The Kiss in Modernist Literature

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Abstract

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Modernist writers were remarkably preoccupied with the relationship between the haptic experience of the kiss and the social, technological, and political conditions of modernity. This thesis argues that attention to the kiss provided a way for these writers to comprehend and relate how modern experience feels. By intervening in recent haptic and phenomenological studies in modernist criticism, it not only contributes to our understanding of modernism as something concerned with the experience of the body and its intersubjective encounters, but aims to make two wider points. Firstly, as the first extended study of the kiss in prose, it shows that kissing emerges in a huge variety of modernist texts while also contributing to a much longer literary tradition stretching back to classical texts. Secondly, it traces the socio-political frameworks that shaped prevailing cultural attitudes towards the kiss in the modernist years and suggests that such frameworks contribute to regular attempts to dictate who should kiss whom, and in what context.

The work is divided into four chapters that, while non-exhaustive, approach significant instances of modernist literary kisses. In Chapter One, I discuss D. H. Lawrence's writings on kisses that happen at speed and make new connections between this writing and contemporary ideas about the body's experience of space. Chapter Two compares Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928) with Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and suggests that two interracial kisses in these novels reveal a relationship between touch and racial politics in the context of modernist cinema spectatorship. In Chapter Three I analyse kisses between women in Rosamond Lehmann's *Dusty Answer* (1927), Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) and Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* (1936) and locate a constellation of narrative strategies for deviating from heteronormative modes of perception or patriarchal models of intimacy. Chapter Four explores the writing and dancing of Richard Bruce Nugent, including a wealth of unpublished material. It suggests that his representations of kissing share qualities with his philosophies of dance, which subvert the cultural expectations of Black racial uplift and wider capitalist narratives. The Conclusion draws together threads regarding the kiss and consent, and gestures towards a pressing need in kiss studies to take seriously the forced kiss and criticise literary narratives of 'stolen kisses'. In all, the thesis makes the case for the multi-faceted exploration of the act of kissing in texts of the modernist years.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my stepfather,
Jonathan Symons

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Introduction: The Modernist Kiss

In Graham Greene's late-modernist thriller *Brighton Rock* (1938), lipstick is an absent barrier between an unhappy couple. Boy-gangster Pinkie, in his scheme to marry Rose and prevent her from testifying against him with damning evidence for a murder, reluctantly places a kiss on her mouth:

> He knew what was expected of him; he regarded her unmade-up mouth with faint nausea. […] He pressed his hard puritanical mouth on hers and tasted again the sweetish smell of the human skin. He would have preferred the taste of Coty powder or Kissproof lipstick or any chemical compound. He shut his eyes and when he opened them again it was to see her waiting […].[1]

The lipstick that Pinkie wishes for is both touch-inviting and touch-resistant. The 'Kissproof' name indicates that kissing will occur, but result in smears that need to be prevented, whether for aesthetics, discretion, economy, convenience, or some combination of these.[2] The branding of Kissproof, which registered its trademark in 1925, marks a trend in kissing culture wrought by post-Victorian modernity – aligned with a wider trend of sexual liberation, particularly for women – of increasingly casualised kissing, occurring in public more often, between unmarried people.[3] Kissproof lipstick compensates the body (adding rouge to lacklustre skin) while exposing its limits (its vulnerability to the physical imprints of touch), giving it the quality of a 'doubly prosthetic' technology which, as Tim Armstrong shows, initiated new modes of representation of the body in modernist literature and art.[4]

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[1] Graham Greene, *Brighton Rock* (London: Vintage, 2004 [1938]), p. 137.
[2] A 1928 advertisement for Kissproof promises that it 'really just doesn't come OFF no matter WHAT one does! I was just the hit of the PARty last night, no LESS! I didn't have to STOP every few minutes to put more ON! […] Kissproof tells no tales […]. Kissproof makes lips youthfully NATURAL – irresistibly kissable – pulsating with the very spirit of reckless youth!': *Photoplay Magazine*, May 1928, p. 143.
[3] United States Patent and Trademark Office <https://tmsearch.uspto.gov/bin/showfield?f=doc&state=4805:g2kn1h.2.4> [accessed 9 May 2023].
[4] Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology, and the Body: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 220.

Indeed, Kissproof advertised itself as 'New! Different! Exquisitely Modern!'.[5] This cosmetic development and its slogan, which could almost be an epithet for modernism itself, provides an insight into the close relationship between kissing and modernity in the modernist period, as modernity relates to aesthetics, novelty, sexuality, the body, technology, and capitalism.

Seized by 'repulsion', Pinkie wants the kiss to feel removed from his immediate experience.[6] This is achieved in his imagination not only by lipstick or powder putting a thin boundary between two skins, but also in his recognition of these cosmetics as 'chemical compound[s]'. In this description – which reinforces the reading of cosmetic as technological advancement – Greene invokes concepts not yet visible to the eye but imbued in the language of scientific discovery (of the atom, for example) that Pinkie might well have read about and accepted without personal verification by perception. The way Pinkie conceptualises his reluctance to kiss shows us how advancements of modernity (aesthetic, technological, sexual) affect the immediate experience of the body. Modernist writers, as we shall see, were remarkably preoccupied with the relationship between the haptic experience of the kiss and evolving conditions of modernity. This thesis argues that attention to the kiss provided a way for modernist writers to comprehend and relate how modern experience feels. 'Experience' is taken here in the phenomenological sense of a stream of perceptions, and 'feeling' in the haptic sense that nonetheless maintains a relationship between the physical and the psychological.[7] Reading the kiss in modernist literature allows us to regard modernism's aesthetic project to apprehend the 'shifting nature of life' in a new way.[8] That is, for modernist writers, the kiss reinscribes the body and its action, and hence their preoccupation

[5] Kissproof advertisement, *McClure's Magazine*, January 1923, inside back cover.
[6] Greene, *Brighton Rock*, p. 137.
[7] On perception as experience see: Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology* (Dordrecht; Boston; London: Kluwer Academic Publishers 1999 [1907]), p. 24.
[8] Randall Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1998), p. 8.

with the kiss is remarkable in light of its disruption of critical narratives of 'contemplative withdrawal from all significant activity whatsoever' that the comprehension of modern experience supposedly initiated.[9]

Kissing and modernity

The rapid changes to everyday life in the machine age were described by writer, philosopher and educator Alain Locke in 1936 as the 'quick nervous tempo and pace of the hectic civilization of ours'.[10] More recent critics agree that this 'transformation of everyday life through the accelerated pace of changes' constitutes a condition of modernity, the relation of modernism to which has been variously debated and consecrated.[11] In his study of modernist innovation in the novel form, Randall Stevenson argues that modernist writers resisted, much more than they reflected, the changes of modernity, but there is a general consensus that modernist writing engages with 'the speeds and stresses of modern life, and the new technologies and forms of rational intelligence which supported them'.[12] Such speeds and stresses are of interest here. While the pressures of modernity are more usually treated as a concern of the individual in relation to 'individual, subjective consciousness', the kiss presents a more intersubjective story.[13] In this thesis I show that, at crucial pressure points in such 'transformation[s] of everyday life', the kiss surfaces as a point of discussion and marker of altered experience. As such, cultural attitudes towards the kiss changed in the early twentieth century in a way that can be indexed to the social, technological and political pressures of modernity.

[9] Philip Henderson, *The Novel Today: Studies in Contemporary Attitudes* (London: John Lane, 1936), p. 103.
[10] Alain Locke, *The Negro and His Music and Negro Art: Past and Present* (New York: Arno Press, 1969 [1936]), p. 90.
[11] Katy Deepwell, *Women Artists and Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 6.
[12] Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction*, p. 14.
[13] Ibid. p. 2.

Of these technological developments, the cinema is most central in its relationship with kissing. One of the first commercial Vitascope (film projector) presentations included a kiss, filmed by Thomas Edison using his kinetoscope technology (which creates the illusion of movement by flipping through images with a high-speed shutter).[14] *The May Irwin Kiss* (1896), named after the actors, is fifteen seconds long and depicts a scene from a popular play, *The Widow Jones*.[15] An excited reviewer for the *New York World* exclaimed that '[f]or the first time in the history of the world it is possible to see what a kiss looks like'.[16] There is some irony that this filmed kiss is transcribed from the stage, a medium through which audiences have watched unmediated kisses for centuries, and yet the reviewer supposes that the filmed kiss provides some kind of unprecedented access. Indeed, the kiss before film was an act in which one would have been partaking, either as a kisser, or as a real observer with the capacity to alter or influence. To repurpose the words of Virginia Woolf in her essay on the medium, 'The Cinema' (1926), to see 'what a kiss looks like' for the first time is to see kissing 'as it is when we have no part in it'.[17] The reviewer continues that '[t]he real kiss is a revelation. The idea of a kinetoscope has unlimited possibilities.'[18] Though histrionic in tone, this review suggests that the startlingly new view of the kiss initiated high expectations regarding what the emerging cinematic medium might go on to achieve. Thirty years later, however, Woolf's essay captures some disappointment in the progress of cinema. She deplores its mere recording capacities and its correspondingly goggle-eyed audience 'watch[ing] things happen without bestirring itself to think'.[19] One of the essay's most-quoted

[14] Charles Musser, *Thomas A. Edison and His Kinetographic Motion Pictures* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), p. 26.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Mrs M'Guirk, 'The Anatomy of a Kiss', *New York World*, 26 April 1896, p. 21.
[17] Virginia Woolf, 'The Cinema', in *Selected Essays,* ed. by David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 [1926]), pp. 172-76 (p. 173).
[18] M'Guirk, 'The Anatomy of a Kiss', p. 21.
[19] Woolf, 'The Cinema', p. 172.

passages points out the clumsy forms of representation that adorn film adaptations of famous novels: '[a] kiss is love. A broken cup is jealousy. A grin is happiness. Death is a hearse.'[20] This has typically been read as an accusation of cinema's 'reduction of emotion into a thin range of impoverished symbols'.[21] However, this interprets Woolf's meaning as a disappointment in cinema's representation of love, rather than disappointment in cinema's one-dimensional use of a kiss. The passage can be read alternatively, not regarding cinema's disservice to the represented (love, jealousy), but to the representing. Indeed, to Woolf, a kiss was much more than love. In a fragment of a short story draft that she wrote only a few years after 'The Cinema', the narrator points a telescope at a man and a woman kissing and exclaims, '[t]here was life, there was love, there was passion'.[22] This framing of a kiss through the telescope is 'cinematographic', as Laura Marcus shows, in its invocation of a close-up kiss which was by 1930 'a standard way in which to close a scene or an entire film.'[23] While kisses are often taken for granted when seen as simply a sign of love, Woolf offers up the potential of the kiss to capture nothing less than 'life' itself. Cinema's close-up kiss was evidently suggestive, for Woolf, that the kiss had more to offer the production of modernist narrative than one emotion.

