinctions, those which are expressed by sharply defined words or by different positions in space”—indeed, it is the setting side by side of inner states as if in space that creates “a mechanical conception of the self” (176-177, 170-71). In *Matter and Memory*, the mechanical is often invoked in order to describe an unconscious or passive mode of being; perception without attention, for example, is passive, and is thus accompanied by

a “mechanical reaction” (163). An example of this is walking “mechanically” through a town, which occurs when the path is known, and when the subject no longer needs to consider his or her interaction with their surroundings (110). In these examples, the mechanical operates tropologically to depict the way in which habit dampens experience. In *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, this mechanical metaphor is actualised in the body, and the result is ridicule. The mechanical thus operates as a way of producing comedy: “*The attitudes, gestures and movements of the human body are laughable in exact proportion as that body reminds us of a mere machine*” (15, italics in original). The “stiff and starched formality” imposed upon life in comedy is referred to as both a “mechanism” and as “automatism” (22-23). These examples are by no means exhaustive, but they demonstrate the regularity with which the mechanical was deployed as an archetype for unconsciousness, stasis, repetition, and the absence of free will. In addition to her interactions with Futurism and New York Dada, Loy’s reading of Bergson may reasonably have aided in shaping her understanding of the mechanical body, for although Loy and Bergson have different ways of connecting the mechanical to the body, both do so for similar ends; namely, the representation of immobility, unconsciousness and loss of freedom.

One exceptionally clear example of the affinity between Loy’s and Bergson’s invocations of the mechanical is in Loy’s “All the Laughs in One Short Story by McAlmon,” a posthumously published short story that depicts a woman, Yoland, laughing mechanically (*Stories* 219-20). As a result of its similarity to the noise made by a machine, Yoland’s laughter appears to be eerily inhuman and unthinking:

Yoland laughed harshly disdainful.
 And she smiled her glistening
 mechanically glamorous smile into his eyes
 was laughing her unlubricated
 laugh steadily now — — — —
 The jeer and taunt in her weird laugh — — —
 She laughed a warmer rusty
 chortle now
 She smiled sphinxly
 , and they shrilly shrieked laughter

— —voice was higher and more abandoned than
usual. It shrieked, but rustily mechanical rather than human.

Their jokes could not be heard
because of the laughter,

She gave an inebriated rasp of laughter (*Stories* 219)

Loy provides no explanation of why Yoland laughs; indeed, the noise that she produces drowns out the sound of the jokes, and so her laughter appears purposeless. Further, her laugh is more fitful than mirthful, for Loy later describes how it “is cleared of emotions,” and that even “Though her smile seemed directed at me I know she wasn’t even looking” (*Stories* 220). Throughout the text, line breaks sever sentences, and phrases end and start abruptly, cutting each other off, such that the language, like the laughter, stutters. This discontinuity disrupts any sense of continuing logic, while also echoing the sound of Yoland’s spasmodic snorts and shrieks. Moreover, there is no reference to any part of Yoland’s body with the exception of her mouth and teeth, and thus she is reduced to a clamorous mouth-piece. This also renders her sexuality as a machine-woman ghoulish, for although she is “cute,” she is also nothing more than lips and teeth that are “dry” and “unlubricated”. Yet, as a laughter-machine, Yoland is faulty, as she is “rusty” and “crackling” on one hand, and on the other, she becomes not as much the producer of laughter as its object (*Stories and Essays* 220). Indeed, if we follow Bergson’s assertion that “*The attitudes, gestures and movements of the human body are laughable in exact proportion as that body reminds us of a mere machine,*” (*Laughter* 15, italics in original) then it is Yoland who becomes the object of the joke.

Furthermore, there is no explanation of what Yoland is laughing at (except for the insinuation that she is performing for a man). Her laughter appears to be not only vacuous, but also as a discrete moment in time, isolated from causality and what came before. In this way, Yoland’s laughter is comparable to that of the hysterical woman of Eliot’s “Hysteria,” whose uncontrollable chortle heralds the abrupt opening of the poem, and so there is, analogously, no sense of causality. To further elucidate the inexplicable nature of the laughter, Loy’s story similarly begins abruptly, and indeed mid-sentence, with the line: “, and crackled a laugh that came on in sharp hard spurts of metallic sound” (*Stories* 219). Loy’s precipitous start dislocates the moment of laughter from its preceding moments, and thus like Eliot’s hysterical woman, Yoland is occluded from the movement of

time. In this way, Yoland moves like a machine; that is, she vibrates in place but does not travel through duration, and the incessant repetition of the word “laughter” reinforces this sense that the laughter, like the language, is unable to progress over time.

Similar machine-like feminine bodies are portrayed in Loy’s “Eros of Offices,”⁶⁸ which depicts women whose perfunctory tasks at work have rendered them automatons. The “Eros” of the title is ironic. Sexuality is absent from the bodies in the poem, and the only clues that the bodies are female are references to “nylons,” “stockings” and stenography, a profession that was largely associated with female workers in the early twentieth century, according to Friedrich Kittler, who attributes women’s success in the typing pool to their willing, metaphorical degradation into the machine (193-94). Loy’s assessment of this degradation is rather more damning than Kittler’s technologically characterised emancipation, for her poem underscores the inherent drudgery and boredom of the typist:

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| iterative Eternity | |
| of succession— | |
| of classification | |
| piling filing — ⁶⁹ | |
| stereography | due |
| days arid of change | duplicate |
| days— ⁷⁰ | |
| Drudgery of dates | duplicity |

⁶⁸ “Eros of Offices” exists only in draft form, and is scribbled on the back of a draft of “Brain”. It can be found in the same folder as “Brain” (Box 5, Folder 80) in YCAL, although curiously the contents of the archives only indicate that this folder contains drafts of the poem “Brain”. This folder also contains drafts of “Sunlight Somnambulist”. Apart from the fact that they have been grouped together in the same folder, there is no overlap in content between these three poems, and so I would argue that they are *separate*, and not different drafted versions of the same poem. The only clear similarity between “Eros” and Loy’s other poetry is in the line “aviators’ eyes,” which echoes her poem “Aviators’ Eyes”; yet other than this phrase, there is no other similarity between the two poems. Neither “Eros of Offices” nor “Sunlight Somnambulist” has been previously acknowledged. For an image of the original draft of the poem, see Appendix B.

⁶⁹ “piling filing” appears squeezed between lines in the margin, rather than in its own line. Thus “stenography” is written on the line directly below “of classification”.

⁷⁰ “days” appears squeezed between lines in the margin, rather than in its own line. Thus “Drudgery of dates” is written on the line directly below “days ~~arid of change~~”

into

Now there are no nylons— <?drudgery>⁷¹

Lifetime erosion of nerves
as one timeless run in a stocking—

<?Honing>

telephoning— Beauty on
Eros of offices the job—

iterative Eternity
piling ~~as~~ days
filing them away—

aviators' eyes

Loy makes particular use of the repetition of sounds in her language to echo the sense of repetition in the lives of the women; her rhyming of “piling” with “filing,” “honing” with “telephoning” and the half-rhyme of “eternity” with “stereography” and “drudgery” create a sense of replication of action through the replication of sound, as does her deployment of consonance in “iterative Eternity,” “succession— / of classification” and “due,” “days,” “Drudgery of dates,” and “duplicity”. Moreover, the formatting of the lines creates an illusion of at least two columns, and possibly three, as most of the words of the poem are aligned with one of three vertical lines. The main body of the poem is aligned along the centre line, and “iterative” and “aviators” appear deliberately placed along a margin further to the left. Some of the words sketched along the right-hand line may only be present because Loy was trialling possible words or lines to include in future drafts, in particular “due,” “days,” “~~duplicate~~,” “duplicity” and “drudgery,” as these words are tightly wrapped around the main body of text (see appendix B). Arguably then, it may not have been the intention that they remain to the right of the page. However, the lines “Beauty on / the job” seem more deliberately placed to the right: they do not tightly wrap the central text in the way that the previous words do, nor are they compressed between lines but are, instead, evenly spaced. The three vertical alignments suggest that the words of the poem have been “filed” and “classified”; its layout thus becomes a visual metaphor for the processes of the filing, piling, and classifying that the women

⁷¹ “into” appears squeezed between lines in the margin, rather than in its own line. Thus “Now there are no nylons” is written on the line directly below “Drudgery of dates”

undertake. Yet, the separation of words into columns is arbitrary—there appears to be no discernible formula for deciding which vertical line a particular word or phrase will adhere to. This is counter to the logic of classification in which objects are grouped according to patterns, and therefore suggests a sense of pointlessness to the working lives of these women. Even more poignant is the indication in the opening line that these cyclical actions are iterative; that is, the eternity to which these bodies are condemned is iterative, and thus fixed into place through repetition over time. On one hand, this evokes a long history of identical actions, all of which have reified the current mode of the automatons. But concurrently, it suggests that alternative presents were once possible, and that these were occluded by past actions—actions that at one time might have engendered a conscious decision. Loy implies here that her contemporaries are at a crossroads, and that decisions made in the modernist moment would have unchangeable consequences. The consequence of choosing to amalgamate human and machine, Loy admonishes, will result in the obliteration of choice itself.

The correlation between the twentieth-century typist, automatism, and unconsciousness is explored not only by Loy, but in other modernist writing. Gertrude Stein, for example, depicts human typewriters as trapped in repetition, and whose communication is reduced to meaningless noise:

Henriette was a French typewriter Yetta was a German typewriter and Mr.
House was an American typewriter and they all lived together, they all click
clacked together only Mr. House made the least noise.
They were all three machines and they worked every day and they had nothing
to say and that was the way it was. (*To Do* 31)

The machines communicate insofar as they “clacked together,” and yet with “nothing to say,” their speech consists only of identical and aimless clicks and clacks and is merely a series of empty mechanical sounds. Similarly, T. S. Eliot’s “Fire Sermon” in *The Waste Land* depicts a woman infected with the characteristics of an automaton, and this connection to the machine is implied through the absence of consciousness that manifests itself in repetitive bodily movement. She is introduced only as “The typist,” (III.222) and is thus characterised from the outset by her profession, its connection to the machine (the typewriter), and its sense of automatic, repetitive and dictated response. The

typist's proclivity for unconsciousness in her professional activities extends to her personal life: she piles her "combinations," and "lays out food in tins" (III.223-26) in a way that suggests unthinking routine. Her "young man carbuncular" hardly elicits an emotional response—although he readily secures her obedience (as one would from a machine); his advances are "unreproved, if undesired" when he directs her to bed (III.231-42). After his departure she is portrayed moving about her room:

"Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over."

When lovely woman stoops to folly and

Paces about her room again, alone,

She smooths her hair with automatic hand,

And puts a record on the gramophone (252-56)

She neither objects to nor enjoys the event but does as she is directed, and her single thought ("Well now that's done: and I'm glad that's over") reveals only clinical detachment. After the man leaves, her movements are no longer controlled externally, and so she returns to the quiet hum of her routine: pacing rhythmically around her room, she uses her "automatic hand" to smooth her hair and initiate another mechanism—her gramophone. Even the rhythm of the lines falls into regular iambs, parroting the regularity and predictability of her movements.

It is precisely this kind of unconscious repetition and amenability to control that Loy's poetry forewarns, for mechanised bodies are trapped in an existence in which movement through time and free will is occluded. This is similarly the case in Loy's "Brain," a poem that depicts a mechanical brain whose impulses are governed not by desire, but automatism. It is incapable of realising its choices, for each decision is undermined by the brain's automatic gestures:

Radio pulp

stacked

with microscopic

recordings

drumming on time

trivia of the past

Automatic

disc-server
 ceaselessly
 sabotaging
 my choice
 of selections
 lapsing
 my memory
 too fast (*LdLB* 257)

Whereas the brain attempts to reach for its own selections, its automatic “disc-server” responses not only undermine its wishes, but also cause the brain’s memory to atrophy beneath the strain of its rapid movements. The brain’s mechanical experience of time is restricted to repetitive “drumming” on the past, and so although its selections occur rapidly, its experience of time never catches up with the present moment. The short line length in the poem, formed by the fragmentation of a single sentence that is continually halted by line breaks, mirrors the disruption of the brain-consciousness’s choices and forces a rhythm that is unnatural, and which measures out each line in roughly equal lengths, particularly in the second stanza. The poem thus literally enacts a sense of “drumming on time,” with both the word “drumming” and the structure of the lines themselves suggesting methodical rhythm and mathematical measurability, which, if we follow Bergson, renders time an “immobile medium” that is detached from “an ego that endures” (*Introduction* 41). “Brain” thus takes to task the mechanisation of the body, portraying both its thwarted personal freedom and its inability to experience the movement of time.

Reading Loy’s “Brain” according to Bergson’s account of habit further reveals how mechanical actions result in a closed circuit and occlude movement through time. As Chapter Three outlined, Bergson distinguishes between two kinds of memory: recollection, needed to choose a course of action, and habit, which—acquired through repetition—determines action in the form of a reflex (*Matter* 86). The two kinds of memory result in two kinds of bodily action—one conscious and deliberate, and the other the “automatic setting in motion of a mechanism” (87), but of the two kinds of memory, “Brain” reveals a grasp only of habit and repetition. In the very instance that the brain reaches for the former by voluntarily invoking a memory that might aid in deliberate decision, its efforts are

usurped, and its recourse to memory “lasps[es]”. According to Bergson, habit, once acquired, is entirely determined and has no room for unpredictability; rather, “it is stored up in a mechanism which is set in motion as a whole by an initial impulse, in a closed system of automatic movements which succeed each other in the same order and, together, take the same length of time” (90). Every movement in “Brain” resembles that of habit: its units of action, measured out in equal lines, occur over unified spans of time; its memory is defined by necessity and closure and not decision or will; and it is incapable of unpredictability.

Yet “Brain” is not wholly unconscious, and its capacity for self-reflexivity creates pathos when it is compelled to confront its own failures. The brain functions automatically, and yet, it also reveals a higher consciousness that operates above that of the mechanical, that can make theoretical choices, and that becomes exasperated when these choices are not realised. The brain is thus conscious of its limitations, but powerless to overcome them. In this way, the brain is not only the poem’s subject: it is also the speaker, self-consciously aware of its own limitations, making decisions on one level and having those decisions thwarted on another. Self-criticism is woven into the deployment of first-person pronouns in a way that is connected particularly to the brain’s failure as an artistic producer. The poem opens with the line “radio pulp”; in one sense, the pulp connotes the fleshy tissue of the biological brain, which is compounded with the machinery of the radio, therefore signalling unification between the organic and mechanic. However, “pulp” is also indicative of damaged tissue, and what is more, denotes art of poor quality: this brain may be partially biological, but its amalgamation with modern technology has damaged it, and as a result, it cannot produce anything of artistic value. The brain comments on its own limitations for creating art while, paradoxically, writing a poem to reveal this frustration.

The mechanical body, devoid of agency, is cast by Loy as a mere object to be directed, controlled, and restrained, its potential power harnessed by others. Yet, when envisioning the machine as empowered, Loy reveals more despair still, and depicts the relationship between human and machine as one of inverted control. As such, a hierarchy of power still persists, but it is the original maker—rather than the machine—who is ultimately objectified. In either case, the machine-body is, in its essence, at odds with authentic movement, either because

it is incapable of directing its own movements, or because it overtakes its makers, casting them as manikins. Whereas “Human Cylinders,” “Brain,” and “Eros of Offices” portray machine-bodies that struggle to maintain agency over their bodies, “Impossible Opus” (1961) imagines the consequences of the machine-body with agency. Like a modern-day Frankenstein monster, the machine-body overpowers and “dwarfs” its maker:

Gigantism of the machine
reduces its designer
to a minikin

Approach
exactly calculated
for avoidance,
of attendants’ extinction

The Brutal pulse
of the potential man-crusher
prowls in his ears

before his insulated eyes
furnaces play leap-flame
as he feeds
metallic tonnage
to metallic tonnage.

raised from inertia
in earth-depth
to towering automatism
of microscopic precession
below the scope
of uvea or finger

Terrorist massive
confronter,
dwarfer,
outdoer of the human doer

Enormity of the super-matter

--until the cyclotrone,

all inconceivably

'made by hand'

for in the dawn of his

doing

his hand

was man's lone tool. (199-200)

This machine-body makes a "minikin" of his inventor; as an amalgamation of "miniscule" and manikin," the word "minikin" depicts both the infinitesimal size of the human maker and the way in which he can be physically manipulated by the "Terrorist massive," which strips him of his power and renders him a miniature. Small, emasculated, and with no control over himself or his surroundings, the human creator thus becomes a kind of doll. First conceived of in order to protect his maker from "extinction," the machine made of "super-matter" becomes a menace rather than a guardian. Even in the description of the intended function of the machine, the inventor is referred to as an "attendant"—it is he who serves the machine and not the other way around. The man's "lone tool"—his hand—at the time when he makes his machine remains so, as his creation does not bend to his demands and will not be his instrument. Further, as the machine progresses from passivity at the time of his conception to becoming a subject of agency, and as the power of the inventor is diminished while that of the machine grows stronger, so too does the structure of the grammar change: the machine-body is the object of the sentences in the poem only in reference to the final moment of his construction when he is "raised from inertia". At other times, he is always the subject: he confronts, dwarfs, and outdoes his maker whom he makes his object.

The machine in "Impossible Opus" is clearly divergent from that described by Haviland; it will not be directed but rather wrenches authority away from his master (or more accurately, his "attendant"). Importantly, the machine's new power is not one of creation but of destruction, and therefore more closely resembles accounts of technology in Futurist writings that stipulate that the "nonhuman and mechanical being, constructed for an omnipresent velocity, will

be naturally cruel, omniscient, and combative” (Marinetti *Selected Writings* 91). Furthermore, both machine and his inventor in this poem are male, fulfilling Marinetti’s specifications that modern technology be purely masculine, an “identification of man with motor” that excludes women altogether (91). In this respect, the womanless “birth” of the machine in “Impossible Opus” resembles Marinetti’s novel *Mafarka the Futurist*, in which he fantasised about the possibility of conjoining man and machine, circumventing woman’s role in reproduction. And again, like the child envisaged in *Mafarka*, the poem’s title suggests that the machine-body in the poem is merely fantasy: an impossible opus. The poem thus not only warns against the inanity of a machine so formidable, but also suggests that this mechanical powerhouse is little more than a poorly thought-out fancy.

4.2 The mechanical artist

I have thus far argued how the machine-body as art’s object is rendered unconscious and devoid of agency. The machine-body as artist presents a rather different kind of challenge for Loy. To be sure, technological artists are not vacated of control or consciousness in the same way as art objects, for they remain active producers. Nonetheless, mechanisation of the artist results in failed art. Loy’s novel *Insel* depicts the artist as an embodiment of the technological. Insel’s body is frequently compared by Jones, the narrator, to that of an automaton, and he strives to rival photography by painting his subjects in a hyper-realistic manner, aiming to make the “grain” of his painting “invisible,” such that “it will look like a photograph” (53). He is thus doubly mechanical: his body is machine-like, and as art producer, he functions like a piece of technology.

To be sure, it is not only the mechanical that characterises Insel’s technological nature. For instance, Insel’s body can be read in terms of atomic radiation and disintegration, as Chapter Five will discuss. Moreover, Insel’s *Strahlen* have been productively compared by Vetter to magnetic rays that penetrate the body of Jones. Vetter charts a history of sexual politics embedded in electromagnetism that affirms a singular and normalising vision of heterosexuality in which positive masculine magnetic forces draw in feminine negative charges to create a happy union. She identifies repeated references throughout *Insel* to magnetism, magnetic pulls and electric currents and offers a gendered reading of

these occurrences (60). According to such a model, the two polar opposites—the empowered and collected Mrs Jones who bemoans her inability to tap into artistic chaos and the withering derelict whose creativity is initially electrifying—can be understood in terms of opposing magnetic forces that neutralise each other. In light of this, Vetter suggests that Jones’s disintegration is an implicit critique of Surrealism’s misogyny, for she becomes an embodiment of the “magnetic chaos” of Surrealist painting (61). While this chapter focuses exclusively on Insel’s capacity for automatism, I mention Insel’s affiliation to the atomic, magnetic, electric and radioactive here to make apparent that Insel is not a straightforward machine. Indeed, he is radically unstable, and embraces a plurality of technologies: the mechanical and the prosthetic, as well the radioactive, magnetic and atomic. Insel reveals prodigious artistic potential, and he makes radical attempts to trouble the limits of his body, yet he incessantly collapses into a mechanical body and thus ultimately fails in his artistic pursuits. It is this collapse and its consequence for art that I interrogate here.

Jones’s close observation of Insel persistently uncovers behaviour that borders upon the mechanical. She describes their conversations as “clatter” with a “wound up automaton,” and when she suggests to Insel that he write his biography, claiming that all he requires is to write like he paints—“meticulously”—he answers that he remembers “every least incident” of his life (30). His mind thus operates in the same way as his art; it records everything with inhuman accuracy. When he attempts to choke Jones, he does so with “fingers of automatic pressure,” revealing so little emotion—he is distant, “eyes fixed as blinded granite” and his body “shrunk to a nerve”—that Jones cries out, “*choked by a robot!*” (158, italics in original). Indeed, his very appearance resembles a mechanical kind of puppet:

In profile, as if he cut himself in half and in halving should leave himself evil, he became so alien, so very elfin, he induced aversion. The notch at the spring of his nose was further back than the drop of the upper lip. These angles of his pasty face were over-acute and out of plumb. A kink near the ear suggested the wire-hung jaw of a ventriloquist’s dummy. In profile, this nitwit infused with the secret ghost, seemed to have been carved for a joke out of moldy wood. (69)

His face, angular and acute, appears inhuman: it is emaciated and death-like, and seems held together with springs and wires. Rather than a body and consciousness that work organically together, the two are disjointed: his body is a badly carved chunk of old wood, and his ego a ghost that mysteriously inhabits it.

As a piece of technology, Insel's agency is compromised. Figured as a ventriloquist's dummy, Insel appears to be a marionette controlled by the hand of an external, unnamed force. He does, at other times, appear to have a hypnotic power over those around him (over the women he picks up and over Jones), although this power is revealed to be all surface. Indeed, this ostensible power is, too, described in technological terms, at times in terms of magnetism or radioactivity, and at others in terms of the brute force of electricity and lightning. Jones notes how Insel

seemed to collect electricity from the air (in the afternoon there was a violent storm). This crackling electricity flashed so nearby without attaining to me. It was as if I were *almost* leaning up against a lightning conductor. (93, italics in original)

Insel is thus not the lightning (the naturally occurring phenomenon) but the conductor, the man-made conduit, into which the lightning is channelled. While he might have a hold over the women close to him, he too, in turn, is controlled by greater forces.

Yet it is Insel's hybrid status as part machine, part human, which evokes the strongest horror and which marks his embodiment in terms of failure. Insel is neither complete technological cog nor entirely human; he is trapped between the two, a failed mechanism that cannot keep up with modernity's technological leaps. At the opening of the novel, Jones describes him as

A man who finds himself economically nude, [who] should logically, in the thickset iron forest of our industrial structure, be banged to death from running into its fearfully rigid supports. He is again the primordial soft-machine without the protective overall of the daily job . . . this metal forest of coin bearing machinery will partially revert to the condition of nature preserved in him, and show patches of moss as if he had projected there some of the verdure rooted in him. (23-24)

As machine, Insel is “soft,” and he risks annihilation by the modern world. The mechanisms of the “iron forest” of modernity are linked here with commercialism—as Insel is unemployed (Jones refers to him as her *petit clochard*) he is occluded from being inaugurated as complete machine, but rather exposes the “patches of moss” in which his human quality lies. To be sure, Insel never succeeds in any of his functions: he fails to subsume Mrs Jones entirely within his *Strahlen*; his paintings fail to differentiate themselves from modern photography; his artistic production depletes entirely by the novel’s conclusion, and he is left staring at a blank canvas, frozen by indecision (174). Even his face shines “uselessly, as an electric bulb ‘left on’ by day,” (86) a mechanism that is both unnoticeable and redundant. His body fails: it is so feeble that when Jones holds onto his shirt as he moves away, she is left clutching “a few inches of gray bone” (84). Neither machine nor human, Insel is thoroughly transient, and his uncanny status as in-between precludes any kind of success. It is difficult to extricate from the text precisely what Loy’s verdict on Insel is. His *Strahlen* bestow him with a unique and compelling aura, and he seems to possess an elusive but intrinsic artistic quality. However, I would argue that this quality ultimately eludes him, and his final artistic failure is encapsulated in the image of the blank canvas. While his transience leaves him incomplete—a quality that in Loy’s other texts symbolises promise, potential and freedom—Insel has no access to process either; he is trapped in a peculiar limbo, and thus while movement is sometimes channelled through him (wherein lies the fragments of power that he has access to) he is merely a conduit. Over-inscribed with various markers of technology, Insel is a faulty machine.

As both the creator of technological art and technological art object himself, Insel occupies a liminal space between mechanical object and active artistic producer. Yet as an aesthetic agent, Insel enjoys limited success. According to Tyrus Miller, *Insel* reflects upon the effects of technologies of replication on art in the 1930s in an analogous way to Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility.” In particular, Miller explores the correlation between Insel’s mechanical production and artistic failure. It is the presence of women that heralds the age of technology and the diminishing artist, for it is women who come to metonymically stand in for mass production; Jones, for

instance, is a film enthusiast (348-49). And yet conversely, by failing to write Insel's biography, Jones defers the solidification of Insel's aura in a tangible, textual form, and this deferment perpetuates his *Strahlen* (354-55). Indeed, as Insel's emanating *Strahlen* operate like Benjamin's aura, Insel becomes an embodiment of autonomous, auratic art (348-49). According to Miller, it is thus Insel whose body is "thoroughly penetrated by a technology of seeing and recording"; on one hand, he sees through the bodies that he paints, and on the other, he sees through his own fading presence as an autonomous artist (342). Moreover, Insel's painterly technique—to create an image of his subject that competes with photographic technology—renders him a piece of technology that projects images upon canvas. In doing so, Insel unwittingly designates his paintings to the same reproducibility that characterises photography, and therefore "undermines [his] claims to visionary originality" (352). The technological artist foils his own pursuit of artistic originality, and therefore technology, and the reproducibility that it enables, threatens autonomous art.

Reading Insel as the fluoroscope (as both the object and the producer of technological art), as both the auratic artwork and as the projector of technologically reproduced images, makes it apparent that technology traps Insel in an impossible bind: it threatens him as an artist, and yet his status as "artistic," both as producer of art and as auratic object, depends on technology. A part of what characterises Insel as "artistic" is his relationship to technology, that is, his status as the fluoroscope on one hand, and his technological *Strahlen* on the other. Yet it is technology that threatens the aura. The aura of Insel's paintings is undercut by their resemblance to photography, and Insel's *Strahlen* pale when confronted with consumers of mass-produced art. Insel both depends upon technology and is, paradoxically, undone by it. It is precisely this contradiction that Loy draws upon in order to critique the role of technology in art.

4.3 The marionette and the body beyond prosthesis

Loy was sceptical of the extent to which prosthesis could rebuild the body just as she was suspicious of representations of the machine and for the same reason: she refuted the proposition that the body could be both easily controlled and temporally dislocated. However, although Loy's poetry forewarns the

consequences of the machine on agency and movement, her attitude is not always so straightforward. Particularly at the beginning of her career—and specifically, while she was still optimistic about Futurism—Loy’s letters betrayed her enthusiasm for technology, and her later experiments in reshaping the body for commercial purposes cast it as malleable. This contradictory response to the advent of technology is particularly pronounced in her attitude towards prosthesis; however, it is precisely by teasing out this ambiguity that we can chart not only which technological advancements had the most radical effect on her work, but also how these developments inscribed themselves onto Loy’s poetic bodies. I argue that Loy’s fervour for modern weaponry was quickly unravelled by the realities of World War One, and her later experiments in manipulating the body were motivated by commercialism; that is, her positive outlook on the potential to control the body was apparent only in instances when she was trying to earn money and do not reflect an aesthetic interest.

Indeed, the two pursuits (aesthetic and commercial) were antithetical for Loy. When compelled to run a small shop selling lampshades that she designed in order to earn a living, Loy bemoaned: “I am supposed to be a fine artist and everybody thinks I am mad because I have to make lampshades” (*LaLB* lxxii). Despite the fact that these lampshades were designed and assembled by Loy, she viewed this work as commercial, rather than aesthetic. This incongruence between commercial capital and cultural or aesthetic capital is evident not only in Loy’s attitude towards art, but also throughout American modernism; Vondeling argues that little magazines gained cultural capital by distancing themselves from business concerns. This made them economically unviable in the long run, and Vondeling attributes their inevitable obsolescence—as well as Loy’s own effacement from the literary scene—to a failure to secure economic security while simultaneously effacing all traces of this security in order to maintain cultural status (141). It is for specifically commercial ends that Loy sketched out plans to design, patent, and sell techniques that would reshape the ageing body—she even drafted advertisements for her plans—but this enthusiasm was not mirrored in her poetry and therefore reflected not Loy’s aesthetic vision for the body, but the imperative to make a living and the identification of the body’s plasticity as a particular market interest of the time.

The early twentieth century created a climate that fostered movements and ideologies that attempted to reconstruct the body, and this resulted in a commercial market for corporeal plasticity. Modern medicine made colossal advancements in orthopaedic and cosmetic surgery in response to the destruction caused by World War One. War thus procured for medicine resources (which included maimed bodies as well as the allocation of funding and infrastructure) on an unprecedented scale, and surgery quickly evolved in the eyes of the public to become a heroic act (Carden-Coyne 94-95). The understanding of the plasticity of the body—as well as the acceptability of these practices—was radically transformed. Moreover, the end of the war did not bring about an end to surgical reconstruction and experimentation; as Ana Carden-Coyne explains,

military surgeons used what they had learned to develop plastic surgery as a specialty. It was applied to victims of motor and industrial accidents, but also for cosmetic purposes—breast, eye, and neck lifts, dental prosthetics, and rhinoplasty . . . War surgeons recognized that the human body was now a consumer item, a factor in marriage and employment. Modern bodies had to display and market their appearances, like mannequins in shop windows. (107)

The body thus represented capital gains both for those whose bodies were reshaped for marriage and employment, and those who could offer the means to reshape it. This interest in the body as cosmetic object was reflected in the proliferation of contemporary methods of bodily renovation not only in plastic surgery, but also Christian Science, electric therapies, eating and exercise regimes, colonic irrigation, and the Alexander technique (Armstrong *Modernism* 106).

Loy initially revealed enthusiasm at the prospect of World War One, although this did not translate into sustained enthusiasm towards bodily plasticity. At the outbreak of war, Loy insisted upon Italy's military involvement with as much fervour as the Futurists, and like Marinetti, her desire was for a specifically mechanised warfare. Burke recounts a revealing conversation between Loy and Dodge: Dodge announces her horror at men mowing each other down with machine guns—an automated and detached act of “turning the handle” that produces dead bodies with the same ease as the grinding of coffee—but Loy is delighted by her friend's allusion to the soldiers' faces as full of light, conflating in an alarming way the light sparked with the release of a bullet from a gun aimed at

someone's face with the of light of spiritual illumination (*Becoming Modern* 184). Loy's connection between war and enlightenment is extended not only to the spiritual and bodily, but also to her own creative projects; in a letter to Van Vechten she writes that her limited involvement in the military (the lamentable result of being a woman, she adds) must also limit her poetic potential. Loy writes: "don't you sense—what wonderful poems I could have written—round about a battle field!" and she complains that she could not get near enough to the front lines to, "hear a lovely noise! . . . You have no idea what fallow fields of psychological inspiration there are in human shrieks & screams" ("Letters" c. 1915).

The reality of this war that she so feverishly advocated, and its consequences for the body, is repudiated years later in her poem, "Der Blinde Junge," (c. 1922).⁷² In this poem, Loy depicts a young man on the streets of Vienna who has been blinded by the war—a "Kriegsopfer [sic]."⁷³ The term suggests that this particular man was once identified as the enemy whose face she earlier wanted to fill with the light of machine guns. His body, "desecrated" by war, is figured as a mole-like creature, pushing against the light with his body:

the visionless obstacle

this slow blind face
pushing
virginal nonentity
against the light

Pure purposeless eremite
of centripetal sentence

Upon the carnose horologe of the ego
the vibrant tendon index moves not

since the black lightening desecrated
the retinal altar (*LdLB* 83)

⁷² See Conover's "Notes on the Text" for justification of composition date (*LdLB* 200)

⁷³ War victim.

The young man's injury renders him entirely alone, a "purposeless eremite" for whom the city streets are empty and desolate. Here, Loy inverts Keat's "patient, sleepless eremite" (4) of "Bright Star, would I were steadfast as thou art" (1819); rather than a star of infinite lustre who is continuously watchful, the "purposeless eremite" stumbles in the darkness of his blindness. Without human contact, his sense of inner time has come to a stop: no movement extends from the "carnose horologe of the ego"—carnose meaning "fleshy" in Italian and "horologe" suggesting the French word *horloge*, or clock. This internal clock, is linked to the body and the ego but dislocated from the world; the "eyeless offspring" is thus fused with internalised clock-time, but is left wandering in the dark, "void and extinct". Loy diminishes the man's human qualities, referring to him as an "obstacle" and an "expressionless 'thing'" who "blows out damnation and concussive dark / Upon a mouth-organ"—the "mouth-organ" being both an instrument that the youth uses to busk for money, and his mouth itself reduced to a singular organ muttering its damnation (*LoLB* 83-84). Indeed, body parts in this poem are represented each in isolation: a "slow blind face," a "retinal alter," a "downy youth's snout": this body is the awkward accumulation of parts rather than an organic whole. As an instrument, the "mouth-organ" operates as a prosthetic, a mechanical extension of his body that is required to make a living—to survive—now that his own body has been devastated by war. This mechanised body, rather than being a virile locus of muscle and violence, is instead the victim of such violence—a body mechanically compensated for its own ruin and defined by lack. The poem depicts the horror of what it meant to be complicit in the war and the mutilation of bodies—a war in which Loy is implicated not only because she supported it at its outbreak, but further because her reaction to technology and war, mediated through the Futurists, was a condition for the production of her own work and the beginning of her poetic career. It signals Loy's scepticism concerning the effectiveness of prosthesis, highlighting its limitations for restoring the mutilated body back to its original unity.

Insel similarly reveals scepticism toward surgically reshaping the body. In the novel, Jones meets a young girl, "Fifi," whom she describes as intellectually "not being 'all there'" (153). It is difficult to discern whether Fifi also suffers from a physical ailment; although Jones makes clear reference to Fifi's intellectual

inadequacies—she calls her an “imbecile” with a “lunar giggle”—she is more opaque about the presence of physical disabilities. The only instance where Jones alludes to a bodily condition is when she describes the stiffness of Fifi’s body, attributing it to her “orthopaedic corset,” which makes it unclear whether the corset aids, or actually inhibits, movement (153). Seen through Jones’s eyes, then, Fifi’s condition is certainly mental, but the extent to which it is physical is oblique. In contrast, the doctors’ description of Fifi’s disabilities suggests physical “crookedness” and “pain,” and their prescribed course of action is a series of aggressive surgeries:

the medical specialists consulted on her behalf and promised she would become like average children should they graft a bit of the bone in her leg as a wedge into her spine, thus rectifying her crookedness and relieving the pain (154)

There is a striking gap between Jones’s assessment of Fifi, for whom the source of Fifi’s physical limitations are located in a corset and the limits of her intelligence, and that of the doctors, who identify an anatomical deformity that Jones barely remarks on. This gap between the doctors’ view of Fifi and Jones underscores the absurdity of the surgery and its aims: the pain that they claim Fifi feels is rather at odds with Jones’s account of her “slow serenity,” (153) and Jones does not report that Fifi appears physically deformed or “crooked”.

Moreover, the doctors consult “on [Fifi’s] behalf”; agency is thus taken out of Fifi’s hands and she is performed upon regardless of her will. Reduced to a manipulated prosthetic object, Fifi comes to resemble Loy’s other mechanical bodies. This loss of agency constitutes a considerable part of the horror of Fifi’s surgery. Under the effects of Insel’s curious *Strahlen*, Jones’s psyche merges momentarily with Fifi’s, and she is able to experience what Fifi does. Jones empathetically narrates Fifi’s fate in terms of imprisonment, comparing her brain to “a bird in ceaseless hurt, beat[ing] its wings for the conscious liberation against a cage” (155). The result of Fifi’s procedure is monstrous:

Fifi died most uncomfortably, lying very much like a trussed duck, only on her tummy—her leg being bent up behind her for the grafting and bound to her back—screaming in a nursing home until she had no more breath. (154)

Fifi’s surgery is utterly dehumanising: not only has she been stripped of her agency, but her young body is distorted to the point that she no longer resembles

a human but a “trussed duck,” a screaming and misshapen mass of flesh whose only alleviation is death. Loy’s depictions of surgery and prosthesis are suspicious of the potential for physical manipulation to ameliorate the body, for Fifi’s body is not cured but objectified and disfigured, and her limbs dislodged and stitched to the wrong parts of her body.

Although Loy sought to endow the body with movement, mechanically rebuilding the body was not the answer. Nonetheless, she explored commercial methods for cosmetically renovating the body. Indeed, rather than envision the body as machine or propose to surgically penetrate the body, these methods were more therapeutically nuanced, were aimed largely at anti-ageing, and relied upon the body’s own resources with the aid of only a few props. To a certain extent, then, these experiments were more practical than the wild, technological envisioning of the Dadaists, perhaps because Loy’s techniques were designed with a paying customer in mind. Loy attempted to capitalise more than once on the commodification of the body by offering methods for manipulating it. Early in her career while she was still living in Florence, Loy sent Van Vechten fashion designs, imploring him to find a her a buyer as she hoped that her earnings would facilitate her passage to America (“Letters” c. 1915). Her papers are replete with designs for possible inventions, many of which are patented and accompanied by letters to companies about production.⁷⁴ Among these is the “Corselet,” an anti-ageing armour for the body that is designed to correct its shape and posture as it stiffens with old age. The Corselet consists of a series of three “strong cushions” placed beneath the ankles, the buttocks, and the neck, upon which the ageing body sleeps flat on *her* back—Loy’s target audience was specifically the ageing woman. In a letter to a prospective manufacturer, she wrote that the modification produced in the body by the Corselet is “marked in old women who have allowed their curves to wander at their own sweet will” (“Corselet”). She also wrote to Dodge, detailing her excitement at her new product; however, a subsequent letter

⁷⁴ For other inventions, see “Blotter Bracelet” (patented), Chatoyant, a proposal to patent the “musical motif” for “coloured folk have the moon in their eyes” (dated June 9th, 1960), a “Valentine that ticks” (dated February 14th, 1941), and a window washer (patented, accompanied by letter to manufacturer, dated March 30th, 1941) (YCAL, MSS 6, box 7, fol. 186.)

declares that she abandoned the Corselet for being ineffective and uncomfortable to sleep on (“Letters” n.d.).

Similarly, Loy developed a technique for corporeal plasticity called “Auto-Facial-Construction,” designed to prolong the youthfulness of the face: Loy’s pitch contends that modern life extends the youth of the soul, and that we must therefore cultivate the face to stay equally young. She planned to sell her product to public figures, to “the society woman, the actor, the actress, the man of public career,” noting that “initiation to this esoteric anatomical science is expensive”. Loy promised her prospective clients the “conservation, and when necessary, reconstruction” of their beauty and youth through the manipulation of energy, conscious will, and the muscular-skeletal structure of the skull (*L&LB* 165-66). Yet although Loy drafted the advertisement and detailed design plans for “Auto-Facial-Construction,” and constructed and tested a prototype for the “Corselet,” neither of these products—or the many others that she proposed—made it to production, which perhaps further encouraged her dismissal of the mechanically manipulated body.