If Woolf's views regarding the close-up kiss on screen are ambiguous, then those of D. H. Lawrence are far more clear. In his poem 'When I Went to the Film' (1929), he shares Woolf's distaste for cinema's audiences, and states that watching a kiss on screen detaches a

[20] Ibid. p. 174.
[21] Linda Ruth Williams, *Sex in the Head: Visions of Femininity and Film in D. H. Lawrence* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 13.
[22] From 'Incongruous/Inaccurate Memories' (written 1930), one of several early versions of 'The Searchlight' (written 1939 and published posthumously in 1944 in *A Haunted House and Other Stories*). See Laura Marcus, '"In the Circle of the Lens": Woolf's "Telescope" Story, Scene-Making and Memory', *Journal of the Short Story in English,* 50 (2008), pp. 1-14 (p. 4).
[23] Ibid. pp. 6-7.

viewer too much from the action, but his concern more explicitly relates to the role (or absence) of the body in cinema spectatorship:

> When I went to the film, and saw all the black-and-white feelings that nobody felt,
> […]
> and caught them moaning from close-up kisses, black-and-white kisses that could not be felt […].[24]

The kiss on screen is evidently a problem for Lawrence who finds that cinema spectatorship divorces tactile agents from tactile acts. Linda Ruth Williams argues that Lawrence's objections to the kiss on screen complement his advocating for 'any experience which strips one of sight' or turns back the wheel of what he regards as modern society's propensity for 'sex-in-the-head': that is, sex that is too fretted over in the mind and aroused by sight.[25] Indeed, a somewhat grotesque painting by Lawrence called *Close-Up (Kiss)* (1928) shows the subjects' lower lips just touching, both with eyes open, and one subject staring vacantly into space over the head of the other.[26] While his painting does not depict a watching audience, many others ranging across the modernist period did, including Mabel Dwight's *The Clinch* (1928) and John French Sloane's *Movies, Five Cents* (1907) which invokes a cheapness that was a concern for Lawrence given that it facilitated mass entertainment. Relatedly, Lawrence's objections to the close-up kiss are part of his engagement with an elitist culture that 'champion[ed] […] minority taste' over popular taste.[27] The idea of a 'standard' fixture of cinema – the 'gurglings and kissings' when 'the lamps go out', as he describes them in *The Lost Girl* (1920) – poses a problem because of its mass appeal.[28] In the poem above,

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[24] D. H. Lawrence, 'When I Went to the Film', in *The Poems of D. H. Lawrence, Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 385.
[25] Williams, *Sex in the Head*, p. 32; D. H. Lawrence, '...Love Was Once a Little Boy', in *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine: And Other Essays,* ed. by Michael Herbert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988 [1925]), pp. 329-46 (p. 342).
[26] Keith Sagar, *D. H. Lawrence's Paintings* (London: Chaucer Press, 2003), p. 58.
[27] Williams, *Sex in the Head*, pp. 11-12.
[28] D. H. Lawrence, *The Lost Girl* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981 [1920]), p. 110.

Lawrence clearly articulates the development of cinema as a crisis of feeling, but one that, nevertheless, the kiss aids him in articulating. The 'kisses that could not be felt' startle because of the juxtaposition of the tactile and the non-tactile. The kiss on screen evidently struck horror in some and curiosity in others and reflects the technological development of cinema. Indeed, the kiss on screen was so pervasive and so controversial that the Hollywood Production Code, a regulatory code published in 1930, banned 'excessive and lustful kissing'.[29] Such a ban marks a resistance to the casualisation of kisses, and suggests that the kiss was, in some ways, regarded as a synecdoche for sex and therefore a 'lustful' danger. Cultural attitudes towards the kiss, as we see in the example of cinema, reflect wider attitudes regarding how people should move through the world: which kinds of embodiment are allowed, and which are prohibited. Such attitudes towards the kiss – including questions about whether or not it should be watched – both shaped and were shaped by the experience of cinema spectatorship and the content of films themselves.

While the kiss was associated with the popularity of cinema, this was also true of other developing spheres of mass appeal. The kiss became enmeshed in a culture of consumer goods increasingly available to a mass market due to emerging methods of mass production. The unprecedented speed and scale of production and delivery to consumers required advertising to generate demand. The kiss became common imagery to associate a product with desirability or sell the idea that a product would make the buyer kissable. Chocolate was – and still is – one such example as an orally-related pleasure, epitomised by the advertising of brands such as Black Magic or the Hershey's Kiss launched in 1907.[30] The Kissproof lipstick that appears in Pinkie's imagination in *Brighton Rock* is another example, advertised,

[29] 'Hays' Film Regulations', *Variety,* 19 February 1930, p. 9.
[30] Black Magic was advertised with the image of a man bribing a woman with chocolate for a kiss under the mistletoe: Black Magic advertisement, *Daily Telegraph*, 22 December 1938, p. 16. With thanks to the Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York, for locating this advertisement.

as it was, for making the lips 'irresistibly kissable'. Other lipstick brands capitalised on similar claims and associations. Max Factor's Tru-Color lipstick also promised indelibility, which it tested using a kissing machine developed in 1939 that applied pressure to artificial, lipstick-covered lips.[31] The sanitised image of the un-smudged mouth adorned with mass-produced lipstick tested by a mechanical kisser epitomises what Lawrence would have found threatening to healthy embodiment. The kiss in this context makes apparent the dominant priorities of contemporary bourgeois society: of how bodies should be presented to the world. Indeed, in the case of cosmetics, Marcel Danesi claims that '[w]e have developed a kind of "cosmetic hygienics" over time because of the meaning of the kiss.'[32] Another element of this landscape is, of course, oral hygiene products, which were also frequently marketed using kissing imagery. Readers opening *Life* magazine in 1933 would have been confronted by an image of a man trying to kiss a woman with 'how's your breath today?' plastered across the top and the brand name, Listerine, at the bottom.[33] Armstrong uses Listerine as an example of a brand whose advertisements 'posit[ed] a body-in-crisis […] with matching remedies.'[34] In this advertisement in *Life*, the kiss is offered as the reward after the remedy. In contrast, competing brand Pepsodent ran a campaign in 1931 in which the kiss itself was presented as the crisis. Images of passionate kisses between lovers, or kisses between parents and children, were accompanied by a warning that 'a kiss may spread disease'.[35] Pepsodent offers its mouthwash as the new remedy for killing 'deadly bacteria'. These advertisements epitomise a competitive exchange of campaigns, making the kiss alternate between problem and reward as brands hoped to entice buyers to their products. I note that as much as the kiss was used to

[31] This machine can now be found in The Hollywood Museum, Hollywood, California. Readers may be more familiar with this machine as the album cover for the *Red Hot Chilli Peppers: Greatest Hits*.
[32] Marcel Danesi, *The History of the Kiss!: The Birth of Popular Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 74.
[33] Listerine advertisement, *Life*, March 1933, p. 1.
[34] Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body*, pp. 98-99.
[35] See, for example, Pepsodent advertisement, *The Saturday Evening Post*, 28 March 1931, p. 147.

capitalist ends, in Chapter Four I discuss writer, artist and dancer Richard Bruce Nugent's presentation of the kiss as a radical means of prioritising sensory pleasure and joy over capitalist imperatives. Consistently, however, these advertisements show the presence of the kiss in the literary and material culture of the modernist period as a popular emblem of desire, whether that desire be rewarding or dangerous. These boxes of chocolates, lipsticks, mouthwashes and toothpastes on the early twentieth-century market show kissing as something that underwent the pressures of modernity with resulting attempts to keep it neatly circumscribed as an experience, and hence make it sellable.

The kissing in these advertisements and on cinema screens present heterosexual kisses. This dominant cultural insistence on heterosexuality is of course part of wider attempts to market the kiss, whether that be in the form of a cinema ticket or a beauty product. Yet among a cultural landscape of increasing visibility and acceptance of homosexual activity, the queer kiss was discussed and represented in literature, suggesting that the kiss is less stable than slick marketing suggests. In the literature of kissing at the dawn of the modernist period, there is evident tension between insistence on the kiss as a heterosexual act, and reality. In *The Kiss and Its History* (published in Danish 1898, translated into English 1901) – the text that coined the term 'philematology', the study of kissing, from the Ancient Greek philēma ('a kiss') – Kristoffer Nyrop writes that '"the complete kiss," the kiss between a man and a woman, […] is the most delightful one. Kisses between men are stale and tasteless'.[36] An article by criminologist Cesare Lombroso, published in *Pall Mall Magazine* around the same time, did not disparage the kiss between men – rather, it denied its existence almost completely, stating that, 'in the Anglo-Saxon race at all events, [it] is so rare as to be almost

[36] Kristoffer Nyrop, *The Kiss and Its History* (Chicago, IL: Stomberg, Allen & Co., 1901), p. 19.

phenomenal'.[37] The racial implications of the kiss will be discussed shortly. This disparagement or denial of the kiss between men is contemporaneous with the infamous trial and prosecution of Oscar Wilde in 1895 for 'act[s] of gross indecency with another male person' under the 1885 Labouchère Amendment, part of the Criminal Law Amendment Act.[38] The evident anxiety regarding the kiss between men in these articles points to the cultural policing and shaping of what is and is not acceptable when it comes to kissing.

The Labouchère Amendment does not mention the kiss, or any specific acts, for that matter. Its ambiguity became more apparent when, in 1921, it was debated whether to criminalise 'acts of gross indecency' between women.[39] Arthur Foley Winnington-Ingram, the Bishop of London, felt 'unable to describe' such acts in the House of Lords.[40] In the House of Commons, several MPs objected to the clause on the basis that even debating such acts (however unmentionable) would result in making sexual suggestions to otherwise ignorant female members of the public.[41] The clause did not ultimately pass. Conservative MP Sir Ernest Wild referred listeners to the works of sexologist Havelock Ellis to find out about the unmentionable acts.[42] Ellis does, in fact, often discuss kissing in his work on homosexual activity, but it is generally characterised as a rudimentary act. In some cases, Ellis posits the kiss between women as a juvenile attempt between children to 'develop the sexual feeling'.[43] In Radclyffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), the first edition of which included an introduction by Ellis, we do indeed see Stephen Gordon as a young girl kissing Collins, a

[37] C. Lombroso, 'An Epidemic of Kisses in America', *Pall Mall Magazine,* August 1899, pp. 544-47 (p. 545).
[38] See <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/relationships/collections1/sexual-offences-act-1967/1885-labouchere-amendment/> [accessed 3 October 2022].
[39] Jodie Medd, *Lesbian Scandal and the Culture of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 97.
[40] Quoted in: Ibid. p. 94.
[41] Ibid. pp. 106-08.
[42] Ibid. p. 102.
[43] Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, *Sexual Inversion: A Critical Edition* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 165.

housemaid, after becoming 'conscious of an urgent necessity to love'.[44] I further discuss queer kissing and girlhood in Chapter Three. In several of Ellis' case studies, kissing is described as an act that produces excitement but not an orgasm: for one woman, '[t]here is a high degree of sexual erethism when kissing, but orgasm is rare'.[45] Therefore, even the explicit texts referred to in political proceedings hold the kiss in an ambiguous place: adjacent to sexual activity, but not sex itself. The socio-political pressures surrounding modern attitudes towards homosexuality – the tension between increasing acceptance, and cultural or state-mandated oppression – exhibited the kiss' ambiguity: both openly discussed and unmentionable; both done in public and kept hidden; both publishable and censored.[46] The unstable modern culture of authorisation and prohibition of queer activity is apparent when we pay attention to the same-sex kiss.