Loy scholarship tends to cite Loy’s commercial endeavours as evidence for her persistent interest in prosthesis. In particular, Armstrong posits that although Loy resisted Futurist reductions of the body to the machine, she offers her own version of bodily reform in “Auto-Facial-Construction,” in which Loy rewrites the modernist designation of the female body as penetrable by offering up instead the body that is “de-objectified,” and is “anything other than an integral unit”. Armstrong differentiates between the Futurist masculine machine that Loy rejects, and her own project that engenders the “restoration of integrity”. Therefore, he argues that despite the anxieties that Loy portrays regarding the Futurist machine, her venture of bodily revitalisation can be considered to be “sustained” throughout her career (*Modernism* 120-21). While I agree with this distinction between the bodily reconstructions of Loy and the machines of Futurism, I propose that Loy’s experiments with the malleability of the body are fleeting and ultimately add to her disillusionment with the body’s plasticity, for such plasticity suggests a capacity for control over a temporally static body that Loy resists in her poetry. Whereas Armstrong contends that the body for Loy is a machine that fails and cites the character Insel and the dilapidated body in “An

Aged Woman” as evidence, I propose that “Der Blinde Junge” and *Insel* portray the prosthetic body as irrevocably maimed and objectified.

Indeed, Loy’s poetry on the aging body envisions not a failed machine, but the failure *of* the machine to intervene in the body’s irreversible processes. Although Loy argued that age could be reversed or halted for a price when marketing her inventions, her poems, in contrast, oppose physical rejuvenation. In “An Aged Woman,” Loy depicts the slow decay of a woman who looks in the mirror and sees “a bulbous stranger” (*LoLB* 145). She describes a fissure between the inner self of the woman and its new “incognito”—the casing of the ageing body in which the self is trapped and from which the only escape is its exorcism “by death”. The body in the poem is falling apart, its “internal organs” are “eroding” and its structure is little more than a “spoilt closet”; it is on the precipice of being “entirely eliminated”. There is no suggestion of recourse to anti-ageing techniques to rescue this body from its decay, and although the body is motile—its insides are disintegrating and “hanging or falling down”—it is not plastic in the sense that its movement cannot be directed towards a desirable end: the only way out of this body is through death. Loy therefore did not subscribe for long to the potential for bodily manipulation in “Auto-Facial-Construction” and “Corselet” (and indeed her letters reveal her swift discontent with each of these products). Rather, the confidence she depicted in her abilities to master the body was largely an employment of advertising rhetoric that she deployed in the hopes of earning money. “An Aged Woman” reveals instead that bodily reconstruction has its unsurpassable limitations.

Rather than attempting to rebuild the body, or to inflict change *upon* the body using external forces, Loy represents a body that is always, already in motion, and that changes constantly and rapidly in and of itself. She propounds the innate motility of the bodies we already inhabit, rather than suggesting that the body should be moulded like plasticine by prodding it from the outside. Significantly too, this motility is not directed—nor can it be contained or predicted—and it is precisely this unpredictability that bestows it with such creative power. Rather than insisting that Loy aims to manoeuvre and build upon the body, a

consideration of the body as intrinsically motile better characterises much of her aesthetic work.

In this respect, Loy's fascination with technology was not entirely obliterated by her scepticism of surgical reconstruction. Despite her damning assessment of the consequences of modern warfare on the body in "Der Blinde Junge," Loy continues to be enthralled by its capabilities. For example, in 1929, in response to the question "what do you look forward to?" posed by *The Little Review*, Loy responds, "The release of atomic energy" (*LaLB* 305). It is evident, then, that Loy does not "grow out of" her attraction to technology. On the contrary, Loy's approach to technology is inflected by its relationship to movement and instability, concepts that are more productively represented by atomic physics. Whereas mechanising the body renders it static, the splitting of the nucleus unleashes unpredictable power and explosive movement. Loy may have been ultimately disillusioned by attempts to render the body a mechanical marionette, but the same trepidation is not present in her engagement with nuclear technology, for this recasts (rather than rebuilds) our bodies not as vessels or machines but as energy and motility. Chapter Five therefore complicates Loy's repudiation of technology, and asserts that Loy does not denounce science wholesale. Rather, she navigates contemporary science in terms of movement, and nuclear research promises a poetic body that wields unlimited energy, movement, and artistic creativity.

Chapter Five – “Dynamic Decomposition”: The Atomic Body

A body in movement, therefore, is not simply an immobile body subsequently set in motion, but a truly mobile object, which is a reality quite new and original.

(Boccioni 93)

Loy's vision of a body that is inherently mobile, rather than an immobile body “set in motion” or manipulated by external forces finds expression in the radical developments of early twentieth-century atomic physics. In her exploration of the atomic, Loy arguably realises Futurist imaginings of the body that is “truly mobile” described above by Boccioni, and yet she does so in a way that eschews Futurist exaltation of the machine, and in a way that challenges rather than reifies gendered hierarchies. This thesis has thus far argued that Loy's poetry is immanently concerned with embodied, temporal movement, and that this concern characterises her writing not only against traditions of gendered and poetic convention, but moreover against many of the movements that, while claiming to be modern, in fact perpetuated the failings that they were perceived to overcome. And while Loy was cynical of traditional classifications of women's bodies that confined them to stasis, new technologies that reshaped the body similarly enabled the same restrictions predicated on stasis and control. However, this chapter demonstrates that Loy did not reject science indiscriminately; indeed, as critics have noted, her frequent deployment of its lexicons reveal a persistent interest in scientific discovery (Parmar “‘Unfinishing’ Self” 75; Peppis 562-63). Like her engagement with poetic and gendered conventions and the avant-garde, Loy's complex attraction and repulsion to various strands of science can be read in terms of their capacity to facilitate movement. That is, while the machine body's movements are inauthentic as a result of being externally controlled and dislocated from time, the atomic body in Loy's poetry is radically motile.

I employ the word “atomic” in all its connotations: that which is minute and molecular as well as that which—like the atomic bomb—is explosive, satiated with energy, volatile and dangerous. In this way, the atomic provides a model that facilitates embodied motility not possible in the machine. Loy's deployment of the atomic was not, however, structured by a working knowledge of physics. Indeed, modernist poetic appropriation of the atomic tends not to be informed by the

intricacies of scientific knowledge, as Daniel Albright asserts; the poetry of Yeats, Pound and Eliot employed metaphors of quantum mechanics and elementary particles in their poetry, for instance, but this is “merely an exercise in metaphor, and a deceptive metaphor at that” (2). Their poetry thus does not enable a ready equivalence of physics to poetry, nor does it entail the use of metaphor that is strictly in tune with the complex mathematics that atomic physics entailed. The same is true of Loy’s poetry. She engages atomic metaphors not in a way that reveals a technical understanding of atomic science, or that equate the workings of the atom to poetic practice. Rather, she draws on publicly circulated knowledge of radium, the unstable nucleus, and fission in order to deploy the atomic in her writing. She thus traces the molecular movements of the body, metaphorically embraces the atomic in order to cast the body itself as an atomic centre, and explores the possibilities for embodied motility.

Loy’s metaphorical uses of the atomic explore a poetic agenda, premised on both the “irritant”—an impulse that compels a continued state of agitation and motility—and fission, that casts the body’s limits as inherently instable. Much has already been made of the way in which Loy uncovers the minute movements of the sexualised body,⁷⁵ and indeed, this chapter could have additionally undertaken a detailed evaluation of this, particularly in “Songs to Joannes” and *Insel*. However, these movements are not so much underscored by nuclear physics as they are by the molecular gurgles of the biological and sexual body, and I am interested here in the kinds of atomic activity that radically trouble bodily space. To be sure, an argument could be made for the complication of spatial perimeters in the liminal space alluded to through reference to the “mucous membrane” in “Songs to Joannes”; but again, the mucous membrane does not draw on paradigm-shifting developments of atomic physics, but on a molecular view of the biological body, whereas this chapter is focused specifically on the unravelling of bodily space in connection to the motility of the nucleus.

Similarly, an examination of the workings of the microscopic in Loy’s poetry could entail an analysis of the presence of electricity and infrared, and indeed such an analysis has been done by Vetter in *Modernist Writings and Religio-*

⁷⁵ For example, see DuPlessis (“Seismic”), Peppis, Selinger, Quartermain, and Twitchell-Waas.

*Scientific Discourse: H.D., Loy and Toomer.*⁷⁶ Electricity has also been central to Parmar's examination of bodily experience in Loy's manuscripts. She argues that Loy dislocates terms from their scientific origins in order to merge them with religion: electricity is deified into "electrolife," a "universal current that connects the mortal body to its creator by means of conduction" ("Unfinishing' Self" 71). As I am interested specifically in atomic mobility here—that is, nuclear agitation and fission—an examination of electricity is beyond the scope of this chapter. What Parmar's study indicates, however, is that Loy was attentive to a multiplicity of technological and scientific advances, the terms and metaphors of which she adopted or refuted in accordance with her vision for the body.

This chapter first outlines some of the major developments in nuclear physics in the early century and how these overturned existing notions of the stability and solidity of matter and space not only for Loy, but for other modernists and the general public. I argue that research into the peculiarities of the atom is amenable to Loy's project for two reasons: firstly, atomic motility, particularly in the form of radium, carries immense potential for volatile and explosive energy, and secondly, the atom has radical implications for the containability of space. Indeed, other developments in physics also redefined the concept of space. Specifically, Einstein's theories of Special and General Relativity had repercussions for the understanding of space-time in a way that was also inscribed upon contemporaneous literature.⁷⁷ However, this chapter focuses on the atom, for it is the atom that Loy references in her poetry and which she deploys metaphorically to bestow bodies with volatile and inherent movement. Secondly, I outline how atomic metaphors are deployed in Loy's conception of the irritant. In Chapter Three, I examined the irritant for the role that it plays in temporality; here, I interrogate its connection to both scientific discourse and the

⁷⁶ For details, see Chapter Four.

⁷⁷ For a discussion on the impact of space-time on literature, see Whitworth in "Physics" 215-18; Albright, 9-14; and Berlatsky, 261. Additionally, Wyndham Lewis draws a connection not only between Einsteinian space-time and literature, but also Bergson, although the consequences of this for him are lamentable. In *Time and the Western Man*, Lewis argues that the "timelessness" of Einsteinian physics, and the time-obsessed flux of Bergson, merge in each other," and that they have thus "conspired" to produce, in both literature and in popular consciousness, a "sort of mystical time-cult" (xiv).

coherence of the space of matter by exploring its relationship to the agitated nucleus. Atomic metaphors are developed in Loy's essays and poems on Stein, in her unpublished novel, *The Child and the Parent*, and in her poem "Brancusi's Golden Bird". Further, in *Insel*, the irritant is grafted upon the body, making it an atomic centre; it is at times when Insel embodies the atomic that he is at his most powerful, his most volatile, but also his most destructive. Finally, I examine the way in which this metaphor is inscribed not only upon the corporeal body, but bodies of text. Like the texts explored in Chapter Two, Loy's vision for conquering the enclosed space of the lived body is analogous to the freedom of language in texts that similarly trouble their limits, in this case in terms of fission. This chapter looks closely at the manuscript of "Mother Earth," and proposes that Loy's aesthetic of fission and splintering is inscribed within the text and its meaning. The atomic accordingly offers a way to read the inherent movements of Loy's experimental texts in terms of motility and proliferation.

The atomic thus operates as a powerful metaphor that enables Loy to envision both the bodies of her texts and the bodies in her texts as volatile and in constant motion in a way that confounds the very idea of spatial confines, which, as this thesis has demonstrated, operates in Loy's work as a foil to authentic experience and free will. The movements of the atom therefore offer Loy a far more productive set of images and metaphors than that of the mechanical body. As Loy does not present the body as machine in a favourable light, and she is all but unmoved by surgery's advancement and reconstruction of the body, technology's positive legacy on her work has largely been ignored.⁷⁸ Nonetheless, and as this chapter demonstrates, contemporary science aided Loy's vision for a body that cannot be restricted by spatial constraints, and her atomic aesthetic is present not only in those texts that explicitly reference atoms and nuclei, but across her oeuvre in the figure of the agitated, motile, and spatially compromised body.

⁷⁸ Notable exceptions include Armstrong (*Modernism*) and Vetter, discussed in the previous chapter. In addition, Lintz contends that the word in Loy's poetry is modelled upon a radium atom, and that it therefore emanates concentric and excentric forces. Lintz will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

5.1 Atomic space, unstable matter: The early twentieth century

Developments in physics at the turn of the century contributed to a fervent discussion in philosophy about the existence of matter and space. Atomic research radically overturned propositions that had dominated classical physics since Newton, and which, in turn, confounded the notion of solid matter and Euclidean conceptions of space. To be sure, philosophical inquiry and early scientific work interrogated the solidity of space and matter decades before twentieth-century physicists deposed Euclidean space conclusively, and therefore philosophy. Descriptionism in particular foreshadowed what was to later occur in public consciousness and art (Whitworth “Physics” 201). As early as the 1860s, physicist and descriptionist philosopher Ernst Mach began giving lectures on scientific method and epistemology, arguing that the role of physics was to describe intuitive experiences of the world rather than explain them, for explanation “can overreach itself” by designating to precepts of empirical science strict causality where there are only convenient explanations of sensations (199). As such, he proposed that the existence of matter as a “thing-in-itself” was not an incontrovertible truth; matter and bodies are convenient “mental symbols for groups of sensations—symbols that do not exist outside of thought” (200-01). The consequences of this on space are explored at length in Mach’s 1906 text, *Space and Geometry*: in an argument that is comparable to Bergson’s, he contends that there is a marked difference between geometrical space, and the space of lived experience. The significant developments in physics thus gave credence to Mach’s assertions that matter was not as stable, as permanent, nor as impenetrable as previously supposed. They proved mathematically what Mach and other philosophers (such as Karl Pearson)—and indeed even Bergson—had been arguing for years: the solid concepts with which we structure our world might not be right. In the 1920s, the nature of space was further supplanted by Einstein’s theory of General Relativity in which he argued for the curvature of space-time; indeed, Bergson attempted to deploy Einsteinian relativity in order to retrospectively prove his theory of *durée*, although this study was refuted by physicists as incorrect.⁷⁹ This chapter does not focus on General Relativity, for

⁷⁹ For a detailed discussion of the controversy surrounding Bergson’s text, and the refutations offered by physicists, see Durie’s introduction to *Duration and Simultaneity*, xiv-xxvi.

while Loy makes reference to atoms in her poetry she does not engage with space-time. Nonetheless, Bergson's endeavour to account for new ideas in physics reveals how scientific developments radically shifted existing paradigms on space and matter in a way that compelled existing accounts of the world (metaphysical as well as physical) to recalibrate.

The findings of atomic science between 1880 and 1930 were both radical and bewildering to notions of space and solidity. As Michael H. Whitworth suggests, it began "with a world that was so minute as to be invisible, and ended with one that was so strange as to be unvisualizable". These findings were critical to modernist literature, for the solidity of an atom was analogous to the solidity of the body, and to the solidity of the self ("Physics" 206-08). Accordingly, there was a transferability of the atomic through metaphor that cast the atom, the body, and the self as inherently penetrable, unstable, and spatially elusive. Thus when Röntgen discovered X-rays in 1895, and this knowledge was widely disseminated into public knowledge through lectures and the publication of articles on the X-ray in non-specialist journals such as the *Cornhill* and *McClure's Magazine*, it turned the body inside-out; what was previously enclosed was uncovered, and what "appeared solid was porous" (Whitworth "Physical" 40). In the following years, J. J. Thomson posited the existence of subatomic electrons (1897), and published his findings in 1901 in "On Bodies Smaller than Atoms," although at the time, the existence of atoms was still often regarded as a theoretical tool for scientific calculations rather than an undisputed reality. Their existence was not unequivocally proven until Albert Einstein published his paper on Brownian motion (1905). Nonetheless, Thomson's supposition that atoms consisted of smaller pieces troubled the existing paradigm of atomic space: as fundamental units of matter, atoms of an element were previously considered to be indivisible, and indeed, the word atomic "literally meant that which could not be subdivided" (Campos 3). The supposition that the atom could be divided suggested that the most elemental, most unified and indivisible space was, in fact, not indivisible at all.

Moreover, once divided, the component parts of the atom are even more befuddling to notions of space, solidity, and matter. In 1909, Ernest Rutherford's Geiger-Marsden experiment proved that most of the atom's structure consisted of

empty space, the findings of which he published in 1911. The very solidity of matter was once again radically undermined. This pervading fascination with nuclear science did not escape Loy. When asked in a questionnaire posed by *View* what she saw in the stars, she responded contrarily, insisting on “Our need of an instrument analogous to, yet the inverse of a telescope, which would reduce to our focus the forms of entities hitherto visually illimitable, of whose substance the astronomical illuminations are but the diamond atoms and electrons” (*LaLB* 307).

Whereas the atom overturned everything that the scientific world thought they understood about the world of physics, the radium atom was a particular enigma. In an address to Vassar College in 1921, Marie Curie recounted the consequences of her 1897 discovery of radium, and she conveys a sense of awe in response to radium’s inherent instability:

The scientific history of radium is beautiful. The properties of the rays have been studied very closely. We know that particles are expelled from radium with a very great velocity near to that of the light. We know that the atoms of radium are destroyed by expulsion of these particles, some of which are atoms of helium. And in that way it has been proved that the radioactive elements are constantly disintegrating and that they produce at the end ordinary elements . . . That is, as you see, a theory of transformation of atoms which are not stable, as was believed before, but may undergo spontaneous changes. (n.pag)

Radium is in a continual state of decomposition and transformation, and is never at any moment in the identical state that it had been a moment before. For notions of space and the concreteness of matter, radium’s inexhaustive mutability was confounding.

The ensuing public, literary and corporate interest in radium and atomic science cannot be understated; as Luis Campos describes, radium gave rise to “an immensely popular craze” (1). Literary texts were frequently printed alongside scientific articles on the atom in popular publications such as the *Fortnightly Review*, *The New FreeWoman*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, *The Criterion*, *The Dial*, and the *Athenaeum* (Vetter 10-11; Whitworth “The Physical Sciences” 42). Further, on Labour Day in 1903, the American Museum of Natural History was compelled to hire a policeman to move crowds onward from the popular exhibit of radium, and public lectures about radium were a sell-out. Radium even appeared in a wide

array of commercial products, from luminous watches, to toothpaste and “radium spiked diet bread” (“Crowds Gaze on Radium” 100; Campos 11-12). Thus although the truly destructive potential of atomic energy was yet undiscovered during most of Loy’s career, the coverage of the spectacular early developments infiltrated public awareness.

Shifting perceptions of space and matter in the wake of new physics filtered into literary consciousness. Yet, as Whitworth points out, there are methodological problems inherent in the correlation between specific developments in rapidly evolving science to specific texts or writers. Atomic research continually produced fresh revelations, and the field was rife with disagreement: no definitively authoritative version of the atomic was available to scientists, let alone to the layperson. It is thus difficult to ascertain how up-to-date on contemporary scientific knowledge a writer was, or what version of the atomic they subscribed to. Moreover, particular atomic theories, namely Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle,⁸⁰ are deployed in literary scholarship in a way that Whitworth suggests is anachronistic (“Physics” 210-11). Heisenberg’s theorem provides an attractive mode of explaining representations of complementary but competing models of truth, the impossibility of attaining absolute truth, the inherent unreliability of truth systems, or the problems of objectification. Yet, Heisenberg formulated his principle in 1927; as Whitworth points out, if modernist writers of the 1910s and 1920s seem to allude to ideas of complementarity, it could not be in connection to subatomic particles (“Physics” 210-11).

This is not to suggest that correlations have not been productively put forth. In particular, Albright deploys wave-particle duality in order to trace atomic

⁸⁰ It is arguably little surprise that Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle attracted widespread fascination; Heisenberg suggested that energy between the atom and the outside world was exchanged merely in the act of observing the atom. In such a tiny particle, a shift in energy changes its state: the atom cannot be observed without undergoing change. As such, the more accurately one measures the atom’s location in space, the more impossible it becomes to measure its momentum, and the more accurately one measures the atom’s momentum, the more inaccurate is its location in space. This relationship is known as complementarity, and it means that the atom is ultimately unknowable.

patterns in modernist poetry in *Quantum Poetics*. Albright argues that the atomic was a productive model for poets who strove to isolate the elementary particles of poetry, or “poememes” (1). These idealised poememes existed in the form of pre-textual absolutes, such as symbols, images, absolute rhythms, absolute metaphors, the vortex, and objective correlatives, and “endow the finished poem with an electric charge of signification” (4-5). Albright draws on the distinction between particle- and wave-like elemental behaviour in order to classify the kinds of poememes evident in the poetry of Pound, Eliot and Yeats; yet, in no instance is the poet able to totalise the poetic atom according to a strict wave or particle model. Instead, Albright identifies a parallel between the slipperiness of the poetic atom to Neil Bohr’s extension of Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle in particle-wave duality (25).