Such ideas about sexuality raise questions of evolving ideas about gender, and the relationship between gender and the kiss was played out from the socio-political stage to the geo-political. Santanu Das argues, for example, that the kiss between men in the First World War became 'a faultline in the contemporary construction of both masculinity and male bonding'.[47] War initiated shifts in male cultures of brotherhood, nursing, and tending to the dead into which the kiss was integrated. The dying kiss, in particular, halted 'direct homoerotic threat' and appealed to 'a whole tradition of "warm homoeroticism"', an idea that plays out across several pieces of First World War literature.[48] The kiss in this case emerges as a touchpoint through which writers (including Lawrence) grapple with the shifting ground

[44] Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness* (London: Penguin, 2015 [1928]), pp. 9-11.
[45] Ellis and Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, p. 172.
[46] In a more global context, Jonathan E. Abel comments on 'a world history of a redactionary modernism which both suppressed and publicized kissing': Jonathan E. Abel, 'Redactionary Global Modernism: Kisses in Imperial Japan', *Modernism/modernity,* 21 (2014), pp. 201-29 (p. 202).
[47] Santanu Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 125.
[48] Ibid. p. 131.

of masculinity amid the experience or aftermath of industrial warfare. The kiss became a similar touchpoint when it came to ideas about women and femininity. To paint a well-known story with a broad brush, the modernist period saw increased liberation for women in Britain and America, though this was a disproportionate liberation for wealthy, white women. Deepwell attributes this to 'the rupture of the separate spheres, public and private, which had hitherto excluded women from modernity.'[49] The kiss frequently externalised this rupture. Indeed, Jonathan E. Abel suggests that the kiss is 'the place where private and public spheres kiss one another.'[50] As mentioned above, kissing culture was increasingly casualised in this period, and the (sometimes panicked) acknowledgement of this was often along gendered lines with concerns directed at the behaviour of women in public. At the turn of the century, the aforementioned article in *Pall Mall Magazine* reported on an 'epidemic of kisses' caused by Spanish-American War veteran Lieutenant Richard P. Hobson, who kissed 'no less than ten thousand women' on his lecture tour around America.[51] Lombroso finds this to be a pathological phenomenon, in which the usual modesty of women 'of the Anglo-Saxon race' (another example of the racialisation of the kiss) is temporarily disrupted by the mass hysteria of emotional crowds fawning over a war hero.[52]

For these 'excitable' women, 'the readiest outlet is a kiss', perhaps due to its sensuality mixed with its ambiguous sex-adjacency. Their kissing of a war hero suggests a heterosexual displacement of the 'warm homoeroticism' that might take place between male soldiers on a battlefield.[53] Lombroso's concern regarding a readiness to kiss in public is explicitly female-directed. Indeed, Hobson became known as 'the most kissed man in America', not 'the man

[49] Deepwell, *Women Artists and Modernism*, p. xviii.
[50] Abel, 'Kisses in Imperial Japan', p. 203.
[51] Lombroso, 'An Epidemic of Kisses in America', p. 544.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid. p. 547.

who gave out to the most kisses', rendering him some kind of passive sex symbol flocked by thousands of hysterical women willing to give out casual kisses.[54] As the archetypal New Woman character, Delia Poole, quips in Janet Flanner's novel *The Cubical City* (1925), 'for thousands of years the concentrated aim of society has been to cut down on kissing'.[55] This joke points to the understanding of the gendered politicisation of embodied experience in the modernist period. Notably, Lombroso's implicit contribution to 'cutting down on kissing' uses the word 'epidemic', relating the kiss again to disease concern, particularly, in this context, of the spread being perpetuated by amassing crowds. The language of contagion was also used a few years later in a similar context. Public kissing proliferated with the rise of dance hall culture where, in such venues, women were increasingly observed making advances to men, and one waiter called the kissing at these gatherings 'contagious': 'when one started kissing they all started.'[56] Evidently, attempts to regulate the gendered casualisation of kissing could be bound up in concerns about the spread of disease.

This apparently gendered rise in readiness to kiss is commented upon by F. Scott Fitzgerald in *This Side of Paradise* (1920), when the protagonist Amory Blaine observes that '[n]one of the Victorian mothers […] had any idea how casually their daughters were accustomed to be kissed.'[57] Fitzgerald conceptualises post-Victorian modernity as traceable in the osculatory behaviours of young women. T. S. Eliot's poetic observations are less humorous. The typist in *The Waste Land* (1922) accepts caresses with 'indifference' and, after receiving 'one final patronising kiss', mirrors this alarming apathy in her 'half-formed' acknowledgement that

[54] Peter H. Odegard, *Pressure Politics: The Story of the Anti-Saloon League* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), p. 205.
[55] Janet Flanner, *The Cubical City* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1974 [1925]), p. 366.
[56] Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1985), p. 108.
[57] F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 61.

'that's done' now.[58] While this section of the poem makes comment upon the removal of intimacy from sex amid the postwar conditions of modernity, it also offers a bleak addition to the gendered commentary upon the casualisation of kissing, as well as the issue of consent contained within this kiss. Issues of consent will be returned to in the Conclusion. The typist's kiss reminds us, too, of Lawrence's worry about 'kisses that could not be felt', a worry that he pitched along gendered lines given his dislike of women goggling at male film stars at the cinema.[59] While these osculatory behaviours were culturally discussed, they were of course socially regulated. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), Zora Neale Hurston fictionalises one such response to a casual kiss when sixteen-year-old Janie is sent away to be married after being caught kissing Johnny Taylor.[60] While Deepwell argues that the increasing role of women in the public sphere signalled an inclusion in modernity, this inclusion is legible in modernist literary culture that records gendered concerns about women's kissing practices. At gendered pressure points of modernity, then, the kiss is a particular bone of contention.

Hurston's novel explores a Black family confronting the issue of dignity in a racist society, which suggests that if the behaviour of white women was under scrutiny, then the behaviour of Black women and women of colour was scrutinised twofold. The kiss was in fact embroiled in the evolving manifestations of racism in modernist-era culture. Above, I have noted the series of insistences regarding 'Anglo-Saxon' kissing practices in Lombroso's article for *Pall Mall Magazine*. On one hand, in a section titled 'Anglo-Saxon Reserve', Lombroso expresses the view that white people are modest and not disposed to 'expressing enthusiasm'.[61] He finds the behaviour of the kissing women striking given its juxtaposition to

[58] T. S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land', in *Selected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954 (1922)), pp. 39-64 (p. 50).
[59] See Williams, *Sex in the Head*, pp. 6-7.
[60] Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (London: Virago, 2020 [1937]), pp. 14-15.
[61] Lombroso, 'An Epidemic of Kisses in America', p. 544.

the apparently more usual 'reserve' of white people. His aforementioned denial of kisses between white men also hinges upon his idea that they possess a particular 'power of inhibition'.[62] Indeed, 'inhibition' was a quality of whiteness noted by Black commentators: writer and activist James Weldon Johnson sardonically describes it in 1912 as 'the layers of inhibitions laid on by sophisticated civilization'.[63] On the other hand, Lombroso attaches the kiss to whiteness. He uses racist theories of cultural evolution to pose the kiss as 'a gesture which appeared very late in human development', and hence 'unknown to the yellow and negro races'.[64] He goes so far as to say that, among 'debased races', such crowd hysteria would have led to violence, but among a 'highly cultured race', the outcome was kisses – a 'breach of social decorum' rather than bloodshed.[65] To Lombroso, then, kissing is something that white people do as an apparently 'civilised' expression of feeling, but also abstain from with modesty, reserve and inhibition. These ideas map onto white supremacist paradoxes of whiteness as both a quality of sensitivity and an ability to regulate those senses. I discuss this in detail in relation to the interracial kiss in Chapter Two.

Lombroso's article aligns with contemporary ideas about kisses discussed elsewhere in white culture. In the fourth volume of *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1905), Ellis writes that '[i]t is only under a comparatively high stage of civilisation that the kiss has been emphasised and developed in the art of love.'[66] He incorrectly states that '[t]hroughout eastern Asia it is unknown; thus, in Japanese literature kisses and embraces have no existence', while

[62] Ibid.
[63] James Weldon Johnson, '*Along This Way* (Selected Episodes)', in *Black Voices: An Anthology of African American Literature,* ed. by Abraham Chapman (New York: Signet, 2001), pp. 270-87 (p. 286).
[64] Lombroso, 'An Epidemic of Kisses in America', p. 545.
[65] Ibid. p. 547.
[66] Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Volume I, Part Three* (New York: Random House, 1937 [1905]), p. 218.

'[a]mong nearly all of the black races of Africa lovers never kiss'.[67] At the same time, Sigmund Freud writes that the kiss 'is held in high sexual esteem among many nations (including the most highly civilised ones)', almost anticipating surprise in his reader that 'the most highly civilised' nations would enjoy the kiss.[68] These rhetorical choices reinforce the idea that whiteness, while claiming ownership of the kiss in some ways, was also meant to equate to sensory discipline. Such anxieties regarding the racialisation of the kiss emerge alongside changes in socio-political structures of race in the modernist period. People of different races interacted more frequently in urban areas, particularly in North America following the Great Migration of Black people from the south to the north.[69] I further discuss kissing culture and ideas surrounding Black 'racial uplift' in Chapter Four. Cultural attitudes towards the kiss are often wrapped up in questions of who should kiss whom, and in what context, as Flanner draws attention to in *The Cubical City*. Race, therefore, is to be taken as central in the point that cultural attitudes towards the kiss can be indexed to socio-political pressures of modernity.

My discussion of Ellis and Freud is suggestive of one of the most significant manifestations of the way the kiss and the evolving conditions of modernity interact: the fact that the kiss started to be theorised in sexology. While philematology in the work of writers such as Nyrop was a cultural endeavour, relating to the literature and history of kissing, for these sexologists it was an embodied one in which the kiss was to be considered in the realm of the bodily and psychological sciences. The kiss, in this way, can be seen as a locus for the interaction of

[67] Ibid. pp. 217-18. In 1929, Kobayashi Zenpachi addressed Ellis' incorrect claim in a Japanese publication *Seppun no rekishi to gikō* (*Kissing: History and Technique*). See Abel, 'Kisses in Imperial Japan', p. 207.
[68] Sigmund Freud, 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* ed. by James Strachey and Anna Freud (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953 [1905]), pp. 125-248 (p. 149).
[69] See Blyden Jackson, 'Introduction', in *Black Exodus: The Great Migration from the American South,* ed. by Alferdteen Harrison (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1992), pp. xi-1 (p. xv).

several disciplines. Ellis breaks down the kiss in sexual terms to explore why it is enacted in pursuit of romantic-sexual pleasure. He writes that '[w]e have in the lips a highly sensitive frontier region between skin and mucous membrane, in many respects analogous to the vulvo-vaginal orifice, and reinforcible [*sic*], moreover, by the active movements of the still more highly sensitive tongue.'[70] Here, Ellis offers a corporeal fragmentation of the process of romantic-sexual kissing, defining it by the contact between the surfaces of skin, mucous membrane, and tongue. Freud defines the kiss similarly as a 'particular contact […] between the mucous membrane of the lips of the two people concerned'.[71] Freud's writing on the kiss is directed towards considering whether the kiss is a perversion: that is, sexual activity that extends beyond genitalia, or lingers over 'intermediate' activity rather than moving rapidly towards 'the sexual aim'.[72] He concludes that the kiss, unlike cunnilingus and fellatio, is not a sexual perversion but 'provide[s] a point of contact between the perversions and normal sexual life', mirroring that kiss of the public and private spheres.[73] The kiss in sexological terms belongs to the body and, more specifically, the sphere of touch (even while, for both Ellis and Freud, it is a cultural artefact attached to teleological ideas about civilisation). Das points out that the instability of the kiss lies in its propensity to slip 'from a sign to a sensation'.[74] In Ellis' and Freud's studies of the kiss we see this slippage between the semiotics embedded in a cultural artefact and the sensations embedded in anatomical explanations. The inclusion of the kiss in the realm of sexology, however, emphasises the kiss as sensation. Indeed, Woolf's disappointment in the semiotics of the kiss as love can be better understood in the context of a culture that understands the kiss as sensory – specifically, as haptic. The way the kiss continually surfaces amid the 'quick nervous tempo'

[70] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, p. 22.
[71] Freud, 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality', p. 149.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Das, *Touch and Intimacy*, p. 120.

of modernity, with its 'speeds and stresses', underscores the sensory registering of changes relating to technology, consumer culture, sexuality, gender, race and science.