Albright’s analysis productively isolates contrary tendencies in modernist poetry and the elusiveness of poetry’s atomic matter. However, the extent to which poets were aware of the particularities of atomic science, especially the complex theorem of wave-particle duality that was only conceived of in the late 1920s, is doubtful. Albright concedes this, and notes that with the exception of Pound, who aspired “to a genuinely quantum-mechanical view of the poetic act,” the appropriation of physics by poetics was an “exercise in metaphor, and a deceptive metaphor at that” (2). Indeed, as Whitworth asserts, the manifestation of the atomic in poetry is due largely to its presence in popular culture, and scientific knowledge of atomic structure for a poet would be “of little use” if not for the circulation of its metaphors (“Physics” 208). The only certain connection that writers and physicists of the early twentieth century shared was one of metaphors of matter, solidity, space and energy. For example, it is this kind of metaphorical correlation that Marsden employs in her discussion on the nature of ideas and their formation:

Just as in the external world we find material bodies in a condition in which a disintegrating influence is breaking down their atomic structure, so there seems to obtain among ideas conditions in which that high intensification of energies which has made their existence possible, reinforced by the intense heat of multiple concentrations of mental energy, causes a complex idea to undergo disintegration, with the result that a total effect breaks down into its constituent

elements of a simpler sensory base united with a spatial “causal” action.
 (“Philosophy” 5)

Rather than suggest an organic connection between atomic energy and the energy of ideas, Marsden deploys the atomic figuratively in order to convey a sense of intensification, disintegration and extraction of compounds into elemental forms. And yet the success of Marsden’s description relies not on her accurate deployment of radioactive science (indeed, the implied causal connection between intense labour and atomic instability is not scientifically accurate), but an invocation, through metaphor, of heightened energy, intensity, and purification. It is a metaphorical appropriation of the atomic that this chapter identifies in Loy. Analogously, although Loy makes explicit reference to atoms, nuclei, radium and rays, there is no evidence that she had a working knowledge of atomic physics. My approach is rather different from that of Albright, for rather than isolating a specific theory of quantum mechanics, I am interested in the presence of the atom in Loy’s poetry in a far more general way; namely, its amenability for metaphors of volatility, porosity, and explosive energy.

5.2 The atomic irritant

Loy’s work entails a metaphorical appropriation of circulating scientific discourses, rather than a literal description of the mechanisms of atomic science. One specific way in which the atomic is manifested tropologically is as the nucleic “irritant,” introduced in Chapter Three. I further that discussion here in order to examine the implications of the irritant’s internal disruptions and interrogate its similitude to the atomic. Stauder contends that the irritant is irreducible, citing Loy’s essay “Gertrude Stein,” and specifically her statement that “the spiritual record of the race is this nostalgia for the crystallization of the irreducible surplus of the abstract,” as evidence (Stauder 364; *LoLB* 297). The irritant is irreducible, and therefore does indeed resemble an elemental particle, or as Stauder terms it, the “nucleus of being” (Stauder 358. In Loy’s “Aphorisms on Futurism,” the irritant behaves as something minute and unseen, a “mere irritant” that embodies a “new form” and, over time, evolves consciousness (*LoLB* 151). Thus metaphorically, Stauder’s term “nucleus of being” is apt not only because the irritant is stripped of superfluities, but it is also precondition of artistic production

and is therefore pretextual, indeed perhaps pre-conscious, for consciousness moves in response to its stirrings.

I would further suggest that the irritant evokes a very particular element: radium. In “Aphorisms,” Loy asserts that “IN pressing the material to derive its essence, matter becomes deformed,” and that the Futurists, who she celebrates here, “compress every aesthetic principle in one line” (*LoLB* 149-50). This deformation caused by the irritant bears striking resemblance to the process of compressing vast amounts of pitchblende to extract new material (radium). Further, the irritant operates similarly to radium’s constant self-disintegration and transformation that effects change in its environment, casting both itself and everything around it into instability (Curie n.pag.). Like radium, Loy’s irritant is a continuously evolving elemental force, its “form” is “hurtled” against itself (*LoLB* 149), and this results in the transformation of its own matter and in its surroundings; for example, in “Aphorisms,” the irritant not only hurtles itself against itself and is thus in continual transformation, but it moreover reshapes consciousness over time. I proposed in Chapter Three that the irritant can be understood in terms of Loy’s larger project of disrupting traditional understandings of space, and suggested how this is enacted in Loy’s poem, “Brancusi’s Golden Bird,” in which the sculpture disrupts its own stasis through the emanation of light, and the poem, accordingly, mirrors this on the level of sound. I take up the movement of Brancusi’s sculpture here for another end: to reveal that the structure’s inherent movement inflects not only itself, but implicates the external surroundings, deforming stable matter in an analogous way to radium.

The comparability of the irritant and radium is made clearer by considering Loy’s evaluation of movement in the poem “Brancusi’s Golden Bird” alongside “Brancusi and the Ocean,” a commentary on the way in which Brancusi’s art operates as “elemental form” (*Stories* 221-22). Loy reiterates in “Brancusi and the Ocean” the reshaping effect of light upon Brancusi’s art, stating that his work “actually connives with the atmosphere in any attainment of a prolongation of its direction” (222). But she also underscores the reciprocal nature of the art object and the “atmosphere” that surrounds it (in this instance, the light), and suggests that a mutual shifting of the physical properties of both occur.

Indeed “prolongation of its direction” could allude to both the elongation of the surrounding atmosphere in the direction that Brancusi’s sculptures “move,” such that space itself bends around his objects, or to the elongation of the objects in the direction that it reaches out into surrounding space. Thus, although the irritant does, as Stauder suggests, reflect a series of *internal* relationships, the irritant depicted here also implicates its *external* environment. Like radium’s disintegration, the irritant is not be directed by external forces—and thus its capacity for motility is inherent rather than controlled—but it nevertheless produces change in its surroundings. This is the most powerful characteristic of the irritant: its capacity to agitate movement and change in that which it is lodged, and to do so according to its very nature and not another’s will.

However, access to the irritant cannot be attained without difficulty: it requires both artistic vision and laborious work, and indeed connotes the arduous process of extracting irreducible radium from unrefined pitchblende. As Curie describes, it “took many years of hard work” to isolate the element radium, for there is less than one part of radium in a million parts of ore; further, the process was made significantly more onerous by the fact that the Curies had “no money,” and no “good laboratory”. The difficult process of streamlining Brancusi’s “Golden Bird” is described in a similar way:

some patient peasant God
had rubbed and rubbed
the Alpha and Omega
of Form
into a lump of metal (Loy *LōLB* 79)

The “peasant” extractor of the irreducible quality of the bird requires patience in order to perform the monotonous process of “rubbing” the irritant down from its unrefined, natural and diluted form, and into its pure, elemental form as a lump of metal.

The irritant is further invoked in Loy’s essay on “Gertrude Stein”. It is critical to reflect on Loy’s deployment of terminology; while the irritant is described in “Brancusi’s Golden Bird” and “Brancusi and the Ocean” as an element and a metal, in “Gertrude Stein,” it is compared to the nucleus. To be sure, these are not the same thing: a nucleus is a minute component part of an

elemental atom. However, Loy does not differentiate between the two in a strict way. She employs the term “nucleus” as a metaphorical representation of a “core”—which indeed the atomic nucleus is—and the irritant similarly operates as a core insofar as it is a reactive centre that provokes change in its surroundings. Yet, both “core” and “centre” are perhaps deceptive terms too, for while the irritant is “central” to change, it does not have a strict spatial location “in the centre”. In “Brancusi’s Golden Bird,” for instance, the irritant comes to embody the entire sculpture and is dispersed across its motile surface of reflections, rather than being located “in the middle”. In this way, Loy does not invoke an exacting scientific account of atomic structure in her deployment of the “irritant,” and “nucleus” and “atom” tend to be used in a way that is connotative, not descriptive.

The analogy between radium and the irritant is dependent upon the irritant’s inherent volatility and its destabilising effect on matter; yet, in Loy’s essay, “Gertrude Stein,” the irritant appears to be curiously represented in terms of being solidified. This is at odds not only with the depiction of the unstable irritant that Stauder identifies, but indeed with much of Loy’s work that propounds movement and flux. Nonetheless, this portrayal of the stable or concrete nucleus wavers in “Gertrude Stein,” such that its very solidity is called into question. This latent insistence on movement is foreshadowed at the opening of her essay, where Loy draws explicit parallels between the presence of “Being” in Stein’s work, and the notion of Being as it is theorised by Bergson: “This was when Bergson was in the air, and his beads of Time strung on the continuous flux of Being, seemed to have found a literary conclusion in the austere verity of Gertrude Stein’s theme—‘Being’ as the absolute occupation”. Thus from the outset, Loy marks the “continuous flux” as the very foundations of being that, she adds, connects one to “the very pulse of duration” (*LaLB* 289). Her early identification of Stein with Bergsonian *durée* and flux ostensibly trouble her subsequent descriptions of Being as static, for instance, as “The plastic static of the ultimate presence of an entity”. Yet even here, the designation of “static” is thorny, for it is qualified by the preceding “plastic,” suggesting a mutability that denies the very stasis of Being. One possible mode of reading this line is that the “static” that Loy refers to is not the condition of stillness, but rather a kind of

static electricity, a potentially powerful build-up of electrical energy caused by the contact and movement of atoms against one another. As Vetter and Parmar demonstrate, Loy's poetry is pervaded by evocations of electrical charges ("Unfinishing' Self"). "Static" being, conceived in this way, is thus charged with a volatile power.

However, Loy's subsequent references to the atomic invoke solidity in a way that cannot be so readily explained away. In particular, she conceptualises Stein's writing as a metaphorical atom, complete with a stable, centred nucleus and orbiting electrons:

The flux of Being as the ultimate presentation of the individual, she endows with the rhythmic concretion of her art, until it becomes as a polished stone, a bit of the rock of life—yet not of polished surface, of polished nucleus.[. . .]

The most perfect example of this method is *Italians* where not only are you pressed close to the insistence of their existence, but Gertrude Stein through her process of reiteration gradually, progressively rounds them out, decorates them with their biological insignia.

They revolve on the pivot of her verbal construction like animated sculpture, their life protracted into their entourage through their sprouting hair . . . a longer finger nail; their sound, their smell." (*LaLB*, 290. Second ellipsis in original)

The essence of Stein's writing is figured here as the nucleus, around which her words, through reiteration, orbit progressively. Yet, although Being is still characterised as "flux," the core of Stein's verbal construction operates as a stable "pivot". It is thus the reiterated words that appear to move like "sprouting hair" rather than the "polished stone" of the poem's essence. Even so, the stability of the nucleus remains under question; while, for example, the "rhythmic concretion" of the nucleus may describe the process of becoming solid, it is still nonetheless the process, and the changing state of the nucleus, that constitutes the power of Stein's work. Indeed the word that denotes the quality of solidity—concretion—is a verb, which underscores the inherent action of Stein's words. Moreover, in the line, "a bit of the rock of life—yet not of polished surface, of polished nucleus," the absent conjunction between "polished surface" and "polished nucleus" obscures the meaning. Are we to understand that Stein's writing is not that of polished surface *but* of polished nucleus? Or, conversely, that

it is not of polished surface, *or* of polished nucleus? Indeed in all of these examples, it is impossible to assert definitively whether or not the nucleus is concrete or motile, for the meaning of Loy's words can be shifted in both opposing directions. For this reason, I suggest that the core or essence of Loy's essay on Stein—its “nucleus”—is performative. Like Brancusi's bird, it may appear on the surface to be “a polished stone” of immobile matter, but its mutability is enacted in the very angle from which one views the work, resulting in the refracting of light in one instance, and the refracting of signification in the other.

Read alongside Loy's poem of the same title, the motility of the irritant in “Gertrude Stein”—and its inherent connection to radium—becomes increasingly compelling. In her poem, Loy compares Stein's work as a writer to that of Curie's ground-breaking research in radioactivity, drawing parallels between the modes of extraction that both must undertake in order to mine their raw materials for the most valuable elements:

Curie
 of the Laboratory
 of vocabulary
 she crushed
 the tonnage
 of consciousness
 congealed to phrases
 to extract
 a radium of the word (*L&LB* 94)

As Walter points out, the form of the poem itself echoes the act of compression that both Curie and Stein undertook, as every phrase is condensed to only the most essential words (672-73). For Curie, the work was not only gruelling but dangerous. She suffered bodily deformities as a result of prolonged exposure to radioactive isotopes, and radiation distorted her fingers and led to her eventual death. The comparison that Loy draws between Curie and Stein thus casts Stein as an artist who undertakes work of enormous proportions, and at great personal cost, in order to extract her final texts; as Lintz contends, the sheer number of manuscripts that Stein amassed on a daily basis left Loy in awe (94). Moreover, by selecting radium as the atom to which Stein's work would be compared, Loy

signals the inherent instability of her friend's work, for radium is in a continual process of degeneration and therefore never achieves a state of solidity.

Lintz's examination of Loy's deployment of physics metaphors in his doctoral thesis is focused specifically on radium. Lintz argues that Loy, T. S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis, and William Carlos Williams turn to the language of nuclear disintegration in order to engage with Stein's work. In Loy's work, he examines how the metaphor of nuclear degeneration takes the form of excentric and concentric pulses, for the radium atom continually spits particles from itself out into the atmosphere, and it is this expulsion that renders radium unstable. The radium metaphor here thus operates in a similar way to the irritant for Stauder: although radium for Lintz operates at the centre of excentric and concentric pulses, this centre is not an unchangeable solid. What characterises radium in Loy's assessment of Stein is therefore a dual process of excentric particle expulsion (the emanation of "rays") and an intensive process of extraction, or "relentless concentric purification" (95). He draws a connection here between these excentric forces and Bergsonian *durée* on one hand, and between concentric purification to Bergsonian intuition on the other. He argues that the same forces are at work in Loy's poem "Parturition," in which the birthing body enables a unity between concentric (intuition) and excentric (*durée*), between "self and universe," with the body at its centre; through these opposing forces, Loy locates a parallel between the processes of childbirth and the excavation of radium (117-20).

Radium provides a compelling metaphor for reading Loy's analysis of Stein and the operation of bodies in "Parturition" and *Insel*, although my own identification of radium metaphors differs. While it is the body in Lintz's analysis that is analogous to radium, in my own reading it is the irritant that embodies radium, and whereas this might manifest itself in the body and complicate its spatial integrity, it is not an equivalent for it. Furthermore, I do query the sustainability of Lintz's parallel between *durée* and excentric forces, for *durée* does not so much issue forth from the body in Bergson's thinking as the body taps into *durée* through intuition. Moreover, although Lintz is surely right when he suggests that new developments in physics radically alter understandings of the body (124), within the specific parameters of his thesis, this radicality is characterised by

radiation alone. By contrast, this thesis takes up radioactivity as but one way that this rewriting of the body is realised by Loy. As I suggest here, what connects the variable topological appearances of the atomic in Loy's writing to her poetry on domestic space and her response to the body as machine, are their effects upon bodily space, the sanctity of perceived limits, and motility.

This atomic irritant can be deployed to unravel the spatial limits of the domestic house identified at the outset of this thesis. In Loy's unpublished novel, *The Child and the Parent*, this is particularly enabled by the way that the irritant, as well as the body it is lodged within, enters into a relationship with the external world in which both fold into one another, obscuring their spatial contours. Further, the irritant not only overcomes the aesthetic limitations of the house, but also is harnessed in order to awaken consciousness and give the subject access to creativity. Like "Brancusi's Golden Bird," "Brancusi and the Ocean," and "Gertrude Stein" (both poem and essay), then, the irritant in *The Child and the Parent* is tied to both aesthetics and consciousness. Indeed, in the Chapter "The Will," the irritant is responsible for the child's first realisation of consciousness and aesthetic beauty, for she discovers these and the irritant in the same gesture.

The chapter relates the tale of a child coming into consciousness—or her identification of her own will—and is recounted metaphorically in terms of becoming aware of one's "nucleus". I use the phrase "becoming aware" rather than "locating" or "isolating" in order to deliberately avoid placing the nucleus in a definable space, for like the nucleus that Stauder identifies in "Brancusi's Golden Bird," it is unstable and motile, rather than an unwavering central core. The nucleus is discovered when the child overcomes its first spatial limitation—the boundary of the domestic house—and in doing so, comes to the realisation that "aesthetic suggestion" does not entail making the art "object" an "object," for this would cast it as static, but rather involves attention to its inherent transformations:

I urged my body through the lower bars of the fence to get into the field and gather this blue innocence whose beauty was reassuring after the mirage of the ruby blood. But even a flower held in the hand is not possessed, there is something more about it than itself, the aesthetic suggestion: to make beauty

one's own through some dimly conceived and incalculable transformation. —
(26)

In this instance, it is the suggestion of aesthetic beauty, dispersed across the blue and red of the field and the flowers, that embodies the irritant. As a manifestation of the irritant, the flower cannot be “possessed”: rather than become an object, it is an agent of change, provoking “incalculable transformation” in the child who beholds it. Indeed, like the relationship between Brancusi’s “Golden Bird” and its surroundings, this transformation between the irritant and the child is mutual, for the child undergoes radical change and the beauty that belonged to the flower is made the child’s “own”.

The obscuring of the child’s bodily space, her identification of consciousness, and her apprehension of beauty, all occur at the moment that spatial separations are dissolved:

Flooded with a sudden determination, the physiological vehicle is wiped out; once more for a moment consciousness overflows and there is nothing here but infinity and where I had been standing is left only a nucleus of power. As consciousness came upon my body, I came upon my will. It is redeemed by self-sufficiency. (26)

All spatial perimeters—bodily, conscious, and domestic—are dissolved as the child finds her artistic will. Consciousness becomes viscous, a liquid that “overflows” its physiological vehicle. The body’s properties as a container of consciousness are eradicated, it ceases to be a vessel, and it dissembles its own external boundaries from its inside. The child’s sense of aesthetic power is inextricable from the obliteration of the distinction between internal and external:

When I narrowed down to myself again, something of this power that had absorbed me remained within me; it is the power that hovers over our eyes and through our eyes reciprocates the light. The light that makes the inside and the outside One. And I said to myself, ‘I can know all things, achieve all things. All is in me; ready to emerge at a sign, a hint, with little cooperation, on some reflection.’ That certitude of the whole future before one. There were no barriers to that solar golden future; the light had washed it up at my feet. (26-27)

She feels an overwhelming sense of elation; now that the inside and the outside have been turned in upon each other, the body and its consciousness have launched into movement. The resounding effect of the nucleus is “absorbed” into

the body, endowing it with the capacity to “achieve all things,” a capacity that is closely entangled with the disruption of space and the distinction between the “inside and outside,” and the folding of the nucleus into the body. The nucleic power tellingly moves through the eyes in the figure of “light”, suggesting that it facilitates perception. And yet, “perception” is not entirely accurate, for this implies that the body makes objects of the world that it perceives. Rather, the process “reciprocates,” such that the body is both affected by and affects that which it comes into contact with. In this way, the light is also responsible in making the inside and outside one; in fact, the irritant has spilled beyond the flower and the field and aesthetic suggestion, and now inhabits the light too. The body and its consciousness are no longer containable—they no longer represent a fluid captive inside a vessel, but mingle with the surrounding world as Brancusi’s bird became intertwined with external space and light. Yet it is critical that in “The Will,” it is the body itself—in this instance, the eyes—that facilitates this unfolding. The body therefore is not compelled to “open up” by external forces, and it is not ripped open from the outside. Rather, it is responsible for its own movement and its own uncontainability. The body’s motility is an intrinsic quality.