The modernist kiss as transhistorical

The apparent impulse to define and relate the kiss in the modernist period suggests that this act, in the Western tradition, had been inherited as unstable yet rich in historical resonance. Indeed, the range of meanings and significations that the kiss has taken through history is dizzying. It includes the kiss of peace, the kiss of subjection (particularly on the feet), the lovers' kiss, the conferring kiss (in academic ceremonies, for example), the sealing of marriage vows, the kiss of a pact, the platonic kiss, the familial kiss, the healing kiss, the waking kiss, the dying kiss (discussed above), and the Judas kiss stemming from the Bible story in which Judas kisses Jesus to betray him to the Romans.[75] This thesis primarily investigates the lovers' kiss. The kiss is a type of touch that can be differentiated from other incidental or overtly sexual kinds given its particular cultural and literary history, one of which modernist writers were aware and in which they were interested. In 1924, *The Criterion* published 'The Soul in the Kiss' by Stephen Gaselee, an essay that traces literary representations of 'lovers' souls meeting in a kiss' from the classical tradition to the contemporary.[76] *The Criterion* was edited by Eliot, who evidently saw an investigation of the kiss as compatible with the magazine's manifesto of maintaining intellectual standards.[77] In fact, he personally correct the proofs of the essay 'in great haste' while Gaselee was

[75] For a list of types of kiss, see Keith Thomas, 'Afterword', in *The Kiss in History,* ed. by Karen Harvey (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 187-203 (pp. 187-88). The Judas kiss can be found in Matthew 26: 47-50, Mark 14: 43-45 and Luke 22: 47-48.
[76] Stephen Gaselee, 'The Soul in the Kiss', *Criterion,* April 1924, pp. 349-59 (p. 359).
[77] In the final issue, Eliot described this aim as 'trying to maintain literary standards increasingly repudiated in the modern world': T. S. Eliot, 'Last Words', *Criterion*, January 1939, pp. 269-275 (p. 273).

travelling in order to avoid postponing the essay to the following issue.[78] Gaselee is clearly steeped in a long literary kiss tradition. He begins by discussing a few poems by Plato which had been considered falsely ascribed and claiming that 'modern scholarship is disposed to restore' the credit of authorship to Plato.[79] This article, in a high modernist arena, appears to harness a modern understanding of the kiss as something of philosophical interest.[80] Gaselee surveys the classical roots of the 'soul in the kiss' tradition, citing Bion, Favorinus of Arles, Achilles Tatius, Aristænetus, Petronius and Aulus Gellius. He goes on to trace this conceit through the early modern writing of Angelo Poliziano, Giovanni Pontano, Christopher Marlowe and John Donne. Nineteenth-century writers, he claims, were influenced by this rich tradition, such as Percy Bysshe Shelley and Alfred Tennyson. Notably, his contemporaries such as Edgar Lee Masters and John Galsworthy had followed suit. Gaselee's final assessment is that the similarity of the words for 'soul' and 'breath' in Greek and Latin has initiated the conceit of lovers' souls mingling in a kiss. This conclusion demonstrates an impetus towards thinking about the representation of the kiss as a transhistorical phenomenon. It also captures a desire to situate the modern iterations of kiss-writing in a literary tradition – a tradition that seems 'poetical and remote' and yet intellectually demanding and fresh.[81] The kiss maps out a long cultural history that is punctuated by a transhistorical literary tradition. This history is of particular interest to authors in the early twentieth century who were also grappling with questions, across multiple disciplines, of what the kiss was in aesthetic, cultural and experiential terms.

[78] T. S Eliot to Stephen Gaselee, 13 April 1924, in *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 2, 1923-1925*, ed. by Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 369-70, p. 369. Eliot signed off with 'very many thanks for so interesting an essay' (p. 370).
[79] Gaselee, 'The Soul in the Kiss', p. 349.
[80] While this thesis looks at the Western Anglosphere, Japanese journalist Aoyagi Yübi wrote *Seppun tetsugaku* (*Philosophy of Kissing*) in 1921: Abel, 'Kisses in Imperial Japan', p. 206.
[81] Gaselee, 'The Soul in the Kiss', p. 359.

The soul in the kiss trope explored by Gaselee conjures images that are relatively wispy and intangible. However, an enduring feature of the literary kiss tradition anchors the kiss in the realm of touch. In Book X of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (8 CE), the sculptor, Pygmalion, falls in love with his own sculpture, Galatea, and kisses her to life through a miracle bestowed by Venus. As he kisses her, Galatea becomes flesh and begins to feel his kisses:

> […] at last
> His lips pressed real lips, and she, his girl,
> Felt every kiss, and blushed, and shyly raised
> Her eyes to his and saw the world in him[.][82] (293-96)

The kiss in these verses is the tactile agent of sentience. Abbie Garrington argues that '[t]he moment of greatest import in the story, the hinge point at which her statue history ceases, and from which her haptic life unfolds, is the one in which Galatea herself, always available as an object of touch, becomes a tactile subject.'[83] This haptic story was of particular import in the modernist period given, as Garrington shows, 'the renewed interest in the human sensory faculties, and their role in the perception of art.'[84] Several modernist texts contemplate and allude to Pygmalion, but a few, in particular, hit upon this idea of the kiss itself as tactile agent. One of the most overt is Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925). When Gatsby kisses Daisy we are first presented with an ivory-like figure whose 'white face shone'.[85] Then, 'at his lips' touch she blossomed for him like a flower, and the incarnation was complete.'[86] From the Latin *incarnāre*, to make flesh, Fitzgerald draws our attention to sentient skin which appears to spread from the lips across Daisy's blossoming form.[87] This fleshy

[82] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 [8 CE]), p. 234.
[83] Abbie Garrington, *Haptic Modernism: Touch and the Tactile in Modernist Writing* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 54.
[84] Ibid.
[85] F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019 [1925]), p. 134.
[86] Ibid.
[87] 'Incarn', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/93327> [accessed 7 November 2022].

transformation of a white female body is an obvious rendition of Pygmalion kissing Galatea. Indeed, this is a myth that, as John T. Irwin argues, Fitzgerald annexes to *The Great Gatsby* by coding 'the process of projecting the image of an ideal woman onto a real one [as both Nick and the God-like Gatsby are prone to do] as specifically that of a visual artist creating his embodiment of this ideal in a work of art'.[88] Fitzgerald's interest in kissing and sculpture extends across his oeuvre. In *Tender is the Night* (1934) – a novel littered with kisses – Nicole Diver's features are described as though they had been 'molded with Rodinesque intention', alluding to Auguste Rodin who, among many other pieces, created a marble sculpture of an intertwined couple called *The Kiss* (1882).[89] The narrator particularly draws the reader to the mouth, with which 'the sculptor had taken desperate chances – it was the cupid's bow of a magazine cover, yet it shared the distinction of the rest.'[90] Nicole's mouth is apparently caught between conflicting beauty standards, from bold nineteenth-century sculpture to the touched-up perfection of Jazz Age visual culture. This allusion also points to the wider significance of the kiss in visual art, rendered as it was in several other prominent sculptures of the period including Constantin Brâncusi's *The Kiss* (1907-08). In Fitzgerald's sculptural interests in the kiss specifically, stemming from its classical origins, we have a window into a broader culture (of literature and visual art) that was interested in the transhistorical idea of the kiss as touch. This is a history that raises questions about the feeling flesh, and about sentient subjects and touched or statuesque objects.

Ovid's stake in the literary tradition of kissing is apparent in his elegies as well as in the Pygmalion myth. In a verse in *Amores* 1.4 (16 BC), the mouth is occupied not just by kissing

[88] John T. Irwin, *F. Scott Fitzgerald's Fiction: "An Almost Theatrical Innocence"* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), p. 216.
[89] F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender Is the Night* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012 [1934]), p. 23.
[90] Ibid.

but also by drinking. The speaker addresses his mistress whom he can see sat beside her husband at a banquet:

> When he fills for you, never touch the cup,
> But bid th' officious cuckold drink it up.
> The waiter on those services employ;
> Drink you, and I will snatch it from the boy,
> Watching the part where your sweet mouth has been,
> And thence with eager lips will suck it in.[91]

To interpret such an image, we can look to a taxonomy of literary kisses from 1876, *The Literature of Kissing*, the date of which suggests the emergence of an academic interest in the kiss imbued with the Victorian impetus towards categorisation. The writer, Charles C. Bombaugh, identifies the expression 'cups of kisses', and suggests that this 'reference is most probably made to a favourite gallantry among the Greeks and Romans of drinking when the lips of their mistresses had touched the brim.'[92] The oral pleasure of kissing becomes part of a romantic ritual which is about the preserving of touch on an object, or the transmittance of kissing between the body and a mediator (now familiar in the acts of blowing kisses or signing letters with kisses). In his transhistorical analysis of love poetry, Erik Gray traces the cup-kiss which he reads in terms of the pleasure of delay. The cup-kiss motif is picked up later by Ben Jonson in his lyric poem 'To Celia' (1616), in which the speaker asks Celia to 'leave a kiss but in a cup' from which he can 'of Jove's nectar sup'.[93] In this kiss, again, 'the imperfection and delay are the very source of the pleasure.'[94] Most significantly in the modernist context, Gray identifies a resurfacing of this motif in a poem by W. B. Yeats, 'A

[91] Ovid, 'Amours. Book I. Elegy IV' translated in: John Dryden, *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. by James Kinsley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958 [16 BC]), p. 1771.
[92] Charles C. Bombaugh, *The Literature of Kissing: Gleaned from History, Poetry, Fiction, and Anecdote* (Philadelphia, PA; London: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1876), p. 22.
[93] Ben Jonson, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson: Volume 5*, ed. by David Bevington, Martin Butler and Ian Donaldson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 227.
[94] Erik Gray, *The Art of Love Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 88.

Drinking Song' (1910): 'I lift the glass to my mouth,/ I look at you, and sigh.'[95] Although the poem does not explicitly mention kissing, Gray argues that the unachievable drink in this line implies that 'love has given the mouth other employment.'[96] The latter word 'sigh' also recalls the literary tradition of souls (read breath) meeting in a kiss. The cup-kiss exemplifies the transhistorical nature of particular kissing motifs that surface in modernist writing.

The cup-kiss motif can in fact be found in several writings and art pieces in the early twentieth century. By looking at this motif, we will see that kissing is of interest even to those modernist writers who have not previously been regarded as particularly osculatory. One such writer is Aldous Huxley. His novel *Brave New World* (1932) is not a text that is readily associated with the kiss. Yet there are kisses lurking within its pages, including allusions to the cup-kiss, through which the conflicts of the novel can be understood. Midway through the novel, Huxley presents a method of propaganda for the World State's values, a 'Solidarity Service' in which citizens join together for a ceremony. The protagonist, Bernard Marx, files in to the Fordson Community Singery with his fellow citizens, 'twelve of them ready to be made one, waiting to come together, to be fused'.[97] During the ceremony, 'the loving cup of strawberry ice-cream soma was passed from hand to hand and, with the formula "I drink to my annihilation," twelve times quaffed.'[98] This cup etymologically accentuates the desire to 'fuse', from the Latin *fūs*, participial stem of *fundere*, to pour.[99] Huxley concludes the Solidarity Service by inserting the kiss into the proceedings. As the participants sing the repurposed nursery rhyme, 'Orgy-porgy, Ford and fun,/ Kiss the girls and make them One,'

[95] W. B. Yeats, 'A Drinking Song', *The Poems* (London: Everyman, 1994 [1910]), p. 143.
[96] Gray, *The Art of Love Poetry*, p. 98.
[97] Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (London: Vintage, 2007 [1932]), p. 69.
[98] Ibid. p. 70.
[99] 'Fuse', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/75763> [accessed 7 November 2022].

Huxley makes explicit that the kiss is a tactile engine of fusion.[100] The ceremonial practice of passing the cup around the circle 'to come together, to be fused', culminates in this 'liturgical refrain', trailing off with an ellipsis that only serves to draw attention to the central motif of the scene: 'kiss the girls…'.[101] This Solidarity Service provides a sinister rehearsal of the cup-kiss. The soma is chemical, not the divine refreshment of Jonson's 'nectar', and it both detracts from and points to the *soma*tic experience of drinking from the 'loving cup'. At a basic level, the Solidarity Circle speaks to the institutionalised polygamy in the novel. A kiss does not belong to just the lip owners – 'everyone belongs to everyone else' – and the 'Second Solidarity Hymn' calls for 'Annihilating Twelve-in-One'.[102] While the Solidarity Service reminds the reader of Christian liturgy, this context sets soma apart from the wine of Holy Communion: instead of a process of transubstantiation in the mouth by action of the Holy Spirit, soma draws attention to the bodies of the swallowers sharing in communal somatic pleasure with a disregard for spiritual nutrients. The process of passing a cup between lips is presided over by a state which aims for the annihilation of the self, rather than the nourishment of two selves who grow together in union.

In keeping with the tradition of the cup-kiss, one remarkable feature of the service, which is illuminated by our osculatory reading, is that of delay. When Huxley introduces the service, we find the circle '*waiting* to come together' [emphasis added], a transgressive inclusion since the World State actively attempts to eliminate scenarios in which people have to 'live through a long time-interval between the consciousness of a desire and its fulfilment'.[103] While in a pre-industrial state, delay of pleasure is heavily related to desire, the World State condemns any such 'time-interval' – an ingenious method of control in its constant

[100] Huxley, *Brave New World*, p. 73.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid. p. 34.
[103] Ibid. p. 38.

facilitation of mechanised contentment. The Solidarity Service is the only point in the novel in which waiting is institutionally authorised. One participant feels 'the calm ecstasy of achieved consummation' at the scene's climax, achieved only through the necessary process of delay. This sheds light on Huxley's use of the cup-kiss since, as Gray tells us, this tradition emblematises the pleasures of 'deferral'.[104] The act of bringing the cup to the lips promises pleasures to come. Later in the novel, John's avoidance of Lenina's 'parted lips', coming 'nearer and nearer', leads to an exasperation 'so intense […] that she drove her sharp nails into the skin of his wrist.'[105] John's transgression is his demand for Lenina to 'live through a long time interval between' her desire to kiss him 'and its fulfilment'. Garrington argues that, at this point in the novel, Lenina's kiss 'prevents John's desire through its immediate availability'.[106] John's penchant for delay also relates to the novel's more overtly political theatres of social control, in which the cup-kiss is tantalising because it materialises something not 'immediately available'. The dermic trauma from Lenina's nails is fully realised for John during the novel's dramatic climax, in which he whips her and then himself in an attempt, according to Garrington, 'to mark out his own right to self-determined fleshly experience through the pain of flagellation'.[107] John, therefore, is nominally 'savage' because he finds pleasure in this delay. The medium of control in the Solidarity Service is hence, curiously, a reversion back to 'savage' tendencies and desires. George Orwell explores the same idea in a comparable scene in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). During the Two Minutes Hate, the state exploits a mass reversion to passion as a medium of control – a sort of turning on the tap to momentarily release pressure from its citizens.[108] Therefore, using the cup-kiss as our entry point, and extending our osculatory reading of *Brave New World* to the pleasures

[104] Gray, *The Art of Love Poetry*, p. 85.
[105] *Brave New World*, p. 166.
[106] Garrington, *Haptic Modernism* p. 42.
[107] Ibid. p. 45.
[108] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1987 [1949]), pp. 13-18.

and perils of delay, the highest dramas of Huxley's novel can perhaps be best understood through the kiss.

The cup-kiss also appears conspicuously in several other modernist works where we might consider the kiss more at home. These include two little-discussed poems by Lawrence, a short story by Nugent, and the film *Flesh and the Devil* (Clarence Brown, 1926) starring Greta Garbo. Lawrence's collection *Love Poems and Others* (1913) contains a poem of two stanzas, 'The Appeal', in which the speaker says to the addressee, Helen: 'seeing I am a bowl of kisses/ Should put your mouth to mine and drink of me.'[109] The second stanza ends with an infuriated question: '[h]ow can you from my bowl of kisses shrink!'. This insistence on intersubjective experience hints towards the significance of this motif in modernist writing: that questions of delay and closeness have a new urgency when (as Lawrence imagines it) the world is moving towards the immediate satisfaction of desire through mechanisation (cinema, peep shows etc.) rather than bodily means. In a later collection of poems, *Amores* (1916), with a title that matches Ovid's, Lawrence includes a poem named 'Mystery' in which similar images are used. The speaker again describes themselves as a 'bowl of kisses' and begs the addressee to 'drink me up/ That I may be/ Within your cup/ Like a mystery'.[110] While this poem contains allusions to Communion wine – references to the 'altar', '[c]ommingled wines', and the 'mystery' of transubstantiation itself – it, alongside 'The Appeal', heavily suggests the uses that a 'sex-in-the-head'-fearing writer such as Lawrence might have had for a ritual that attempts to preserve touch through an object. These commingling wines, too, recall the literary tradition of mingling souls. Both *Love Poems and Others* and *Amores* contain several kiss-related poems to which I return in Chapter One.

[109] D. H. Lawrence, 'The Appeal', in *The Poems of D. H. Lawrence, Volume III: Uncollected Poems and Early Versions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018 [1913]), p. 1635.
[110] D. H. Lawrence, 'Mystery', in Ibid. pp. 1673-74.

The relationship between this motif and Communion is made absolutely overt in *Flesh and the Devil*, a film that encapsulates Lawrence's disgust for 'close-up kisses, black-and-white kisses that could not be felt'. In an 'orally fixated', pre-Production Code film that contains 'what may be one of the silent screen's longest kisses (nearly twenty seconds)', Garbo's love interest, played by John Gilbert, takes communion.[111] When the pastor brings the cup from Gilbert to Garbo, she turns the cup around to touch (to repurpose Ovid's verse) 'the part where his sweet mouth has been'. Writing just a few years later, cinema-goer Nugent includes the cup-kiss motif in his partly-published novella, 'Geisha Man' (written 1929, extract published 2002). The protagonist, Kondo Gale Matzuika, is at the house of their lover (and father), Don. Don blows Kondo a kiss and sings songs about kissing that contain the line '[o]n the bevelled edge of a crystal cup'.[112] This line also appears several times elsewhere in the drafts of 'Geisha Man'.[113] Nugent, in fact, includes Ben Jonson in a list of writers on Kondo's bookshelf in an unpublished portion of 'Geisha Man', cementing the plausibility that Nugent may be familiar with the cup-kiss via 'To Celia'.[114] In these examples of cup-kisses in the writings of Huxley, Nugent and Lawrence, as well as in *Flesh and the Devil*, I am not merely making the case for a set of kiss-interested modernist authors. Rather, I am finding the shared poetic traces of kiss representation across a range of (sometimes surprising) modernist works.

[111] Linda Williams, 'Of Kisses and Ellipses: The Long Adolescence of American Movies', *Critical Inquiry,* 32 (2006), pp. 288-340 (p. 320).
[112] Richard Bruce Nugent, 'Geisha Man', in *Gay Rebel of the Harlem Renaissance: Selections from the Work of Richard Bruce Nugent,* ed. by Thomas Wirth (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 90-111 (p. 95).
[113] Nugent, 'Geisha Man Manuscript', Folder 4, p. 5, and 'Geisha Man Notebooks', labelled p. 48 in plain-covered notebook, Folder 3. Both Box 18, JWJ MSS 92, Series 2, Richard Bruce Nugent Papers, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University (hereafter RBNP).
[114] Nugent, 'Geisha Man Notebooks'.

The enduring nature of these poetic traces can in part be credited to the centuries-long literary tradition of the *basium*, or kiss poem. As Gray argues, the *basium* 'is not just a poem about a kiss but is itself a kiss; it aims not only to describe but to re-create the experience of kissing' using techniques that convey similar erotic tensions and allude to acts of embracing.[115] These include 'chiasmus, parataxis, and polyptoton', while the discrete form of a poem reflects the sense of the kiss as a discrete act, sometimes enacted in series.[116] The poems of Yeats and Lawrence, above, and the verses sung in Nugent's 'Geisha Man', can each be considered *basia*. This genre can be traced back to classical roots. The Roman poet, Catullus, wrote a book of 116 poems, many of which are about kisses.[117] In his writing on kisses, Ellis notes the developments of kisses from their Roman significations to the contemporary, remarking that '[i]n Rome the kiss was a sign of reverence and respect far more than a method of sexual excitation.'[118] Catullus' poetry influenced the posthumous *Basia* (1539) of Dutch poet Johannes Secundus which, according to Gray, 'were widely read throughout the Renaissance and which significantly influenced the development of European love poetry'.[119] In yet another modernist-era survey of literary kisses, the author of a 1904 article in *The Fortnightly Review* writes that '[o]ne almost has to pick one's way between the kisses' in Secundus' poetry.[120] While Catullus' poetry initiated kiss interests in Renaissance poets, such lineages were resurfacing in the early twentieth century through a renewed interest in this literary tradition and new ideas about the senses.

[115] Gray, *The Art of Love Poetry*, p. 94.
[116] Ibid. p. 11.
[117] See Poems 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 48, 99, in: Catullus, *The Poems of Catullus: An Annotated Translation,* trans. Jeannine Diddle Uzzi and Jeffrey Thomson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015 [c. 84 BC–54 BC]).
[118] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, p. 219.
[119] Gray, *The Art of Love Poetry*, p. 85. In the only other book in literary studies dedicated to kissing, Alex Wong traces the revival of interest in Catullus in the Late Middle Ages, and the poetry of kissing in Secundus and Shakespeare: Alex Wong, *The Poetry of Kissing in Early Modern Europe: From the Catullan Revival to Secundus, Shakespeare and the English Cavaliers* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2017).
[120] Norman Pearson, 'The Kiss Poetical', *The Fortnightly Review,* 1 August 1904, pp. 291-306 (p. 303).

The long history of the kiss is clearly one known by cultural and aesthetic commentators in the modernist period. Ellis notes that the kiss in England was, until around the eighteenth century, 'an ordinary greeting between men and women'.[121] Indeed, when Erasmus visited England in the sixteenth century, he observed that 'wherever you move there is nothing but kisses'.[122] This remark, when compared to the (more gendered) comment made by Amory in *This Side of Paradise,* speaks to the nonlinearity of change in kissing culture. As Ellis tells us, the kiss as a greeting was 'a custom inherited from classic and early Christian antiquity'.[123] This type of kiss is more commonly referred to as the holy kiss, mentioned at numerous points in the New Testament, for example, in Paul's letter to the Romans with the words '[s]alute each other with a holy kiss'.[124] It was used as both a greeting between early Christians and as part of Communion, a point that brings us back to the cup-kiss and its Communion-like allusions in modernist texts. The kiss of peace (*osculum pacis*) in Christian worship was a gesture that underwent much change from the Middle Ages to post-reformation Europe. The kiss was transformed from something bodily, religious and communal to something secular, erotic and private. Craig Koslofsky argues that the 'shift of the kiss from the social to the erotic, and from the communal to the private, is fundamental to its place in the modern West'.[125] This history is crucial to our understanding of the kiss in the early twentieth century.