5.3 Insel: Radium and spatial disintegration

Radium metaphors are also evident in Loy’s novel *Insel*, in which the coherence and severability of bodily space is depicted as radically compromised as a result. Insel’s emissions of the invisible Strahlen are reminiscent of radioactive rays. He appears to Jones to “leak out of himself” (102), and he has a luminous “halo” that glows with a pale light (105). Indeed, Insel’s *Strahlen*—like the rays of radium—have a similarly devastating effect on the bodies of those he comes into contact with and infects them with a curious kind of radiation poisoning. As she increases her meetings with Insel, Mrs Jones finds that her body also begins to deteriorate:

The painless buoyancy lasted well into the night when, as I sat calmly at work in my hotel bedroom, I unexpectedly disintegrated. My body, which had hitherto made upon itself the impression of a compact mass, springing a multiplicity of rifts, changed to a fractional covering I can only compare to the spines of a porcupine; or rather vibrant streamers on which my density in plastic undulation was being carried away—perhaps to infinity. A greater dynamism than my own rushed in to fill the interstices. Looking down at myself I could see my sensation. The life-force blasting me apart instead of holding me

together. It set up a harrowing excitement in my brain. An atomic despair—so awful—my confines broke down. (150)

Although her body assumes a dynamic rush of power, this force “blast[s]” her apart; Mrs Jones has lost control over her body, which—although having begun as a “compact mass”—begins to rapidly decompose, particle by particle. Her body assumes the quality of radium; as it violently emits “vibrant streamers” into the atmosphere, it releases an enormous amount of energy, and it quickly begins a process of atomic decay. Spatial severance between bodies is consequently troubled: Jones struggles to maintain the distinction between herself and Insel, for she recognises her atomic pulverisation as “Insel’s”. Lintz similarly reads Insel as a metaphorical lump of radium, and argues that by figuring Insel as such, Mrs Jones, “who uses the most modern technology available to register Insel’s rays” becomes a metaphorical Curie, who works vigorously to understand how these rays operate (124). As Lintz points out, contact with radioactive material inverts subject-object relations, for the radioactive object renders radioactive that which it comes in contact with, and thus the observing subject similarly becomes, with time, another radioactive object. While Jones undergoes such a transition, unlike Curie, she cannot sustain her analysis of her radioactive object, and in order to prevent further damage to herself, she extricates herself from her relationship with Insel by the end of novel (Lintz 125-26).

The analogy between radium and Curie, and Insel and Jones, is not, however, scientifically precise. Unlike the conditions of radium and observing bodies, Insel and Mrs Jones do not deteriorate simultaneously: Jones’s body is poisoned by Insel’s *Strahlen* and begins to physically deteriorate, while Insel concurrently gathers his strength. Jones’s disintegration throws her into a state of frantic delirium a “maddening with desire for a thing I did not know—a thing that, while being the agent of his—my—dematerialization alone could bring him together again” (151). On one hand, Jones’s and Insel’s consciousnesses appear to be merging: Jones not only begins to experience Insel’s maddened, impulsive desire, but her pronouns, “his—my—” are muddled, and she has trouble distinguishing his consciousness from her own. Nonetheless, it is only Jones who is dematerialising; Insel, on the contrary, is reforming and coming “together again”. In light of this, the order of the pronouns suggests that a replacement is

taking place—dematerialisation was once characteristic of *Insel*, but now that his *Strahlen* have taken hold of Jones, she has taken over the process of disintegration. “[H]is—my—” is thus not merely a confusion between the two bodies, but Jones’s realisation that it is now her atoms, rather than his, that are bursting apart. Accordingly, both characters are at once intimately conjoined and yet distinguishable; their experiences bleed into one another’s, and yet their bodies operate separately.

Insel not only enacts the overlapping of bodies and consciousnesses, but also their proliferation. Thus another appropriation of quantum mechanics in Loy’s work is that of atomic fission; in Loy’s writing, this is manifested in the proliferation of bodily space. Like Loy’s other scientific appropriations, this is not structured by a faithful application of scientific principles. To be sure, many of her texts that represent proliferation were written before nuclear fission was achieved in the late 1930s. Nonetheless, the penetrability of the atom was established long before atomic fission was successfully actualised.⁸¹ As I have argued, public knowledge of this overturned previous notions of the containability and coherence of Euclidean space and, by analogy, the unity of bodily space. Indeed, according to Armstrong, there is an affinity between the dissolution of matter’s solidity by nuclear science and Loy’s embrace of Christian Science—which renders the world “pure mind” (“Loy and Cornell” 211).

The instances of bodily and conscious overlap and proliferation in *Insel* do not entail a clean split of one body from its doubles; rather, each body remains both interconnected and distinct, both singular and multiple. They are, to a degree, extensions of Bergson’s critique of the role of geometry in determining individuality. Indeed, the fission of a cell presents a useful trope for elucidating the difficulty in approaching the world through a geometrical lens for both Bergson and Loy. The body in Loy’s writing has indefinable limits, splinters and becomes multiple while overlapping with other, similarly uncontainable bodies. If we recall, for example, my examination of “The Effectual Marriage” in Chapter Two, the three figures of Gina, the narrator and the poet cannot be readily

⁸¹ As early as 1909, Rutherford proved the penetrability of the atom in his Geiger-Marsden experiment.

disentangled; in “Ladies in an Aviary,” an overlap similarly begins to emerge between the birds in the cage and the poem’s narrator, indicating that neither the birds, the narrator, nor the cage that appears to keep them separable and distinguishable from each other, are impermeable. By comparison, Bergson argues that individuality—the containment of a unique self within the boundaries of a singular body—are troubled by the nature of reproduction which results in a “fragment of the old” being embodied in a new body. As such, individuality is never complete, as each body carries within it the detached parts of older, parent bodies and therefore “harbors its enemy at home”. By extension, the imperative to continue human existence across time “condemns [the individual] never to be complete in space” (*Creative* 13). It is this trouble that Bergson locates in the search for individuality—that the production of whole and separate units defies the very logic of reproduction itself—which is most productive in Loy’s writing.

While Bergson maintains that spatial abstraction is the key obstacle in defining individuality—that is, individuality exists if we can only train ourselves to not depend upon notions of wholeness and severability—Loy’s representation of bodies in *Insel* is more complex. It therefore indicates the way in which Loy employs a model of atomicity (in this case as it is articulated by Bergson) not by adhering to it exactly, but by pushing it to more experimental ends. Take for instance the moment in which Jones touches Insel’s temple, a point on his body from which she can feel his *Strahlen* emit:

Straightway I found myself possessed of an ability to form a ‘mental double’ (for no portion of my palpable substantiality was in any way involved), a mental double of my own temple.

This was one manifestation of how in Insel’s vicinity pieces of bodies would seem to break off as astral fractions and on occasion hang, visually suspended in the air. Quite apparently to my subconscious the bit of my skull encaving the fragile area flew off me, crashed into his and stuck there. (65-66)

In that moment of contact, Jones is able to replicate a part of herself. That is, she does not merely become aware of her own doubling; she is its agent, for what she acquires is the “ability” to double at will. This is rather at odds with the suggestion of the second sentence, which insinuates that doubling in Insel’s presence happens spontaneously, that body parts break away as a consequence of his mere

proximity, which would render the splintering body an object being played upon by Insel's *Strahlen*. The status of Jones's body as either the object of Insel's emissions or the subject of her own splintering is therefore medial. Both Insel's *Strahlen* and Jones therefore operate as distinct agents, and yet Jones is equally acted upon. Further, Insel's subjectivity is difficult to pin down, for he seems to have no control over the actions of his *Strahlen*. Rather, the *Strahlen* appear to act as if of their own volition, making Insel its medium.

The effect that this has over the spatial integrity of each body is multitudinous; both Insel and Jones are distinct, and yet in order to maintain the doubled spectre of the temple, they remain interconnected. In addition, in this passage Jones is no longer a singular person, but a person plus a mentally projected piece of temple. The same could be said of Insel, for the temple does not remain attached to Jones but "crash[es]", lodging itself there as a part of his own skull. However, these cannot be strictly considered *doubles*, for it is not an entire body which is being reproduced, but a disembodied fragment. That this fragment does not partake in Jones's "palpable sustainability" signifies not only that the doubled temple is itself not a tangible, but a mental, projection, but also that Jones's body is not diminished by the appearance of the temple, for her own "sustainability" makes no physical investment in the apparition. Can the floating temple therefore be considered bodily at all? It is not "whole," and yet being whole is clearly not a condition of being for any of Loy's bodies. It certainly issues forth from the body, and yet without tangibility, it is arguably more akin to a hologram or hallucination than a bodily fragment. However, despite her claim that the temple does not drain her own sustainability and thus does not partake of her own bodily processes, Jones identifies the temple as a fragment broken off from her own, a real-world bodily "piece" rather than a phantom. The floating skull casts itself and all surrounding bodies into states of transition: they are neither subject nor object; not whole, singular, or double; and both Insel and Jones are severed (from each other and from the temple) and intertwined at once. The temple itself cannot be considered to be either entirely bodily or entirely non-bodily, but rather occupies an ethereal space in-between. The consequence for bodily space is that it is largely indefinable, for it can be splintered and rejoined to

another body, and even teeters between the bodily and ghostly. Its parameters are mercurial.

The body in *Insel* rarely splinters in exactly the same way or with identical effects. Whereas in the above extract a bodily fragment doubles and breaks away from the “original,” experiencing body, other moments in the novel depict a more total process of bodily proliferation that obscures such a ready identification of the origin. Jones describes the effect of Insel’s *Strahlen* on one day as a “sort of doubling of space where different selves lived different ways in different dimensions at once. Sitting on the sidewalk—floating in an Atlantic Ocean full of skyscrapers and ethereal cars” (117). In this case, the body—which, according to Bergson, occupies the centre of experience—is now experienced through two different centres at once (*Matter* 12). Whereas the disembodied temple has clear origins in the “whole” and tangible version of Jones, the doubled body here can account for two different sets of experience, both of which are recalled simultaneously by the same consciousness. The consciousness is thus still centralised in Jones, who can follow the movements of multiple “bodies” at once, and is thus singular. However, it is also multiple, mediating bodily experience on two different fronts—sitting on a sidewalk and floating in the ocean. Although the severance between the two centres is more complete than in Jones’s doubled temple, the unification of both experiences in a single memory complicates what constitutes a bodily limit, or where one body ends and the next begins.

In the examples above, Jones’s narration of events reveals that her experiences of disintegration and proliferation, although curious or maddening, are non-threatening. Other instances are more ominous. The morning after Jones is faced with the spectre of her own dematerialisation, she loses control over her body as a result of another kind of doubling, whereby her body remains singular, but her control over it is split apart:

Although I was all of a piece, my very bones were weak. I had to walk carefully. I found out why, when climbing slowly up the hill to the station to buy a newspaper, I was cleft in half. Like the witch’s cat when cut apart running in opposite directions, suddenly my left leg began to dance off on its own. Thoroughly frightened at this bisectational automatism, I somehow hopped to the fence on my right and clung to it in an absurd discouragement (151-52).

Although her physical body is still intact, her body as a centre of experience has been cleaved in two, and she only retains agency over one half. The other half is not attached to any consciousness, and so does not experience its own movements; it has become an automaton. It is thus as if her body is being operated by two different control centres: the first is her own consciousness, and the second she has no access to—it is, in a sense, an experience diametrically opposed to that of the astral body, in which two bodies occupy differing spaces but are united in a single ego. The loss of control over half of her body engenders a radically different response, for in the instance (where she experiences her body traversing both the sidewalk and the ocean), Jones describes her “sense of timeless peace—of perfect happiness” (117). The second, in contrast, brings only terror. The atomic subject thus often teeters dangerously between independence, ecstasy and annihilation.

It is entirely fitting that the atomic body carries with it not only the potential to unleash creative energy in spectacular proportions, but that it also registers the peril that this entails. This volatility is alluded to in Loy’s poetry in the form of radical bodily change or in the evolving creative consciousness. Her identification of the atomic with eruptions of energy is on occasion, however, stated literally. In the 1929 *Little Review* “Questionnaire,” for example, Loy’s response to the question “What do you look forward to?” reads: “The release of atomic energy”. Another such example is the depiction of a phantasmic surge of energy in her poem “Time Bomb”. While much of Loy’s other work was written before the consequences for splitting the nucleus had unfolded, “Time Bomb” was written around 1945.⁸² The poem does not name atomic energy, and yet the coincidence of its composition with the detonation of two atomic weapons in Japan, coupled with its description of a violent explosion, suggests that the poem registers concurrent world events. Indeed, given the poem’s timeliness at the end of World War Two, it is curiously devoid of references to political tensions or national identity. Rather, “Time Bomb” explores the consequences of explosiveness in terms of time and the present moment. Words not only describe an explosion, but themselves appear to be in the process of exploding, of moving

⁸² c. 1945. First published in 1961 in *Between Worlds* 1:2. Reprinted in *LoLB* 123. Date of composition asserted by Cristanne Miller, 194.

outward in pieces from a central point so much so that even punctuation splits off from the words it was once adjoined to. But despite this appearance of motion, the movements of these words are captured in a single, frozen (printed), moment:

The present moment
is an explosion ,
a scission
of past and future

leaving
those valorous disreputables ,
the ruins ,

sentinels
in an unknown dawn
strewn with prophecy .

Only the momentary
goggle of death
fixes the fugitive
momentum .

Cristanne Miller argues that although the title suggests movement, the content of the poem itself is characterised by stasis, as the only active verb, “fixes,” describes a state of motionlessness (195). I would further suggest that this effect of stasis is a result of pinpointing a singular moment that inevitably sets up time as an externality by positing the present as a discrete instant, and that does not take into account the flow of the past into the present. Specifically, it is the “goggle of death,” the allusion to the devastation in Japan, which has frozen momentum that is otherwise “fugitive”; the death-toll and the lived consequence of the bomb has halted time in its tracks. In this sense, the “Time-Bomb” of the title reflects not the mechanisms of the bomb itself that split atoms apart, but its splintering effect on the conscious experience of duration, as the events of 1945 force a violent disruption of regular experience.

5.4 The atomic text: “Mother Earth”

Loy’s representation of the atomic in her poetry reveals how the disassembling of corporeal space results in a body that is in a constant state of mutability, and

which is, as a result, supremely poetic and creative, but which treads the line of annihilation. As Chapter Two argued, the body *in* the poetry and the body *of* the poetry are in close symbiotic relationship with each other, such that the troubling of limits spills into the formal structures of the text itself. Bodies of text for Loy are thus also unstable and mutable. Just as corporeal bodies split apart, fuse together, and secrete beyond their own perceivable edges, so too do the texts themselves. Some of Loy's poems can thereby be considered atomic, as they radically complicate their very status as enclosed bodies of text. The final part of this chapter examines the unpublished manuscripts for "Mother Earth," in which the fission between multiple meanings is played out in early drafts of the poem in the process of composition. I propose that "Mother Earth" can be read as atomic insofar as meaning in the poem fractures internally into two poems, neither of which should be hierarchized over the other. Rather, both should be held at once if the creative power of the poem, as well as the creative power of the poem's subject, Mother Earth, is to be maintained. This radical severing of meaning is generative, and enacts precisely the kind of splintering that is at work in texts like "The Effectual Marriage" and *Goy Israels*. The difference between these texts and "Mother Earth" is that this splintering happens not only on the level of the word, the clause, or the corporeal body, but to the poem as an entirety: the proliferation of meaning results in a poem that is at once singular under the title, "Mother Earth," and multiple. Like the atomic body, the whole text divides and is nonetheless unified.

Although a version of "Mother Earth" was posthumously published in Conover's *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, I am interested here in the manuscript drafts. This is because the poem's subject—the evolution of the earth over time and the resulting creative power—is lost in the short published version of only four lines. The manuscript, on the other hand, spans over fifteen pages, including Loy's notes. The drafts reveal repetitions and gradual evolutions of words and sounds in the poem that are occluded by considering the published version alone. Moreover, the multiple repercussions of the shifting grammatical meaning on the rest of the poem cannot be accounted for in the shorter version. Indeed, in the attempt to represent a containable and manageable "piece" of Loy's much longer poem, an order is imposed upon the published version that does not exist in the draft. Its

unruliness is clipped and contained, its protean limits made stable, and as a result, its creative force elided.

The principal quatrain posits the relationship between the bedridden earth and the act of creation—a relationship that is central to the poem’s overarching meaning. The sense of the poem shifts depending on how one interprets this quatrain, and this hinges on the way that the words “earth” and “out-ages” are read, and how their grammatical relationship is understood:

An eyeless negress
the bedridden earth
out-ages
the creational caress

I call these lines principal because they reoccur most frequently in Loy’s drafts, and because they are worked over in more detail than any other line in the poem. It was also these four lines that were chosen by Conover as the representative lines of the poem published as “Mother Earth” in the 1982 edition of *The Last Lunar Baedeker*. In addition, in the various drafts of the poem, it is from these lines that most others appear to spring: versions of this quatrain appear on nearly every drafted page—often more than once—and other lines of the poem are tested around these. For example, the lines “All over-crept with / Concupiscence,” “And over-crept with / curiosity—,”⁸³ “Concubine of the zodiac” and “Concubines & / Harlequins—” are positioned next to early versions of the central four lines, “An eyeless Negress / this root-ridden Earth” (see Appendix C.9).

The manuscript pages for “Mother Earth” consist of multiple drafts that were composed at different times. In these drafts, Loy experiments with possible lines for her poetry that register the variant implications that the different readings of “outages” and “earth” entail; that is, the split in meaning is registered and played out in early versions of stanzas before they make the later draft. Two of the manuscript pages (Appendix C.15 and C.5) appear to be more “final” than all the other pages, which appear to be earlier drafts, and the variant consequences for

⁸³ Originally “consciousness”; this is crossed out in the manuscript and replaced with “curiosity”.

meaning are tested throughout the drafting process. I differentiate earlier drafts from later ones as they are all written in a different pen, whereas the more “final” drafts are written in thicker ink. Moreover, earlier drafts are more haphazard—notes are written around the body of the text in fracturing columns; doodles and numerical sums are etched into the white spaces between the poem’s text; and particular images are worked out several times over, sometimes each experimenting with slightly different wording.

The meaning of the poem, hinging upon the “bedridden negress” lines, remains ambiguous and open-ended in the more “final” versions. But their manifestations in earlier drafts (in which the lines change by degrees) reveal the teasing out of these possible meanings, for the different versions of these lines lend themselves to particular interpretations. It is critical to note, however, that one cannot ascertain whether both pages (C.5 and C.15)⁸⁴ are a part of the same “later”⁸⁵ draft, or whether one precedes the other. On one hand, both pages indicate a starting point for the poem: one by the roman-numerical “I.” in the top right corner, and the other by the title, “Mother Earth” written across the top of the page.⁸⁶ Further, whereas one of these pages no longer reveals experimentation with the order of lines of poetry, the other has additional lines that appear to be added at the bottom in an after-thought, and could thus be considered to be more of a rough draft than the other. On the other hand, both pages appear to be

⁸⁴ There is no pagination in the manuscript. I have labelled each of the 15 pages in Appendix C, and I use this pagination in my commentary only for clarity and the reader’s reference.

⁸⁵ By “later,” I do not mean to imply that Loy had no intention of making any further changes—indeed, given the notation in the margins, it seems clear that she intended to make further drafts. Rather, I mean that of the surviving manuscripts, both 5 and 15 appear to be in a more complete state than the others; that is, the other manuscript pages seem to culminate in pages 5 and 15.