In the High Middle Ages, the holy kiss was exchanged in many Christian rituals. By the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it was exchanged between congregants as part of Christian

[121] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex,* p. 7.
[122] David M. Turner, 'Adulterous Kisses and the Meanings of Familiarity in Early Modern Britain', in *The Kiss in History,* ed. Harvey, pp. 80-97 (p. 82).
[123] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, p. 7.
[124] Romans 16:16. Also I Corinthians 16:20, II Corinthians 13:12, I Thessalonians 5:26, I Peter 5:14.
[125] Craig Koslofsky, 'The Kiss of Peace in the German Reformation', in *The Kiss in History,* ed. Harvey, pp. 18-35 (p. 29).

liturgy based on Thomas Aquinas' teachings that the kiss could express particularly profound values.[126] The *osculum pacis* between congregants reflects the roots of the word 'communion' as fellowship between those of the same beliefs.[127] Tracing such roots also differentiates the idea of communion (with roots of 'fellowship') from communal (with etymological roots of 'common'), highlighting the differences between Communion rites and *Brave New World*'s Solidarity Service in which the emphasis is on common physicality rather than shared spirituality.[128] This idea of sharing a kiss in religious rites also complicates our idea of Huxley's futurist World State. In some ways, the Solidarity Service harks back to a European past in which kissing was shared and embodied. However, in the early sixteenth century, religious commentators began to spread ideas about the dangers of lust. This undid the significations of the kiss, and kissing among congregants was replaced in most churches by kissing a pax-board, a flat surface passed between congregants.[129] Twentieth-century readers might have encountered the pax-board in Nyrop's history of the kiss in which he calls it 'a kind of kissing machine', using vocabulary that would resurface in 1930s cosmetic testing discussed above.[130] Garbo's communion-taking in *Flesh and the Devil*, perhaps, was not a type reckoned with by proponents of the pax-board, given the lustful potential for placing one's mouth where a lover's has been. Nevertheless, by the time of the Reformation, theologians such as Martin Luther were spreading the idea that the Word, rather than the body, was the only route to Christian transcendence.[131] Post-Reformation Protestant liturgy had no place for the kiss of peace. The ambiguity of the kiss that Christian Reformation left in its wake survives in the modernist period.

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[126] Ibid. p. 20.
[127] 'Communion', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/37318> [accessed 28 October 2022].
[128] 'Communal', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/37287> [accessed 28 October 2022].
[129] Koslofsky, 'The Kiss of Peace in the German Reformation', p. 24.
[130] Nyrop, *The Kiss and Its History*, p. 118.
[131] Koslofsky, 'The Kiss of Peace in the German Reformation', pp. 26-27.

Historical anxieties surrounding the kiss are related to its ambiguity, which only increased in Western Europe after the Reformation. Intense debates occurred between the late seventeenth and the nineteenth century. Taxonomies of kisses were developed in public discourse as 'part of a wider attempt to codify practices of civility and politeness'.[132] Religious literature, for example, differentiated between kissing that was 'wanton' or 'lascivious' and kissing that was 'civill' and 'honest' in an attempt to balance its religious heritage with the dangers of committing adultery.[133] What exactly constitutes 'wanton' and 'lascivious' kissing is unclear, but what is notable is that such an impulse to taxonomise for the purpose of regulating behaviour survives. We are reminded of the Hollywood Production Code's ban on 'excessive and lustful kissing'. One such taxonomy was made available in English in 1901 in Nyrop's *The Kiss and its History*, in which he reproduces the writing of a German jurist who in the eighteenth century (the period which, as Ellis notes, saw a reduction in the kiss as greeting) classifies 'permissible' and 'unpermissible' kisses.[134] Such taxonomies coincided with the 'burgeoning literature of politeness', a genre of discourse which arose from a culture in which increasing social mobility and the development of public social spaces – 'parks, pleasure gardens, assemblies and theatres' – meant that public behaviour and interpersonal relations were increasingly regulated and discussed.[135] This was not a concern that disappeared. For those in the early twentieth century, the question of space and public behaviour is just as immediate in new realms of cinemas, dance halls, and public transport. The question of regulating the kiss remained a public question of class, race, gender and sexuality.

[132] Karen Harvey, 'Introduction', in *The Kiss in History,* ed. Harvey, pp. 1-15 (p. 10).
[133] Turner, 'Adulterous Kisses', p. 83.
[134] Nyrop, *The Kiss and Its History*, pp. 74-76.
[135] Turner, 'Adulterous Kisses', pp. 84-85.

The eighteenth-century anxiety about ambiguity, channelled into taxonomies and the literature of politeness, developed further in the Victorian period. In public, family members and close friends kissed often. Social regulation attempted to quash the ambiguity of the kiss given that 'the relationship between the participants should have been crystal clear'.[136] Ambiguity remained, nevertheless. In particular, growing tensions in public discourse surrounding sexuality meant that there was an increased insistence on platonicism as the acceptable face of same-sex kissing.[137] In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), for example, Jane kisses her childhood nursemaid Bessie 'rapturously' when they are reunited in her adolescence.[138] These are tensions that are very clearly inherited in modernist texts such as, for example, Rosamond Lehmann's *Dusty Answer* (1927), in which Judith Earle and Jennifer Baird frequently kiss in the emerging all-female space of a Cambridge college. I discuss this further in Chapter Three. In the private lives of Victorians, however, the kiss gained particular currency in their 'highly romantic emotional world' with its cultures of sentimental love; it could express 'intense mutual romance and love without any of the less attractive ramifications of reproductive sex.'[139] Mr Rochester kisses Jane 'repeatedly' when they are engaged, but Jane withdraws this privilege after learning about his marriage to Bertha Mason, as though this boundary can be crossed and uncrossed without necessarily permanent consequence.[140] In Coventry Patmore's *The Angel in the House* (1862), the idea that 'modesty' can be preserved after a kiss is a source of humour among this otherwise sentimental verse, when a woman quips that modesty was 'strictly kept' when a man kisses her while thinking her asleep.[141] Victorian treatments of the kiss mark the increasing

[136] Carole Williams, 'Illness and Impact: The Mistress of the House and the Governess', in *The Kiss in History,* ed. Karen Harvey, pp. 148-65 (p. 149).
[137] Ibid. p. 151.
[138] Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016), p. 83.
[139] Williams, 'Illness and Impact', p. 151.
[140] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, pp. 230, 68.
[141] Coventry Patmore, *The Angel in the House* (London; Cambridge: Macmillan and Co., 1863), p. 255.

development from the religious and bodily to the private and romantic; that is, the secularisation of the kiss. The implications of this secularisation are vital in modernist literature. The secular kiss is one that is less about the inner, spiritual realms, and more about the outer surfaces of the body. Throughout the chapters in this thesis we see that modernist literature draws on a rich history of kissing. The modernist kiss must be understood as transhistorical, with a history that traces its increasing secularisation while retaining the remnants of religious observance. This history establishes the kiss as something particularly rich for the exploration of bodily experience, rather than of spiritual transcendence, in the modernist period.

Kissing and phenomenology

One modernist writer who shows a particular preoccupation with bodily experience is James Joyce, and this preoccupation is legible in the kiss. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), Joyce joins his contemporary sexologists in taking up the task of defining the kiss. Stephen Dedalus wonders:

> What did that mean, to kiss? You put your face up like that to say goodnight and then his mother put her face down. That was to kiss. His mother put her lips on his cheek; her lips were soft and they wetted his cheek; and they made a tiny little noise: kiss. Why did people do that with their two faces?[142]

Stephen might have been able to search for answers in Ellis' and Freud's texts cited above; however, while Ellis and Freud emphasise the activity and sensitivity of the lips and mouth, Joyce writes the kiss as a more comprehensive haptic encounter and attempts to break down its components and represent it as it is experienced. The kiss is, at first, not perceived as an

[142] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York; London: Garland, 1993 [1916]), pp. 33-34.

entity, and its haptic components are instead experienced in discrete parts: two faces reach towards each other, and Stephen feels lips, soft, and then wet, accompanied by sound. Even after these perceptions culminate in a concluding label – 'kiss' – the speaker wonders why 'people do that with their two faces'. Describing the kiss so prosaically as an act of the 'face', rather than mouth or lips, is perhaps more true to the experience of the kiss, given, as Joyce illustrates, its actions of the face as a whole: faces leaning towards each other, feeling texture on different parts of the face, facial muscles producing sound. Joyce's description solicits the perspective of a child, partly to emphasise the learning processing of orienting and coordinating one's body, but also to view taken-for-granted social customs through naïve eyes and 'give a direct description of our experience as it is'.[143] This latter quotation comes from phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty who describes, as such, the imperative of phenomenology: the philosophical school of thought that emerged contemporaneously with modernism which aims to study phenomena as they are immediately experienced – more concisely, to meet phenomena in a prediscursive (knowledge before discourse) sense. Indeed, Joycean writing and phenomenology exhibit a 'shared enterprise', as Cleo Hanaway-Oakley puts it, in their exploration of 'the conscious perception of the world-as-it-is-lived, not the world-as-it-is-customarily-characterized'.[144] The passage above suggests that, to Joyce, kissing initiates questions about the experienced world.

The phenomenological emphasis on 'experience' provides a useful way of thinking about the modernist kiss. The word 'experience' shares an etymology with the word 'experiment', both being derived from the Latin *experīrī* meaning 'to try' or 'put to the test'.[145] Writing the kiss

[143] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962 [1945]), p. vii.
[144] Cleo Hanaway-Oakley, *James Joyce and the Phenomenology of Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 2.
[145] 'Experience', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/66520> [accessed 20 October 2022]; 'experiment', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online],

puts these related concepts in contact. The observational and novelty-driven intentions of experiment also drive innovative modernist representations of a bodily experience that was ingrained in social custom, but also undergoing major modern transformations. In fact, the father of the phenomenological tradition, Edmund Husserl, conceptualises the motivation of phenomenology as reacting to the modern iteration of experimental culture. At a time when people were '[c]onstantly engaged in productive activity, advancing from discovery to discovery in newly developed sciences', Husserl finds it necessary to 'raise the question of the possibility of knowledge as such' and return to what is directly experienced – particularly the kind of experience that is 'taken for granted'.[146] As such, he writes that phenomenology 'must be the basis for the solution to the problems that have been agitating us', since it gives us pause to consider knowledge in the face of rapid change, productivity and discovery.[147] This illuminates the point that the kiss had become a shared area of study across several disciplines, each probing the knowledge of something overlooked. Joyce, who was familiar with proto-phenomenological writing, takes part in this.[148] His speaker questions what kissing means, and then engages in an experimental process of observing the experience of the kiss in its broken down components. What Stephen can know about the kiss is first its proprioceptive (sense of space) and kinaesthetic (sense of movement) registers as faces move together; then its tactile registers; then aural. There is no advancement 'from discovery to discovery', but rather a return to 'the possibility of knowledge' of the kiss itself.

A few years after the publication of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce again probes knowledge of kissing in the 'Penelope' episode of *Ulysses* (1922), using similar questions of meaning:

<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/66530> [accessed 20 October 2022].
[146] Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, p. 16.
[147] Ibid. p. 35.
[148] See Hanaway-Oakley, *James Joyce and the Phenomenology of Film*, pp. 52-56.

> he was the first man kissed me under the Moorish wall my sweetheart when a boy it never entered my head what kissing meant till he put his tongue in my mouth his mouth was sweetlike young […].[149]

Joyce uses the trope of the first kiss between young people to pose a thought experiment about the experience of the kiss. The fact that it never enters Molly's head 'what kissing meant' until she experiences one does not mean that she has not encountered kissing as a cultural artefact. Rather, it suggests that kissing is so ubiquitous in visual and literary culture that, despite its romantic significance, it becomes embedded into the background and taken for granted until it is met in immediate experience. I note that researching the kiss is itself, in this sense, a phenomenologically-aligned project, since kissing is so ubiquitous in literature that it is largely ignored and taken for granted in literary criticism. Joyce's thought experiment in *Ulysses* lies in attempting to understand the kiss only once it is brought into immediate experience. This kiss is astonishingly immediate, given the detail of Molly feeling someone else's tongue in her mouth, bombarding her senses of taste and touch. This kiss is sweet, in contrast to the 'stale and tasteless' kisses that Nyrop (above) imagines between men, and the sweetness is a pleasure, and not repulsive as Pinkie in *Brighton Rock* finds it. Husserl defines knowledge in a phenomenological sense as a '*knowledge of objectivity*, […] such by virtue of the sense that is immanent to it' [original emphasis], and the tongue in Molly's mouth can be taken as an 'immanent' phenomenon that lends itself to knowledge of the kiss.[150]

The process of phenomenological thinking is named by Husserl as *epoché* (or 'bracketing'), a method of thinking in which judgement is suspended and we 'cannot presuppose anything as

[149] James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York: Vintage, 1986 [1920]), p. 625.
[150] Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, p. 16.

pregiven'; instead, we 'must begin with some knowledge that it does not take unexamined from other sources, but rather provides for itself and posits as primary'.[151] What we can take as given, therefore, is what we perceive in our immediate experience. '[P]erception, as long as it lasts, is and remains an absolutely entity, a "this-here," that is what it is in itself'.[152] The tongue in Molly's mouth can be read as an invasive and immediate 'this-here'. Joyce's representation of Molly's first kiss exhibits a form of thinking that shares qualities with the process of *epoché*. She receives knowledge of the kiss from what is given before her and does not imbibe the meaning of the kiss from other sources. This observation of *Ulysses* allows us to read the kiss between Pinkie and Rose in *Brighton Rock*, cited at the beginning of this Introduction, in more detail. When Rose lifts her 'unmade-up mouth' to Pinkie, Pinkie 'knew what was expected of him'. His process of knowing is antithetical to the aims of phenomenology. He comes to the kiss with pregiven knowledge from other sources, exhibiting a tendency towards apperception rather than perception. His experience of the kiss itself is written in language not dissimilar to that in *Ulysses* – he tastes something 'sweetish' and feels 'human skin' closely on his – and yet in the middle of the kiss he wishes for that barrier of 'Coty powder or Kissproof lipstick or any other chemical compound' (again, demonstrating scientific knowledge 'unexamined from other sources'). If we take Husserl's definition of knowledge as something objective 'by virtue of the sense that is immanent to it', then Pinkie does not want to gain knowledge of the kiss. Indeed, his intense fear of losing his virginity stemming from Catholic doctrine, and the description of his 'hard puritanical mouth' that kisses Rose, links Pinkie's aversion to knowing about the kiss with the verb 'to know' in the Biblical sense. Pinkie's aversion to the immediate experience of the kiss presents an example of Lawrence's fears regarding 'sex-in-the-head', which is fretted over in

[151] Ibid. p. 23.
[152] Ibid.

the mind. 'Sex-in-the-head' is in fact a concept which, read in this context, offers a useful articulation of the kind of 'agitations' of modernity that phenomenology tries to address. If kissing becomes a conversation piece for 'bringing into dialogue modernism and phenomenology' – as Ariane Mildenberg puts it – then questions of knowing are raised in terms of how modernist writers approach experience, particularly as it relates to the embodied subject and haptic perception.[153] I further discuss the recent interest in the phenomenological in modernist studies below.

This idea of phenomenology looking with fresh eyes at taken-for-granted experience is a difficult one when it comes to modernist writers using the kiss to comprehend and relate how modern experience feels. The kiss is rarely embedded in the background in literature, making it a problematic candidate for taken-for-granted experience. It often forms a significant part of the structure of a novel when it is used as an apotheosis of the literary development of interpersonal relationships. In *Ulysses*, for example, it becomes an object of wonder. In the 'Lestrygonians' episode, Leopold Bloom recalls his first, passionate date with Molly, a picnic on the Hill of Howth:

> O wonder! Coolsoft with ointments her hand touched me, caressed: her eyes upon me did not turn away. Ravished over her I lay, full lips full open, kissed her mouth. Yum. Softly she gave me in my mouth the seedcake warm and chewed. Mawkish pulp her mouth had mumbled sweet and sour with spittle. Joy: I ate it: joy. Young life, her lips that gave me pouting. Soft, warm, sticky gumjelly lips. […] Wildly I lay on her, kissed her: eyes, her lips, her stretched neck beating, woman's breasts full in her blouse of nun's veiling, fat nipples upright. Hot I tongued her. She kissed me. I was kissed. All yielding she tossed my hair. Kissed, she kissed me.
> Me. And me now.[154]

[153] Ariane Mildenberg, *Modernism and Phenomenology: Literature, Philosophy, Art* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 2.
[154] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 144.

Joyce, again, represents the kiss using the prosaic: seedcake, spittle and stickiness. Yet this is an experience satisfying enough to mark with a '[y]um' (an equally prosaic declaration of appreciation) and intense enough to associate with joy, wildness, heat, and 'wonder'. The prosaic is, of course, a defining feature of *Ulysses*, and this kiss is less overtly so than the multiple explicit references to kissing bottoms elsewhere in the novel.[155] Yet the prosaic in this passage offers a particular example of such an unromantic quality imbued with 'wonder'. In fact, Merleau-Ponty points out that the 'best formulation' of the reductive processes of phenomenology was 'given by Eugen Fink, Husserl's assistant, when he spoke of "wonder" in the face of the world'.[156] If phenomenological thinking restores wonder to experience, then opening this osculatory passage with 'O wonder!' establishes the significance of Joyce representing these prosaic elements of the kiss: it 'brings them to our notice'.[157] It forces the reader to consider the actual experience of the kiss-as-it-is-lived. The fact that Molly's eyes upon Bloom 'did not turn away' reinforces a commitment to perceiving what is before her. Joyce has Bloom reflect this commitment through the insistent use of the personal pronoun at the end of the passage, paired with an immediate temporal marker – 'Me. And me now' – making his experience of the kiss akin to a 'this-here'. Molly and Bloom are turned towards the direct experience of the kiss in the present moment. While the representation of the kiss in literature therefore at first seems incompatible with taken-for-granted elements of life, given how often it has a particular narrative significance, the choice to portray it with a 'direct description of our experience as it is' demonstrates how the kiss provides a useful act for modernist writers to relate evolving ideas about experience. That the kiss appears so frequently in literature, paradoxically, makes it a necessary contender for experiential

[155] See Ibid. pp. 120-21, 604, 39, 42.
[156] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. xiii.
[157] Ibid.

interrogation for modernist writers. For Joyce, that comes with representing it in all its stickiness and spittle-flecked reality.

In 'Lestrygonians' above, Joyce plays with syntax as he moves between active and passive voice: 'She kissed me. I was kissed.' In these alterations of description, Joyce also alters the subject of the kiss throughout the passage: 'I lay on her, kissed her […]. She kissed me.' In a rare critical essay that touches on the kiss in modernist studies, Maud Ellmann remarks that 'Bloom and Molly both remember kissing on the Hill of Howth as the deepest union of their lives, because the kisser coalesces with the kissed'.[158] This again makes comment upon the kiss' narrative significance in modernist texts. While Ellmann argues for 'Penelope' to be read in terms of disembodiment and the unweaving of flesh from words, this convergence of kisser and kissed that she observes in 'Lestrygonians' can, in contrast, best be read in the phenomenological terms of weaving embodied subjects.[159] Joyce's ebbing and flowing of kisser and kissed shares its preoccupations with phenomenological understandings of the experiencing subject. As Merleau-Ponty explains, phenomenology is about how 'the paths of […] various experiences intersect', which makes phenomenology inseparable from the idea of the subject and intersubjectivity.[160] In a kiss, the experience of one person overtly intersects with that of another given its (often, but not always) reciprocal nature, as is conveyed in Joyce's shuttling between kisser and kissed. Like Hanaway-Oakley, I am not implying that Joyce is a phenomenologist or was directly influenced by proto-phenomenology. Rather, we can approach their shared concerns given that '[p]henomenology provides a sophisticated way of thinking about and exploring ideas and concepts such as: perception; […] haptic experience; and mind-body, subject-object, self-other, and person-

[158] Maud Ellmann, '"Penelope" without the Body', in *Joyce, "Penelope" And the Body,* ed. by Richard Brown (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 97-108 (p. 106).
[159] Ibid. p. 99.
[160] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. xx.

world intermingling.'[161] As the syntax above makes Bloom and Molly the subject and object interchangeably, their experience of kissing constitutes their sense of self and other as they both experience themselves kissing, and yet know themselves to be kissed. Bloom reaches this conclusion with accelerating finality, repeating 'she kissed me' twice, and finally dwelling upon 'me', with this personal pronoun extracted from a sentence in which he is the object, not the subject. Garrington reads this passage in relation to Étienne Bonnot de Condillac's description of the Pygmalion myth in *Traité de Sensations* (1754). In Condillac's rendering – 'which achieved a renowned translation into English in 1930' – touch establishes Galatea's realisation that 'this is myself, this is still myself'.[162] The reciprocal nature of the kiss in 'Lestrygonians' also establishes an understanding of a 'myself' who affects and is affected by the world.