⁸⁶ In fact, C.5 is titled “Mother Earth” twice: once underlined with a straight line, and with a gap between the title and the top of the page, and this is subsequently followed by nine more lines of poetry; and another title, with four subsequent lines of poetry, compressed in the margin between the first title and the top of the page. This second title is underlined not with a straight line, but with a curved line, and it is possible that the lines of poetry that follow it are an addition to the original nine lines that appear beneath the initial title, and that the second title (underlined with the curved line) is not a title at all, but a way of indicating that the four lines that appear in the top margin of the page are part of the same poem.

written using the same nib, and collectively, they represent almost all the lines that are experimented with in other drafts. Both pages do contain slightly differing versions of the central four lines, and yet this is not necessarily indicative that the drafts are separate, as the repetition and incremental evolution of lines in Loy's poetry also appears in other authorised poems that were published in Loy's lifetime, for example in "Human Cylinders" (with "revolving in the enervating dust"), in "Lady Laura in Bohemia" ("I think he's simply di-vi-ne"), and in "Property of Pigeons" ("Pigeons doze," "Pigeons arise," "Pigeons disappear," "Pigeons . . . appear to reappear"). As it is unclear whether both or only one of these pages is intended as the more "final" version, I here consider neither page as a later version than the other. Indeed, corrections are present on both pages, denoting that they are subject to further revision and that both are part of a larger, incomplete and evolving whole.

Even in the "final" drafts, then, the central quatrain shifts across reiterations, and these variant forms have different implications for meaning as well. The published quatrain in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker* takes an identical form to one of the more "final" drafts of the manuscript (C.5); to reiterate, "An eyeless negress / the bedridden earth / out-ages / the creational caress". In contrast, the same lines on the other "final" draft appear as:

The bedridden negress, earth
outages the creational caress (C.15)

One way in which these lines can be read is that the earth, figured as the bedridden "negress," disrupts creative power. The above version of the poem (C.15) is particularly amenable to this reading, for "outages" appears on the same line as "creational caress," and so there is an implicit connection between the two. "Outages" suggests a mechanical or electrical power failure that is executed by the earth, a "bedridden negress," a force that curtails the "creational caress". This connection may be less apparent in the other late draft (C.5) and the published version in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, in which a line break severs "outages" from "the creational caress," and yet, it is not occluded; indeed, the additional qualifier, "eyeless," before "negress" denotes a lack of vision, a suggestion that the earth is blind to the creational gesture. Moreover, on this page of the manuscript, these lines are followed by:

Unconscious sorceress
and mother of the snake

over brown & over-run
and unawake
to birds words— (C.5)

The earth is thus pitched against creative forces and becomes an insidious “unconscious sorceress,” a mother of “snakes” and “adders” who is “unawake / to birds words”. To this Mother Earth, language—“words”—and the melodic twittering of birds are incomprehensible. Earth herself is characterised by atonal hissing, a language of snakes that is devoid of both musicality and sense-making, and this is echoed in the repeated sibilance of “eyeless,” “negress,” “caress,” “unconscious,” “sorceress” and “snake”.

This way of reading the relationship between the earth and the oppositional creational caress is registered and played out in earlier drafts of the poem. For example, in a more preliminary draft (Appendix C.10), the short-circuited “creational caress” is cast in terms of the disruption of evolution:

The Bedridden negress
Earth
Outages
Creational caress

of years
revolving from their four-fold palms
pigmented seasons
upon her dearth
of participance

Although severed by a line break, the “creational caress” is syntactically connected to the following preposition, “of,” and it is thus the creational caress of “revolving” over “years” that is curtailed. The “their” of these stanzas (“their four-fold palms”) is the creative force behind the revolving of the years, and it is at odds with Mother Earth, or the “her” whose “dearth / of participance” permits the surfacing of the “pigmented seasons”. It is thus Mother Earth who curiously upends creativity as it evolves over time. The harbingers of creativity, characterised only by their “four-fold hands” and their opposition to Mother

Earth, remain unspecified and elusive. In one of the later drafts (C.15), these lines appear in the same sequence but without “of”: “The bedridden negress, earth / outages the creational caress / the years / pour from their four-fold palms”. The connection between “creational” and “the years” is thus occulted, although its traces still persist, for the indented “the years” beginning with a lower case “t” implies a continuation of the previous line, and the plural and gender-neutral “their” that possess the four-fold palms is a different entity from the singular and feminine “negress, earth”.

Further traces of this reading of the oppositional nature of Mother Earth and creative forces can be located on another early draft of the poem (Appendix C. 2). The speaker locates a physical separation between herself and the infinitude of the sky at which she yearns to see; this separation acts as a “roof” that keeps her enclosed, trapping her in and thwarting her vision.

I had always felt that
The roof is a direct complot
to prevent our peering into
heaven.

This “roof,” rather than being inanimate and put in place by another, controlling subject, has its own insidious subjectivity; it is a “complot,” an active part of an unnamed conspiracy that blots the heavens out. As if to illustrate this, a long line is drawn in the manuscript above these lines, separating them from preceding lines, and literally creating a division—a textual “roof”—that encloses the lines within a tight space. Another drawn line underscores Loy’s verse, again demarcating these words from those beneath. In this way, Loy forces artificial spatial divisions upon the page that enact the same gesture of enclosure that obstructs the speaker’s view of the heavens. On one hand, this roof could be a part of a human-made structure. The speaker stands within this construct and looks toward the heavens like Emily Dickinson’s “I Dwell in Possibility — (466),” but unlike Dickinson’s poem, she sees not “The Gambrels of the Sky” (8) and the proffering of endless aesthetic possibility, but the surfaces of enclosure and limitation. On the other hand, the “roof” could be a part of Mother Earth herself, a canopy of the “overgrown” and “overcrept” earth of the later draft (C.5), and which is “unawake / to birds words”. In this instance, the imposing structure is

the anti-linguistic Mother Earth, who finds incomprehensible the birds of the sky and the words that constitute poetry, and who is a counterpoint to the vast endlessness of heavenly skies that the speaker is straining to see.

An alternate reading of the poem suggests that Mother Earth is not the adversary to creativity, but rather predates it. This is implied in particular by the way that “outages” is typed on one of the later drafts (C.5); that is, it is written with a hyphen, as “out-ages,” and so it can also be understood not as a verbalisation of outage, but as a state of being older. By drawing attention to the possible severance between “out” and “ages,” “out-ages” does not simply collapse into the combined “outages,” but could operate in a similar way to the word, “outlast” or “outperform,” such that “out” and “ages” are split into a verb (ages) and a modifier (out). Understood through this lens, the poem is about an earth that is older than “the creational caress”. Like the first reading, this earth does not understand language; however, rather than anti-linguistic (that is, in conflict and struggle against language), this earth is pre-linguistic, a maternal semiotic that is foundational to, and presupposed by, any act of creativity. Read in this way, the persistent sibilance are not instances of “anti-language,” but an inarticulate sound that gestures towards the beginning of language, and it is out of these that “consciousness,” or conscious language, arises. Indeed, particular lines in the poem lend themselves to this reading. For example, in the stanza directly above the “out-ages” passage, the earth does not appear to be opposed to language or consciousness, but is in fact its source:

Mother Earth.
 Crumbling silence—last disgrace
 in pain of your embrace—
 out last disgrace
 The incooperative [sic] loam of consciousness

As the “incooperative loam of consciousness,” Mother Earth may make no attempt to aid in the shaping of consciousness, but she is nonetheless its “loam,” the soil out of which it springs. The unconscious sorceress is thus both uncooperative and resistant to creativity while also being its source; indeed Loy’s particular choice of word, “incooperative,” resembles not only “uncooperative” but “incorporative”—she resists that which she constitutes. She is a complicated

and terrible power, one whose motives and tactics cannot be predicted or controlled, but who, like the mother in “Parturition,” is supremely creative.

This reading of Mother Earth as the creative loam is also played out in one of Loy’s earlier drafts of the poem (Appendix C.7). The stanza “years / revolving from their four-fold palms⁸⁷ / pigmented seasons / upon her dearth / of participance” is repeated, but followed by:

annual alms
 of lion loves
 & woodbines
 Of pines and vines
 Of binds words
 & blood wort

urged by aspiring fire
 & celibate waters—

This passage makes reference not only to the continuing growth of Mother Earth (“pines and “vines”) but to the evolution of time through to the current moment. It alludes to modernity by reference to an early twentieth-century cigarette company (woodbines), which takes a natural product of the earth and processes and repackages it for modern consumption. Mother Earth persists not only in the continuation of her foliage, then, but in the very nature of modern consumerism. This passage also alludes to a multitude of languages, to the English “words” and the German “wort,” which are not only spoken by the body but are inscribed in its “blood”. Language, here, is also not antithetical to Mother Earth’s creations, for the bodies that she has generated are deeply connected with the words they utter. In this case, Mother Earth is not oppositional to modern language; she is its antecedent. Yet, her presence still persists: her vines and pines remain entangled in the present moment, and the iteration of words (in every language) are still “urged” by her “aspiring fire / & celibate waters”. Indeed, the modern commodity product, language, and the earth are all entwined through sound, through the recurring rhyme of “pines,” “vines,” “woodbines,” and “binds”.

⁸⁷ “four-fold palms” is written almost in line with “revolving from their,” but ever so slightly higher and, it appears, with slightly different pressure on the pen. It therefore may have been added retrospectively.

This is not to suggest that one reading must be privileged over the other, and that this tension between two ostensibly incompatible readings needs resolution. Indeed, to invoke an analogy to Heisenberg's complimentary pairs, I argue that both conflicting readings should remain possible at once. By looking at the earlier and multiple drafts of the poem, it becomes apparent that these variant readings are not incidental, but have in fact been registered at all stages of the drafting process; the poem's multiple and conflicting implications have been considered by Loy and are deeply embedded in the poem's own evolution towards its latest (but never quite final) version. The poem is thus inherently splintered and must remain so, for the two opposing readings cannot be reconciled. Like its sorceress, the poem is both generative and volatile, proliferates meaning and yet threatens to short-circuit it in the same gesture, and is both singular and multiple. It is difficult to untangle the intricate and opposing meaning in this poem, for from ambiguity and resistance springs forth a plethora of signification. Indeed, perhaps it is only through her existence in these two oppositional modes at once that the eyeless sorceress of the poem ultimately retains the power to enact the third grammatical possibility of "earth" (as verb) and "outages" (as noun)—that is, it is she, the unspeakable maternal loam of aesthetic power, who retains the supreme right to "earth" the very outages that she wields to begin with.

While Loy's deployment of the atomic metaphors in her work does not entail a faithful adherence to the intricacies of scientific principles, it does provide a tropological model in which she could anchor her literary experiments. As this chapter has argued, this model draws on various manifestations of the atomic, such as radioactivity, decomposition, and fission. Rather than drawing on a particular or cohesive scientific theory, Loy therefore appropriates a variety of metaphors of atomicity as a springboard for articulating an unpredictable kind of motility that confounds spatial integrity. In the processes of its division, the body, or the body-of-text, is neither one nor two and morphs over time—it cannot be properly understood in strictly spatial terms, as it occupies several spaces at once and is subject to continual change. Rather, the process of fission is better identified with movement.

It is movement, and particularly motility, that enables the reader of Loy's writing to navigate her difficult and contrary engagement with various strands of science. Understanding movement through a Bergsonian lens, draws attention to the way in which the mobile body interacts with spatial limitations and temporality, not as a mathematical function of time and space, but as a temporal entity that cannot be spatially locked down. Bodies divorced from temporality—bodies like the machine—cannot participate in authentic movement, and spatial restriction enacts a set of additional restrictions to artistic production, freedom of experience, and gendered embodiment. Conceptualising Loy's account of movement as an appropriation of Bergsonian metaphysics, then, makes sense not only of the agency implicit in moving bodies, but moreover their creative potential. And whereas this was pitilessly curtailed in the spectre of the machine-body, different modes of scientific bodies—such as the atomic body—enable and heighten this creative potential.

Conclusion: Of Bodies and Lampshades

This thesis has argued that the writing of Mina Loy reveals a pervading insistence upon movement. Movement, here, is antithetical to space and stasis, and it is for this reason, coupled with Loy's early contact with Bergson's philosophy, that I have conceptualised movement in Loy's work through a Bergsonian optic. Indeed, I have demonstrated that Loy's aesthetic vision entails a radical extension of the original scope of Bergson's metaphysics. By reading Loy's writing in this light, I have charted her dual attraction and repulsion to her avant-garde contemporaries and the inordinately changing technosphere that tempered their work. At stake for Loy was the body's potential as a creative agent at a historical moment when its very nature was being vociferously contested: how was the body to be conceptualised in response to global warfare and the mechanisation of weaponry, or in answer to surgery and unforeseen limits on corporeal plasticity? What was to become of the feminine body once night had fallen on the nineteenth-century domestic "angel," and in the wake of feminisms that argued contrarily for purity in one instance, or free love in another? And how was the body to be represented through art forms that aspired increasingly not to represent the world as if through some mirror, but in order to test the very limits of its mediums? I have argued that a consideration of Loy's poetry and prose in terms of their expression and extension of Bergsonian movement elucidates how she productively navigated the resulting tensions of these questions, for it is motility that harnesses creativity and assures the body its agency.

I have approached the body in Loy's writing not only as a literal, corporeal entity, but tropologically, too, as bodies of text and of language. In fact for Loy, corporeal and linguistic bodies are not readily severable, for as I have argued, the two mutually produce each other, and the artistic fate of each relies upon that of the other. This is not only because bodies are represented through language in poetry and are thus constructed by it, but also because it is through writing and language that cloistered and restrained bodies unhinge their shackles. Birds write themselves out of cages, bodies out of houses, artists out of conventions, and women write themselves into subjecthood and artistry. Motility thus has consequences for artistic practice, for movement and its restriction present a means to either participate in art, or a means to occlude people from its practice

respectively. Bodies, then, are that which are inherently dynamic and creative, but this nature is curtailed when they are condemned to spatiality. Loy's poetics have wide-ranging implications not only for the representation of bodies, and not only for modes of representing these bodies through language, but also for thinking about how the relationship between artistic practice and free will is enacted on the level of embodiment. She conceptualises poetry as that which gives voice to bodies previously silenced, making artistic practice a sublimely political act.

Like the modernists with whom she worked, Loy aimed to reinvigorate her artistic materials, whether poetic language, painting, or collage, with new life through motility. Indeed, this insistence on embodied motility, I have argued, played a pivotal role in Loy's complex engagement with concomitant avant-garde movements like Futurism and New York Dada. Motility, rather than spatiality, is imperative to this reinvigoration: imposing structure and regimentation upon the art object short-circuits more creative encounters. Crucially, then, motility is characterised not only by movement, but volatility and unpredictability, for this is the lynchpin of creative freedom: authentic creativity cannot be causally plotted out like points on a line but is radical and unconstrained. It is this same tendency towards unpredictability that characterised Loy's involvement in the 1917 Exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists. The first issue of *The Blind Man* declared that this exhibition would have "no jury," and that any work submitted would be exhibited in alphabetical order (Roché 3). The strategy ensured that no artwork could be favoured over others except by accident—an accident that would result in "the most unexpected contracts" (3). In this way, unintended and fortuitous connections could be forged between works, and thus the layout of the exhibit became a way of producing artistic patterns:

Entering the chaos of the Indeps [sic] is entering a virgin forest, full of surprises and dangers. One is compelled to make a personal choice out of the multitude of paintings which assail one from all sides. It means strengthening your taste through ordeals and temptations; it means finding yourself, and it is a strain. (3)

The exhibit, rather than enforcing existing artistic hierarchies by choosing to display artworks according to theme or reputation, left the production of connections between different works in part to chance, and in part to the imagination of the viewer.

Loy both submitted her work to this exhibition, and published articles in the two issues of *The Blind Man*. In the first issue, Loy published “In . . . Formation,”⁸⁸ in which she claimed, like the “Indeps,” that the language and objects we already know must be looked at afresh. Too accustomed are we to viewing things through the same spectacled eyes: the way in which we approach the world must be jolted from the constraint of habit and education so that we “never see the same thing twice” (“In . . . Formation” 7). Indeed, the title of Loy’s article “In . . . Formation” enacts this through its play on language and the word “information”. By severing the word visually, Loy incites a double resistance to both the enforced “formation” of artistic merit in a traditional exhibition in which one artist is privileged over another, and to the “information” that such exhibitions depend upon in order to form their “diluted comparisons”. Moreover, Loy signals that by approaching not only the tangible art-object, but also language, in a habitual way, we miss an opportunity for grasping unexpected meanings. By breaking the word apart visually, Loy reveals the word “information” as we have not seen it before, eliciting our recognition of the double meaning within it, and language’s own pliability if only our vision were not constrained.

“In . . . Formation” was written as part of a revolt against the institutionalisation of art in the early twentieth-century, as well as part of Loy’s larger project of reinvigorating language by removing its constraints. Indeed, it is this interrogation of language conventions, and the testing of its preconceived limits, that makes Loy not only central to her own historical and artistic context, but also adds to her continued significance given the interests of postmodernist poetry, particularly L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry of the 1970s, the roots of which are frequently traced back to other modernist writers such as Gertrude Stein. The implications of Loy’s experimentation have, then, not been eclipsed by the close of the modernist period, but provoke insights into the nature of language that continue to be relevant in the postmodern literary moment.

⁸⁸ First published in *The Blind Man* 1, April 1917. Reprinted in *LaLB* as “The Artist and the Public”. The two versions are nearly identical, with the exception of the opening lines; because of the minor differences, I cite the first publication from *The Blind Man* here.

Part of Loy's continued relevance to the twenty-first-century is her interrogation of the way meaning operates in the art object, which can further be read as an examination of matter and its value. She insists that value is not fixed but mutable, and to impose fixed value upon matter is to circumvent further proliferations of meaning. The value of matter can refer to the contents of a word, or the relation of words or art objects to one another, and can thus be aesthetic. However, it can also refer to bodies: bestowing fixed values upon bodies—as the marriage market does in “Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots” and “Ladies in an Aviary”—strips them of their free will and renders them a commodity for exchange. Loy's “objects” operate not as commodities, but as inherently motile bodies whose values cannot be pinned down and limited. This is where Loy's work goes beyond that of Bergson, as matter for Loy is not the antithesis of intuition and *élan vital*, but its manifestation. Indeed in this way, bodies, when motile, cannot be truly considered as objects at all. This wrenches “objects” and bodies from their capitalist operations by removing them from an exchange market that relies upon fixed and predictable value, and thus perhaps offers us a counterpoint to what Lieven de Cauter calls “transcendental capitalism,” an ostensibly “all-inclusive condition of possibility” (41). Rather, art, language and bodies become refuges from economies of exchange. Moreover, viewing bodies in terms of inherent movement makes Loy's vision particularly relevant to a contemporary world characterised by mobility, but not motility. According to Cauter, capitalism's proliferation and manifestation as the “generic city” is enabled by the mobility of globalisation (43-44), while its sustainability depends upon the “capsule”; that is, enclosed artificial environments—trains, cars, shopping malls, the cocoons of portable media players—that abolish the experience of the everyday in favour of the capitalist fantasy. Capsules endeavour to preclude crime, poverty, spontaneity, and the unplanned. They induce a stasis in consciousness that guarantees political numbness (45-46). The globalised, capitalist market, then, ensures its stability by enabling mobility, but ruling out motility. It is Loy's insistence upon motility—that movement *must* be inherent and volatile—that might offer a way to view bodies, art and language not as objects for exchange rendered static and politically inert, but as nodes that exceed the consumerist nature of the globalised economy.

This thesis has begun a consideration of the “value” of Loy’s objects, and proposes that bodies can be manipulated when they have a predictable “use,” like the domestic bodies of Chapter Two and the machine bodies of Chapter Four. Indeed I would suggest that her interest in particular streams of science, to the atomic over the machinic, betrays at once an interest in motility as well as developments that are not immediately locked inside of capitalist exchange. The mechanical and prosthetic body are, I have argued, entangled in a post-war concern with modern beauty and with reshaping the body for marriage and employment. That is, the mechanical and the prosthetic fix the body’s value at a higher price. While the atomic similar cannot be wholly disentangled from economics—it becomes, to be sure, inextricable from questions of energy generation and, later, warfare—its effect on matter is contrary to that of the machine. Rather than fix matter, it unhinges it. It reveals that matter is not solid and stable but porous and shifting. For the poetic body, atomic metaphors engender not fixed value, but mutability. Yet, there is still scope for further research that might entail an examination of how Loy’s representation of bodies, objects, and their motility, transcends the capitalist market. Indeed, considering the body’s resistance to measurable use and value in tangent with her later poetry on the city and mass production—such as “On Third Avenue” and “Mass-Production on 14th Street”—as well as her depictions of homelessness in poems like “Hot Cross Bum” and her late “Constructions,” crafted with the city’s excesses and detritus, with rubbish and eggshells, might reveal how life exceeds the tidy restraints of capital and market value.

What might it have signified, then, when Loy appeared at the Blind Man’s Ball in 1917—an event meant to celebrate the unpredictability of aesthetic meaning and the courting of chaos over the imposition of order on objects’ value—dressed as a commodity object? And, no less, a lampshade: a *machinic* commodity object, and one that Loy was years later to attach a very specific market value to when she opened her lampshade shop with Peggy Guggenheim? The lampshade is decorative and domestic. It has its place firmly demarcated in the home. Its beauty is crafted through the play of light upon its surfaces, through its appearances, its ability to add a soft touch to a domestic space. Loy’s masquerade as a lampshade appears at first glean to embody the antithesis of that

which her writing propounds, and when she wears it upon her body, she too arguably becomes a decorative, technological surface, a façade rather than a being. Yet while both body and lampshade are rendered decorative objects, their shared performance points to their very construction as such. As costume, the lampshade is self-consciously surface, as it masks, rather than reflects, that which is within. It is oversized, caricatured, and even monstrous. It marks itself as artificial, and its combination with the body reveals and mocks the way in which they have both been conceived as surface. Unlike the commercial lampshade, the woman-as-lampshade gestures to its own performance in order to comment on the nature of the commodity object, and more importantly, to the way that such commercial objectification has been writ upon the feminine body. This lampooning of the woman-as-technology, and more specifically, the woman-as-commodity, is thus not so opposed to Loy's poetics of motility and creative freedom, for it is the stable surface of commercial value and technological use that is made aberrant and obscene.

At the opening of this thesis, I invoked Bergson's search for a novelist that could deploy language not in a way that reifies the artificial spatialisation of consciousness, but who, rather, points to the "fundamental absurdity" of the juxtaposition of "simple states" as if in space. This novelist—or I would add, poet—would wrench back the curtain that clouds our ego, and reveal not spatialised states, but an "infinite permeation of a thousand impressions which have already ceased to exist the instant they are named." This writer, Bergson contends, must be commended for knowing us better than we know ourselves (*Time* 133). This thesis has proposed that Mina Loy is such a writer. In 1958, toward the end of her life, Loy titled her first published collection of poetry as a "Lunar Baedeker"—a work that endeavours to chart the uncharitable, to set out in space the distant, the dream-like, the intangible. Like the lampshade, her title ironically gestures to the very operations that Loy's poetry unravels; namely, the straight-jacketing and delineation of the ephemeral and changeable.

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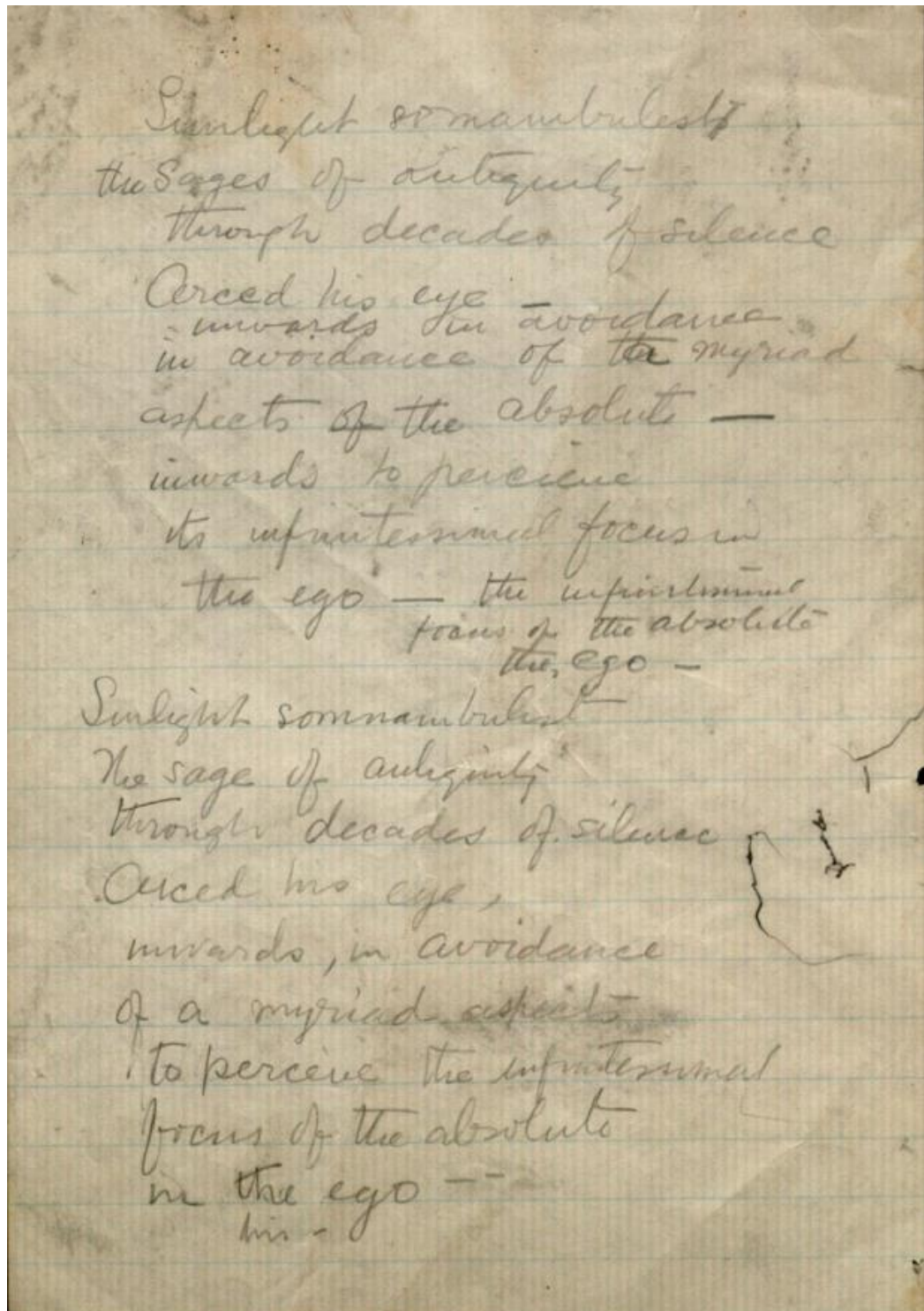
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Appendices

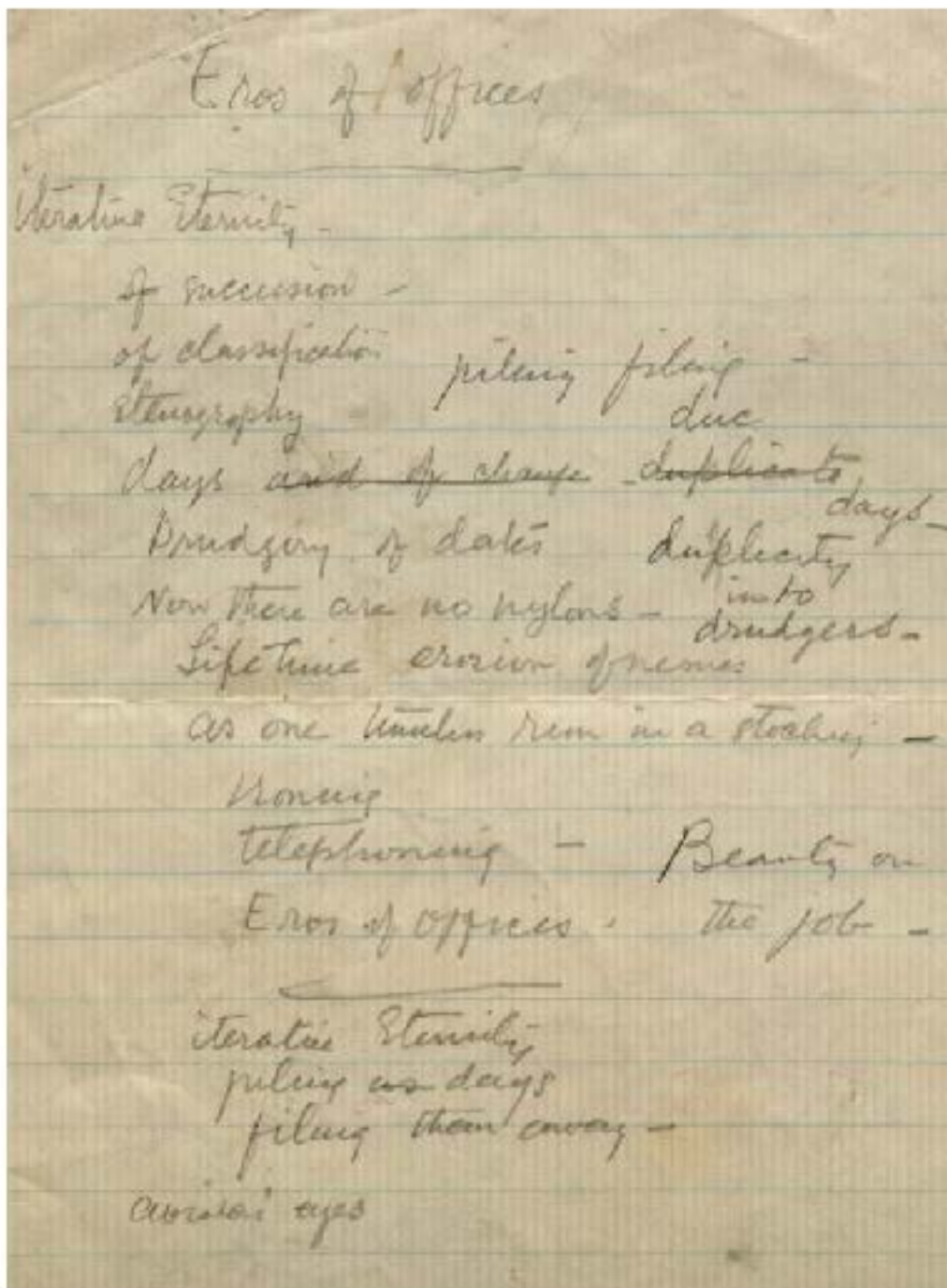
Appendix A. "Sunlight Somnambulist"

Loy, Mina. "Sunlight Somnambulist". Ca. 1930-1940. MS. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Box 5, fol. 80.



Appendix B. "Eros of Offices"

Loy, Mina. "Eros of Offices". [ca. 1930-1940]. MS. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Box 5, fol. 80.

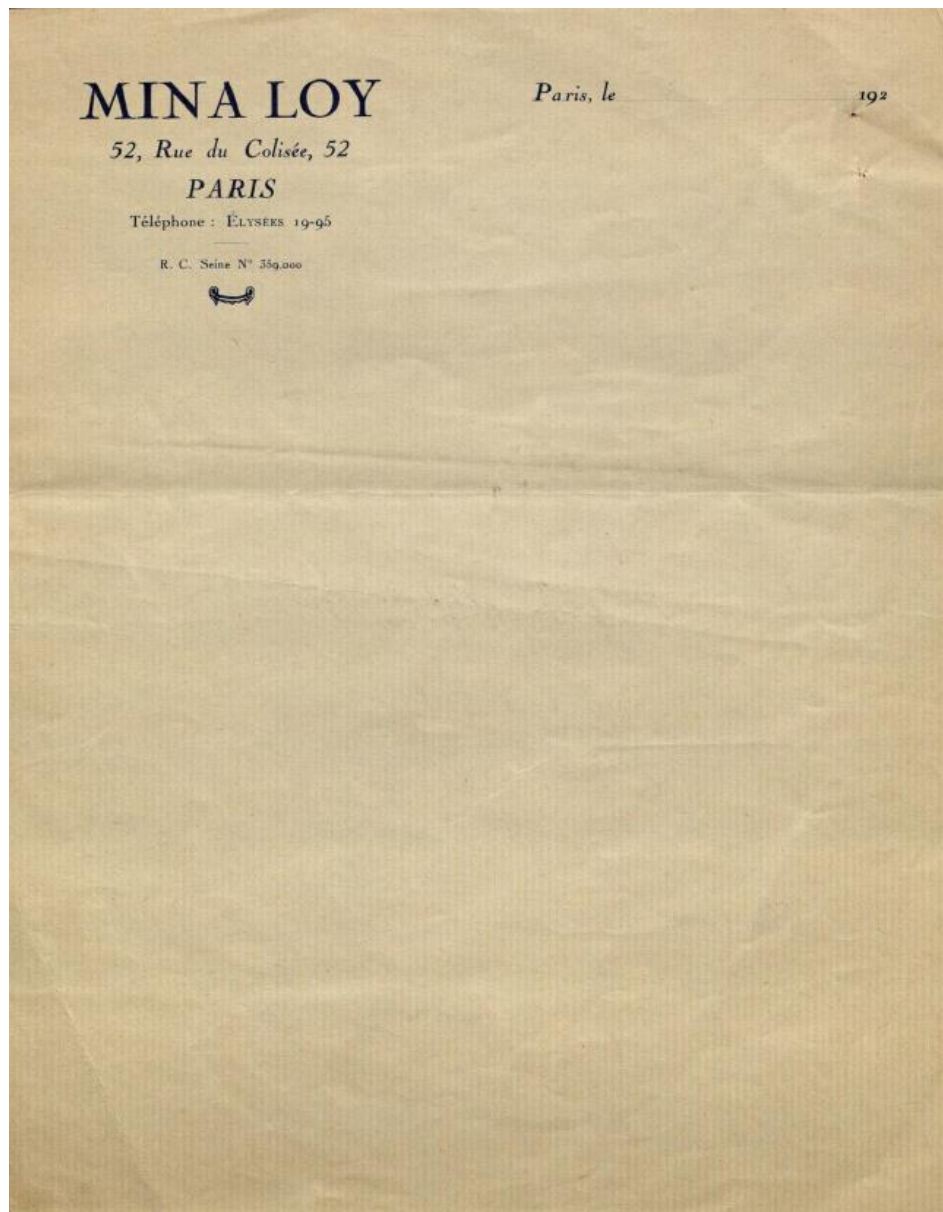


Appendix C. “Mother Earth”

Loy, Mina. “Mother Earth”. MS. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Box 5, fol. 106. n.d.

The following pages appear in the same order as they are found in the folder at Beinecke. All pages in the “Mother Earth” folder are shown here, including blank pages. I have numbered these manuscript pages for ease of reference to the commentary in Chapter Five.

C.1



C.2

revolving from their four fold
palms -

the seasons' pigments
upon our matrix imparticipant

I had always felt that
The roof is a direct conplot
to prevent our peering into
heaven.

Money is like mysticism -
it is at once the damnatory
& salvational element.

C.3

MINA LOY

Paris, le

192

52, Rue du Colisée, 52

PARIS

Téléphone : ÉLYSÉES 19-95

R. C. Seine N° 359,000



The brown crowned bird
 Moonbeam

Carrion corbeau
 Vogel des Morten

Oral overall

- folial overall -

foliate overall -

In the future the world will be
 divided into new sections -
 each with their own dictionary
 & its own literature - Certainly
 the readers of these different
 languages will have an

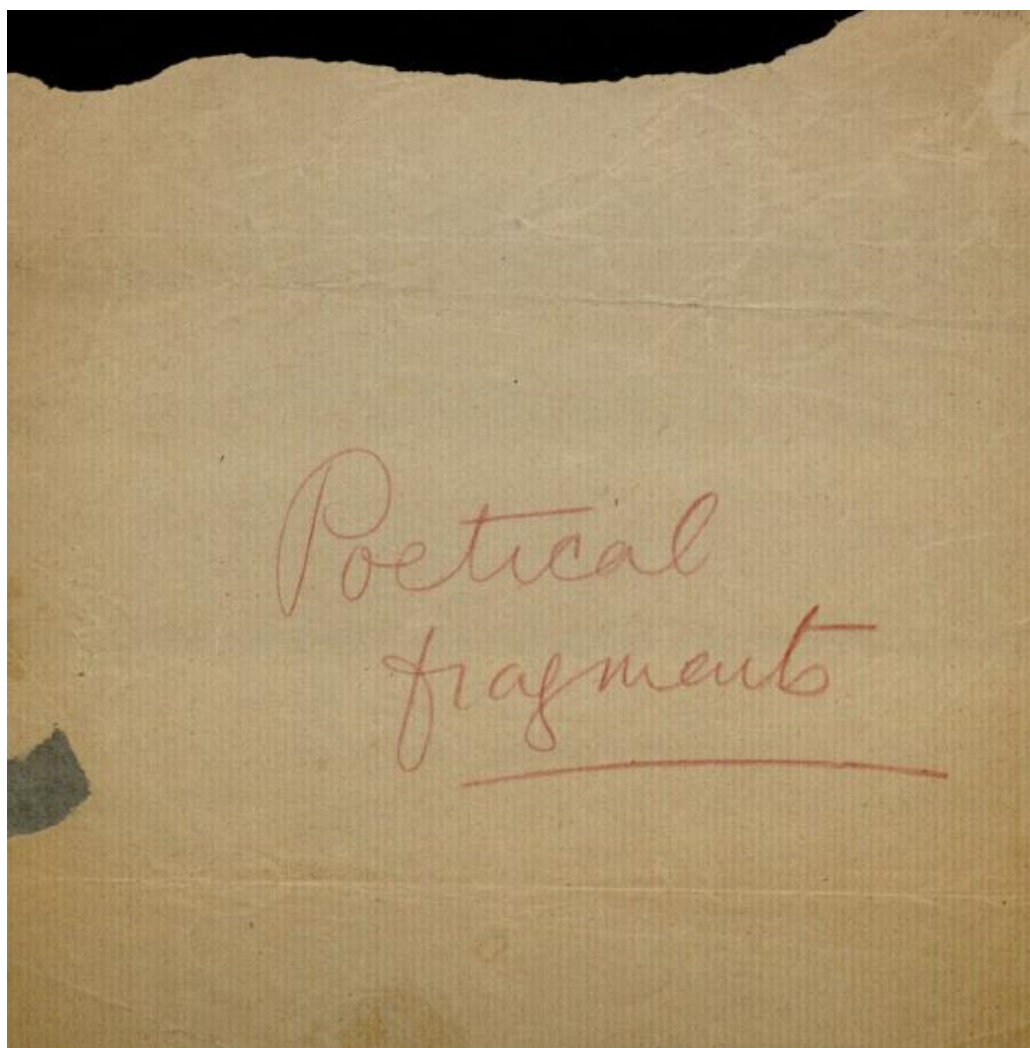
C.4

inherent hate for each other
Based on reviews - History -
which will begin all over again,
the world old - Combustion -

C.5

Mother earth.
 Crumbling silence - last disgrace
 in pain of your embrace -
 our last disgrace
 The uncooperative loam of con seviner
 Mother Earth.
 An eyeless regress
 the bedridden earth
 out-ages
 The creational carress
 Unconscious sorceress
 and mother of the snake
 over brown & over-run
 and unawake
 to birds words -

C.6



C.7

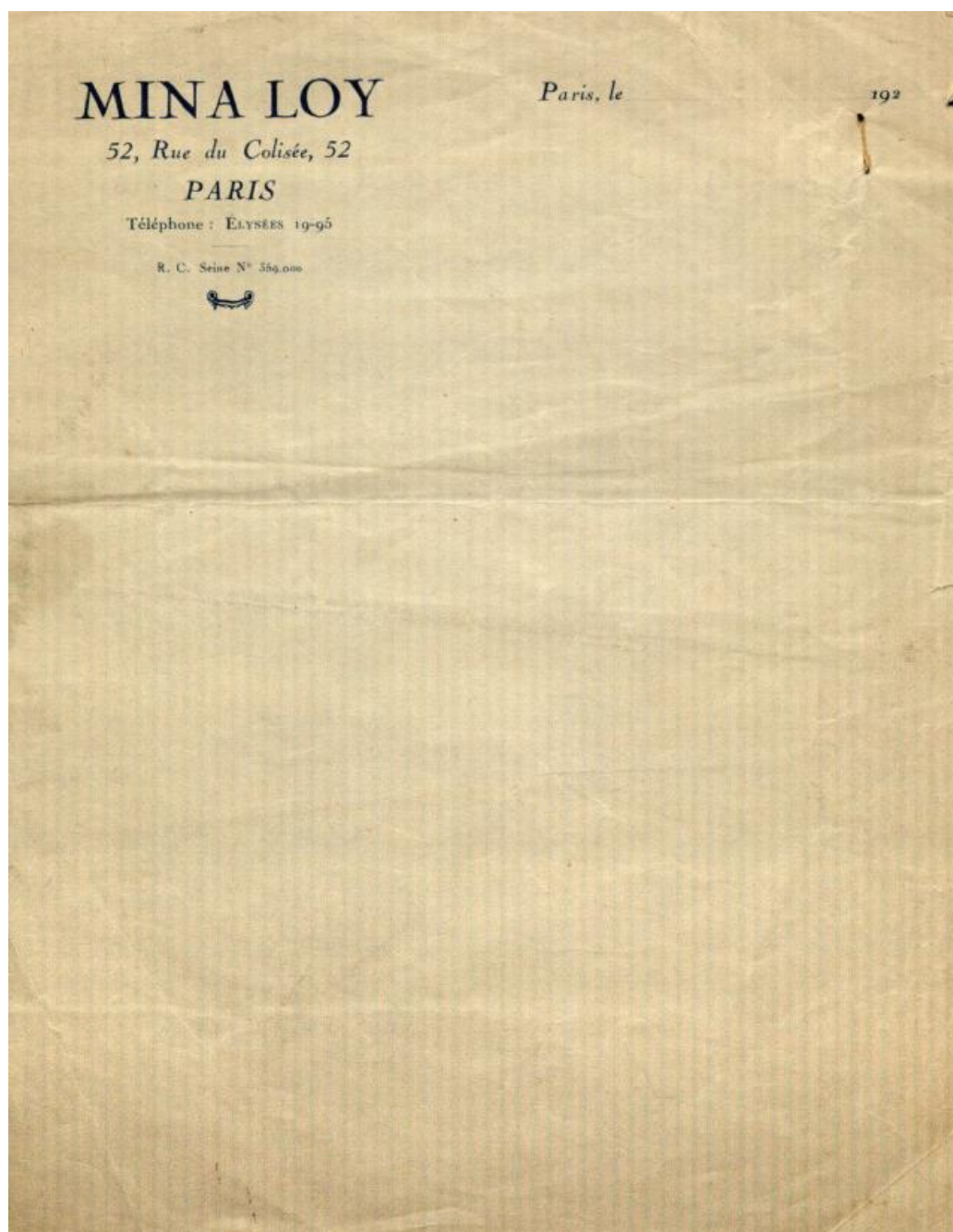
The Bedridden Negress
 the Earth
 out ages
 Creations caresses -

Years
 revolving from their four-fold palms
 pigmented seasons the limbless
 upon der death the negress -
 of participation

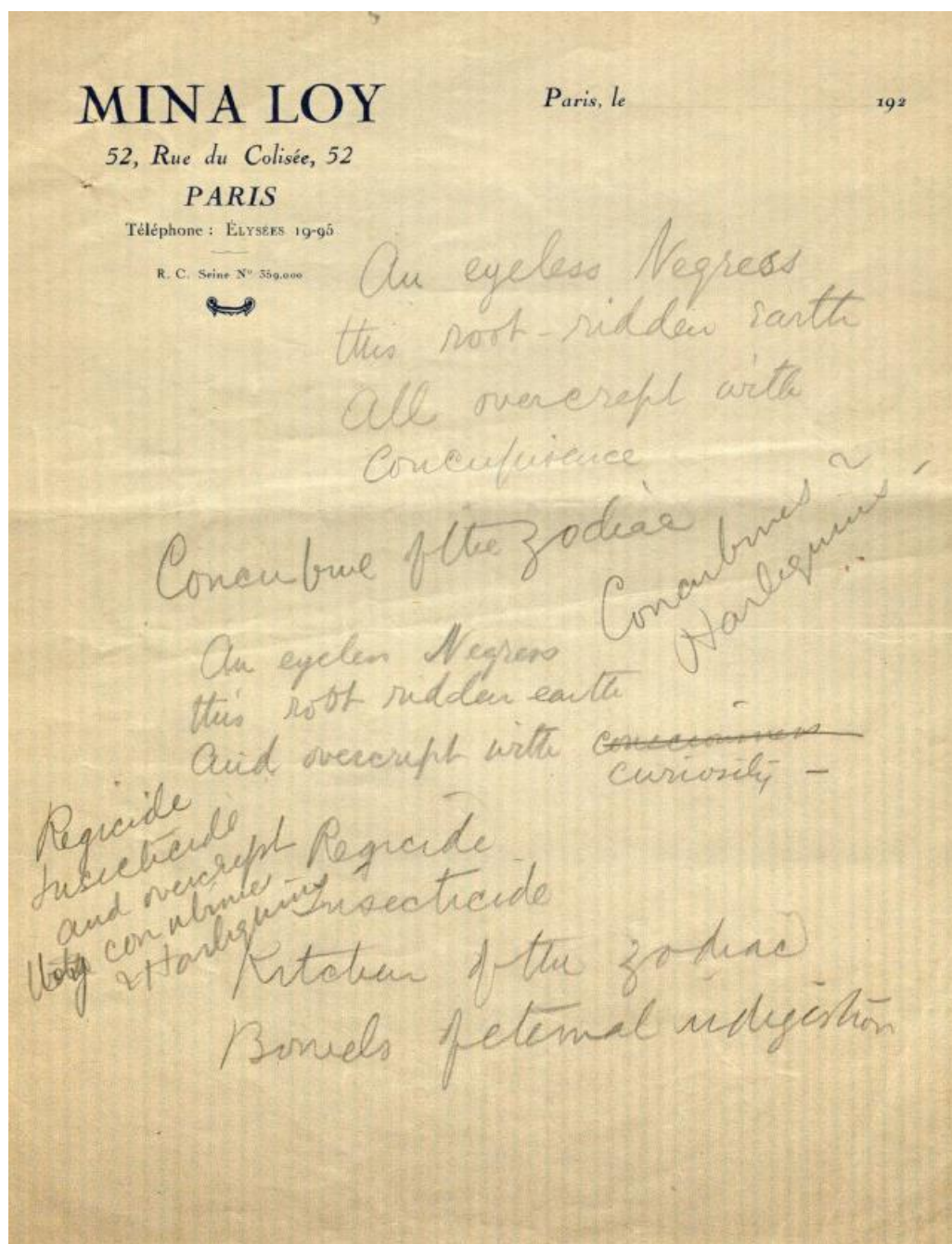
Vampire of
 the ether -
 the fool propmother
 annual alms
 of lions loves
 & wood buies
 of pines & vines
 of birds words
 & blood wort

The Bedridden
 earth
 outages -
 An eyeless negress
 the Bedridden
 earth
 outages
 urged by aspiring fire the occasional
 & celibate waters -
 among her unified undecore
 a myriad concupiscent

C.8



C.9



C.10

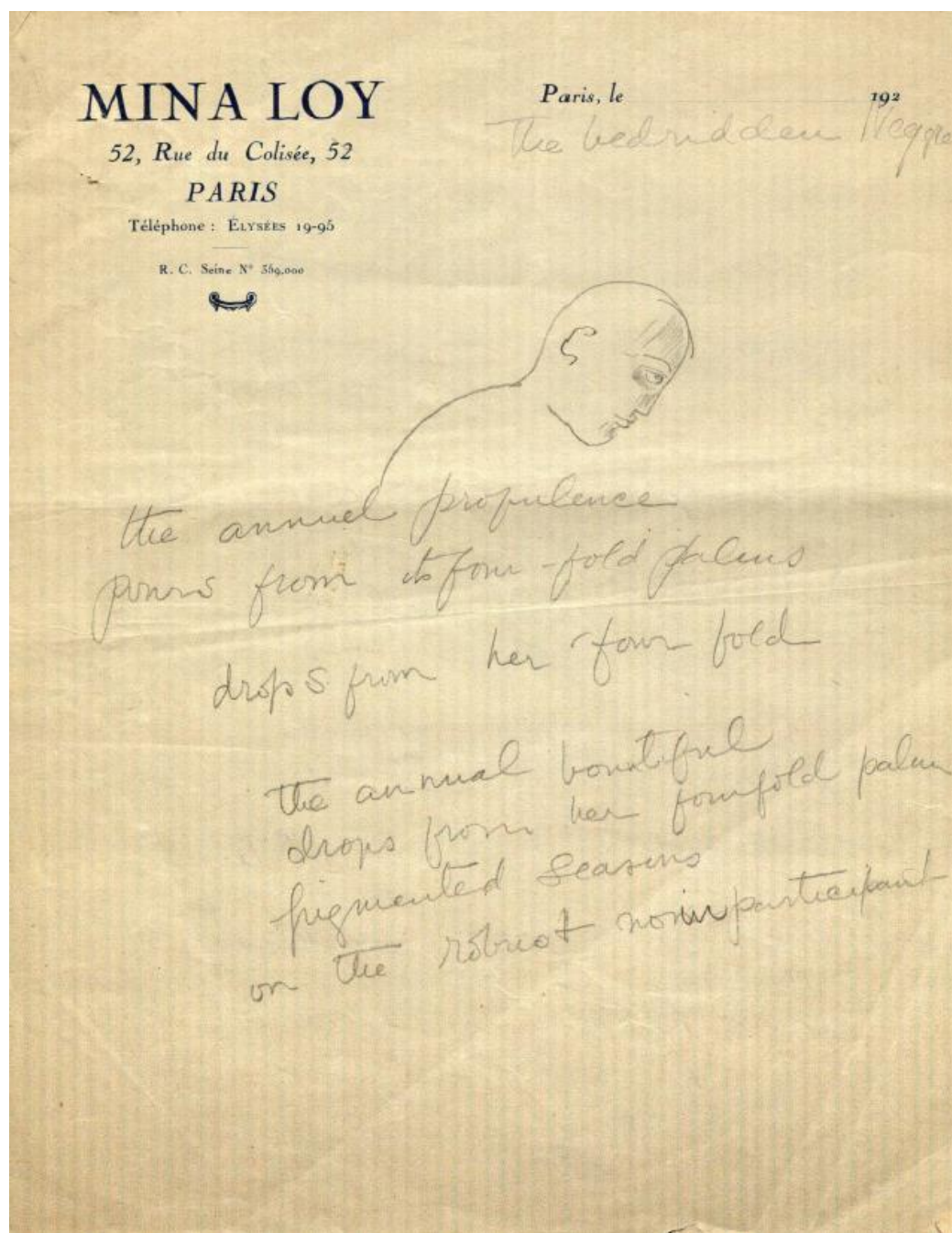
I.

The Bedridden regress
 Earth
 out ages
 Creational caresses
 of years
 revolving from their four fold palms
 pigmented seasons
 upon her dearth
 of participation
 in myriad concupiscence
 among her unified undecide

The August unconscious
 Regicide
 Insecticide

Vampire of the ether
 & insensible bride
 of Nature

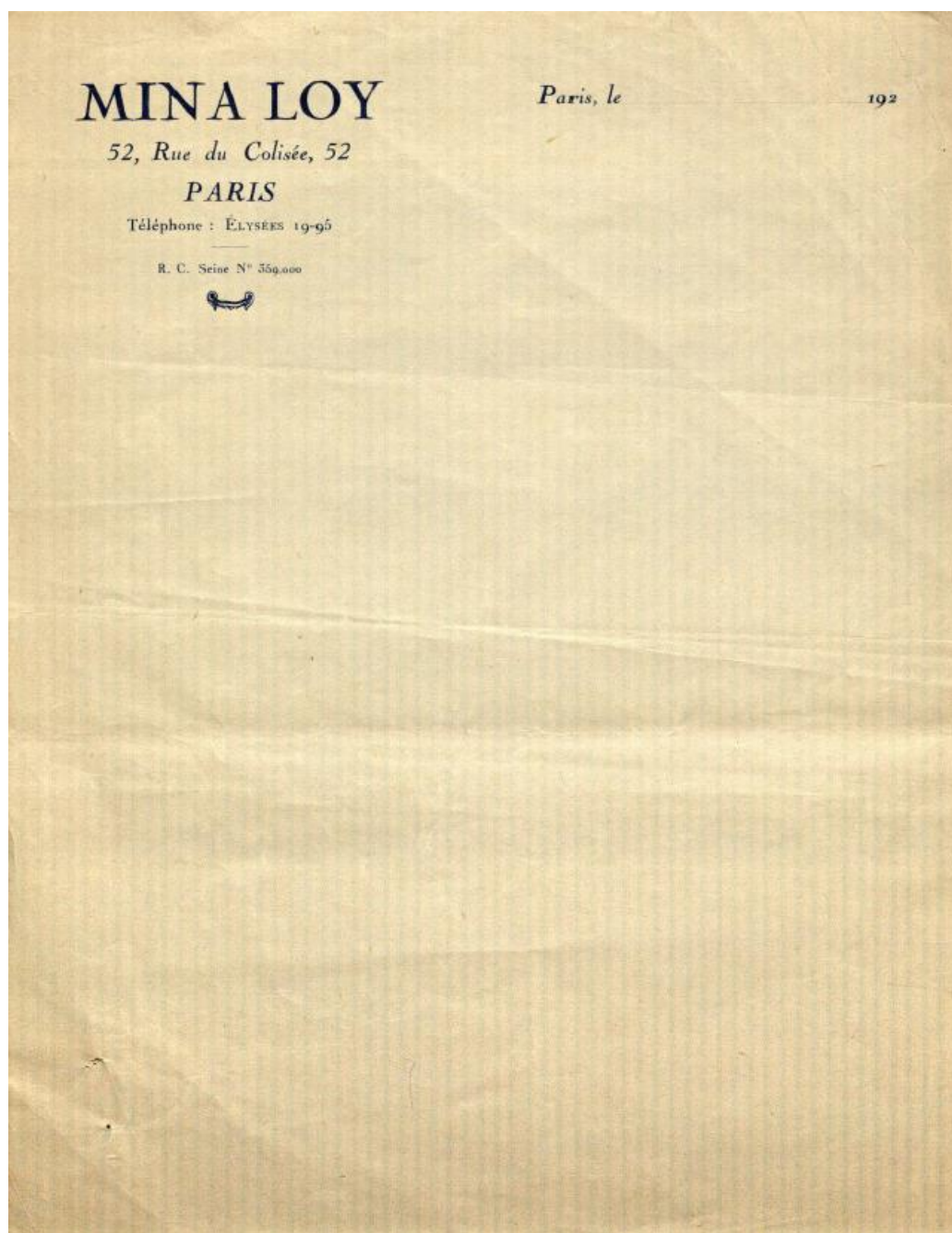
C.11



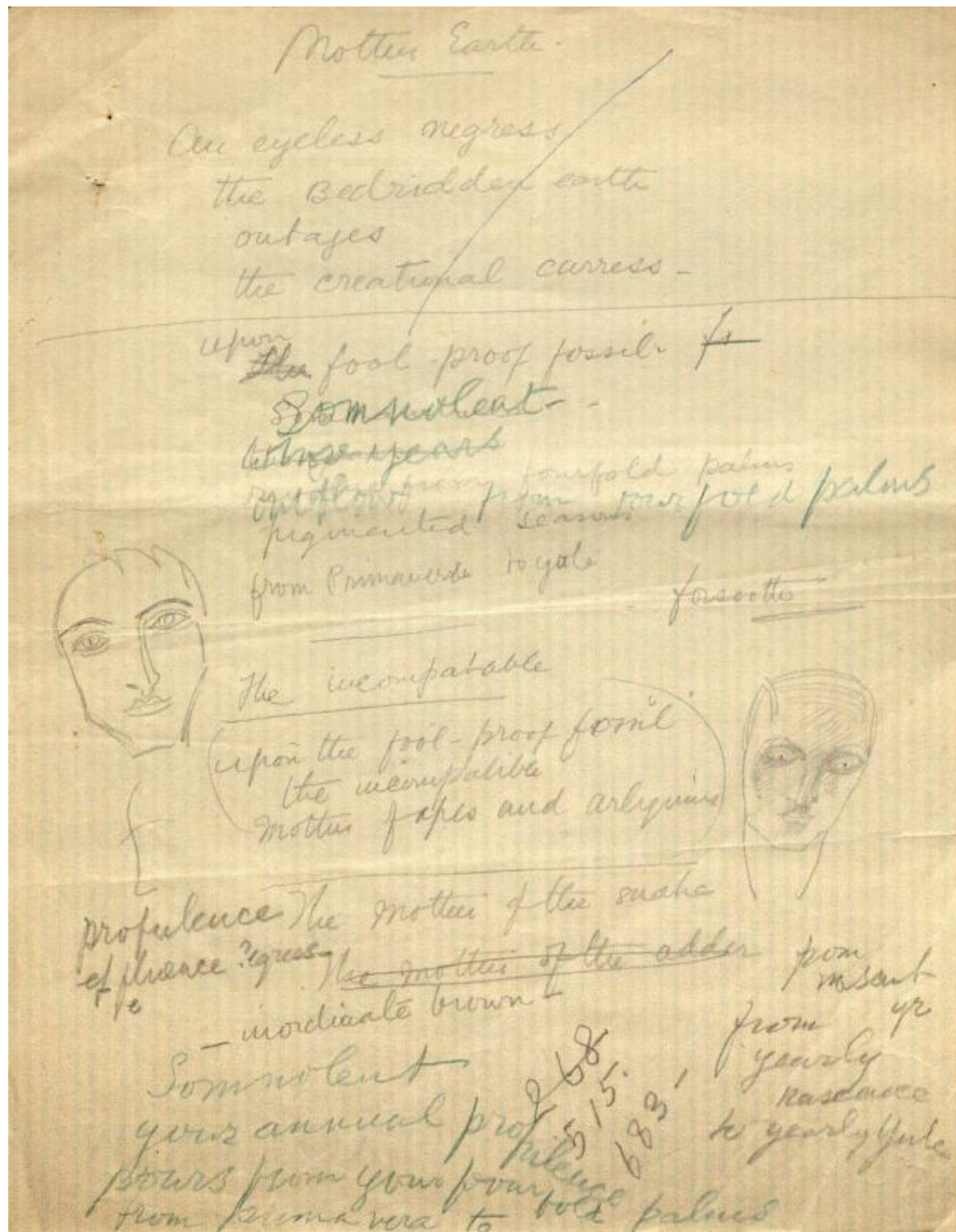
C.12

tempestuous fathers Aspiring fire
 and water
 the upstage mountains
 the mountainous superiors
 The sunbursts & the ribbons of the rain
 bloodwort
 & birds The word was made flesh
 words and lions But when one has seen the flesh
 loves & watercras Retransformed into the world
 with whom shall one hold
 the unshared further conversation
 pleasure
 & outreasoned with whom shall one further
 converse —
 the your pulsating solitude
 sunburst and the undesirous concupescence
 the myriad concupescence
 rain of your warped undesign —
 upon her death

C.13



C.14



C.15

The bedridd - negroes, earth
 out ages the creational carass
 the years
 pour from their four fold. palms
 pigmented seasons
 the sunbursts and the ribbon of the rain
 Vampire of the ether
 the virility of (pines) vines -
 the fragility of volatiles
 the crazy vampire (covered) of
 flowery life
 The fool-proof mother
 x (fallow with the sacrament of time
 the wastes of time -
 fallow and fool proof -
 fool proof motherhood -
 prints & pain
 heavenly flowering
 The neo-operative core of nature
 the robust death of participation
 Breaths out her sodden brains
 The august rhomboid
 ghostly whooper
 x (turds -
 Birds words
 and lions loves & last of all
 panics of your nocturnal embrace
 Reductive of all flesh to skeleton lace
 To trim your private parts with skeleton lace
 Vampire of the ether rolls in her irreducible
 atmosphere - unanalysable atmosphere -
 The vampire of the ether rolls roundly
 - irreducibly in
 to trim her unanalysable
 a skeleton lace