The problems of subject (the perceiving person/thing) and object (the perceived person/thing), affecting and affected by the world, are notable concerns in the writing of Merleau-Ponty. In *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), he argues that the body is 'recognized by its power to give me "double sensations"'.[163] Simply, it can both feel and be felt. The relevance of this phenomenon to kissing is clear when, prompted by Ellmann, we are reminded of Cressida's question in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (c. 1602) concerning whether '[i]n kissing […] you render or receive' (IV. 5. 37).[164] Explored in more nuanced fashion, Merleau-Ponty famously offers the conundrum of the left hand touching the right. These two hands 'are never simultaneously in the relationship of touched and touching to each other', but rather 'alternate the rôles of "touching" and being "touched"'; as such, the left hand can feel the right as a 'bundle of bones and muscles' but also anticipate that this

[161] Hanaway-Oakley, *James Joyce and the Phenomenology of Film*, p. 56.
[162] Garrington, *Haptic Modernism* pp. 54, 85.
[163] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 93.
[164] William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1998 [c. 1602]), p. 287.

bundle will become 'alive and mobile', touching back.[165] This configuration, he characterises elsewhere, is chiasmatic.[166] When considering these ideas regarding animation in the Pygmalion myth, Garrington makes the case that the 'kiss is crucial in its dramatisation of the moment of tactile reciprocity, neatly rendered in the human lips that, as one set, are already the touching-touched' (latterly borrowing Jacques Derrida's term for sensory chiasm).[167] Such an argument builds the collage of uses to which Joyce put the kiss when expressing his own concerns regarding the embodied experience of both touching and being touched. In *Ulysses*, the polyptoton of the kiss verb (kissed, kisser, kissing) are in fact central to Bloom's psyche, not just in his romantic life but also in his parental life. In 'Calypso'. while coming to terms with his daughter Milly's sexual maturation and contemplating Molly's adultery, Bloom thinks about Milly's '[y]oung kisses' (again revealing Joyce's interest in the first kiss trope) and realises that it is useless to prevent the kisses that Molly will experience with another man: '[l]ips kissed, kissing, kissed. Full gluey woman's lips.'[168] Again, we are presented with a kiss that is grossly adhesive in its embodied reality. What Merleau-Ponty would characterise as a 'chiasm' is rendered in Joyce's more condensed syntactical changes. The lips rapidly shuttle between 'kissed, kissing, kissed'. That this passage is echoed and extended in 'Lestrygonians' highlights the use that Joyce found in the kiss to interrogate the felt resonances of experience when one person's experience intersects with another. If, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, the crux of intersecting experience in phenomenological thought is that 'perceptions confirm each other', then we might take this idea of reciprocity to suggest that when kissers grasp each other, their intentions are reflected in the experience of kissing and being kissed back.[169] Joyce, then, in writing the kiss, is almost relating an existential

[165] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 93.
[166] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), pp. 130-55.
[167] Garrington, *Haptic Modernism* p. 53.
[168] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 55.
[169] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. xix.

question of 'do you feel what I feel?' when the kissers encounter a subjectivity beyond their own. By kissing, being kissed, and kissing again, Joyce's characters grasp and mingle with the surfaces of a world beyond themselves – they put to the test, or experiment with, what has been taken for granted. In this way, as we will see in the thesis, writers of the modernist period may be seen to regard the kiss as something that initiates questions about immediate experience when that experience intersects with someone else's. Like Joyce, these writers regard the kiss as something complex and yet overlooked, and strip it back to observe this immediate, intimate and sometimes gross experience and render it in (often experimental) writing.

Reading kisses and the senses

In attempting to answer what use the kiss is for modernist writers grappling with new bodily experiences, the arguments in this thesis must be understood as an intervention in studies of the body in modernism; more specifically, those that study the senses.[170] Several of these studies have taken the relationship between technology and the body as their focus. Above I suggested that Kissproof is a form of prosthetic technology that fragments and augments the body. Armstrong's study of the relationship between technology and the body in modernism argues that a defining feature amid the crises of modernity is the way technology 'offers the body as lack, at the same time as it offers technological compensation.'[171] These concerns are apparent in the aesthetic representations of modernist artists and writers who 'saw the body as the locus of anxiety, even crisis'.[172] Armstrong's most useful achievement for our purposes

[170] In their survey of modernist studies between around 1999-2008, Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz refer to the growth of several embodied fields that 'propel important scholarly endeavours' including 'affect, gender, sexuality, racial dynamics, psychoanalysis, science': Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, 'The New Modernist Studies', *PMLA,* 123 (2008), pp. 737-48 (p. 738).
[171] Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body*, p. 3.
[172] Ibid. p. 4.

is to show that modernism and modernity cannot be treated as separate, a point which is most apparent in relation to the body – the body that produces and consumes both technology and modernist art. This point is built upon by Sara Danius who opposes what she calls the 'topos of the split': that is, seeing modernity as separate from, or mere context for, modernism.[173] This notion guides the overarching argument of *The Senses of Modernism* (2002) which is that 'technology is in a specific sense *constitutive* of high-modernist aesthetics' [original emphasis]: writings concerned with perception are not just explorations of subjectivity, but are actually tenured to modernity and technology.[174] While writing on modernist responses to technologies of photography, Danius analyses Marcel Proust's long meditation on the kiss in *The Guermantes Way* (1920). In this protracted passage, the narrator slowly closes in to kiss Albertine Simonet's cheek. Danius' comparison of the kiss to photography, drawing upon a shared 'tension between proximity and distance', leads her to conclude that 'the passage speaks of alienation, of the alienating power of the gaze.'[175] Her focus on sight, however, means that the tactile weight added to the proximity in this passage is overlooked, leading to a conclusion of alienation – with its emphasis on psychological or physical distance – rather than intersubjective experience. Indeed, Proust's own phrase in this passage focuses upon the 'actual contact between flesh and flesh'.[176] I return to the tactility of the narrator's wandering gaze in Chapter Two.

Allyson C. DeMaagd's recent work considers a full range of the senses as she analyses the relationship between technology and gender. In *Dissensuous Modernism* (2022), she shows that modernist women writers portray intersensory experiences of technology to undermine

[173] Sara Danius, *The Senses of Modernism, Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics* (Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 7.
[174] Ibid. p. 3.
[175] Ibid. p. 141.
[176] Marcel Proust, *The Guermantes Way*, trans. by C. K. Scott-Moncrieff (Gloucester: Dodo Press, 2007 [1920]), p. 351.

traditional constructions of sight and sound as the superior, masculine senses, and smell, taste and touch as the inferior, feminine senses. In the passage from *Brighton Rock* above, Greene explores the body's intersensory capacities as Pinkie 'tasted again the sweetish smell of the human skin', but for DeMaagd, an exploration of these capacities is a gendered phenomenon. These writers, namely Woolf, H.D., Mina Loy and Elizabeth Bowen, were writing in a context in which many women in the West were stepping out of arenas that had traditionally been associated with these latter senses into public spaces with which sight and sound had been associated. (We are reminded of the gendered anxiety regarding public kissing, discussed above.) DeMaagd hence draws attention to modernist writing that unsettles sensory hierarchies; H.D., in particular, saw the 'lower senses as […] generative' rather than 'degenerative'.[177] DeMaagd's focus on gender, however, leaves much to be said about the significant relationship between race and sensory hierarchies, which I discuss in detail in Chapter Two. What these discussions of technology do show is that, where the body and its fragmentations, perceptions and sensory capacities are explored by modernist writers, these concerns are inseparable from modernity – its crises and opportunities, its anxieties, its prejudices – which is not merely contextual but constitutive for a range of modernist literary projects.

The field of sensory modernism has in recent years turned to haptic matters, which reflects a shift more broadly in sensory studies towards placing equal emphasis on senses that have historically been relegated to the bottom of the sensory hierarchy.[178] Although broadly concerned with crises of vision, Anne Anlin Cheng makes the case that skin and surface are primary interests in broader modernist aesthetics, from literature and art to technology,

[177] Allyson C. DeMaagd, *Dissensuous Modernism* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2022), p. 31.
[178] On smell, for example, see Catherine Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility: Perfume in Victorian Literary Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). and William Tullett, *Smell in Eighteenth-Century England: A Social Sense* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

architecture and, most significantly, performance. These crises of vision, Cheng argues, begin with an 'intimacy between Modernism and Primitivism' that underscores the surface-oriented visuality of modernist aesthetics, one that very often settles upon the surface of Black skin.[179] The central figure is dancer and performer Josephine Baker whose skin, Cheng shows, can be viewed as a modern surface that cannot be regarded simply by way of Primitivism, fetishism or liberation, but as a site of aesthetic and philosophical debate about pure surfaces. Her skin is a surface that 'reveals itself as style'.[180] A focus on touch has proved equally fruitful for literary studies. As discussed above, Das intervenes in critical narratives of industrial warfare by showing that the First World War maimed the male body but also 'restored tenderness to touch in male relationships'.[181] While paying close attention to the tactile encounters of bodies living in close proximity, crawling through the trenches, caring for the wounded and tending to the dead, Das' analysis of the relationship between touch and language gestures towards the significance of tactile matters in literary studies. On one hand, '[l]anguage is full of references to touch: all our words are in some way an attempt to reach out to people'.[182] On the other hand, in the context of warfare, 'as words fail and life ebbs away, the body moves in to fill the void: touch becomes the final antidote'.[183] Attention to touch and skin evidently offers a route to reframing our understanding of early twentieth-century literature, for example, by revealing a new narrative about the capacities and limits of language in the context of industrial warfare.

[179] Anne Anlin Cheng, *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 6.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Das, *Touch and Intimacy*, p. 4.
[182] Ibid. p. 21.
[183] Ibid. p. 24.

Attending to modernist writing more broadly, Garrington's *Haptic Modernism* (2013) shows that haptic matters were in fact central to modernist ideas about selfhood and aesthetics.[184] As such, she argues that 'modernist texts – literary, scientific, philosophical and journalistic – return with unprecedented alacrity to the haptic experiences of the human body.'[185] Cultural and technological developments of the early twentieth century – among them the establishment of psychoanalysis, the invention of the motorcar, the discovery of the atom and the rise of cinema, as well as recalibrations of ideas about aesthetic forms such as sculpture and the flat image – contribute to a 'hinge point […] in relation to questions of the haptic.'[186] Whilst laying out this immense field of concern for modernist writers, Garrington shows that literature both 'responds and contributes to' haptic matters, adding to the layers of critical consensus that modernism and modernity can be seen in symbiosis when it comes to questions of the body. Garrington also, crucially, shows that modernist thinkers understood the haptic under its full-bodied umbrella of tactility, kinaesthesia, proprioception and the vestibular sense (of balance).[187] Recall the kiss in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* described in discrete haptic components: it encompasses not just the moment of touch, but also the coordination of bodies moving and orientating themselves in space. The kiss, as I show in this thesis, is best understood not just in terms of the touch of the mouth, but as something more comprehensive that considers the body's position, motion, balance, and points of contact. Each contributes to the significance of the kiss in narrative, and to the significance of its full embodied experience in wider social, cultural and political contexts.

[184] Garrington, *Haptic Modernism* p. 17.
[185] Ibid. p. 50.
[186] Ibid. pp. 32-33.
[187] Ibid. p. 16.

Garrington's work on touch in modernist writing has been followed by several studies on haptic matters in other literary fields, particularly those looking at the nineteenth century.[188] Within modernist studies, further work on touch points to the breadth of the relevance of haptic matters in modernist culture. Daniel Kielty steps back slightly from the full haptic umbrella by returning to the enduring symbol of touch, the hand, in his work on Rebecca West. While Das explores bodies that engage in warfare, Kielty looks at the 'hands of the munitions worker' that shed light on 'the troubling agency of female manual labour' in wartime, as well as the middle-class forms of 'female tactility [that] formed parts of attempts to reinforce [idealised models of femininity] on the Home Front'.[189] Imola Nagy-Seres also follows this strand of tactile research on active hands (notably, in a special issue of the *Journal of Modern Literature* on embodiment). Like Garrington, Nagy-Seres readdresses previously upheld ideas of Woolf as a writer more concerned with the psyche than the body, this time by analysing authorial engagement with sculpture, particularly Greek sculpture in which Woolf saw a 'firm softness'.[190] Nagy-Seres draws an analogy between the gentle fingers of Greek sculptors and the writing hand of Woolf herself, who was experimenting with the 'malleability of human character' while writing *Jacob's Room* (1922).[191] This work, particularly when considered in aggregate with the emerging focus on touch in modernist studies, readdresses the early twentieth-century concerns 'with humans' alienation from the living and feeling body in interpersonal relationships as well as in artistic experiences' by

[188] See, for example: Pamela Gilbert, K., *Victorian Skin, Surface, Self, History* (Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press, 2019) and Heather Tilley, *Blindness and Writing: From Wordsworth to Gissing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[189] Daniel Kielty, '"Hands That War: In the Midlands": Rebecca West's Rediscovered Article on First World War Munitions Workers', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature,* 36 (2017), pp. 211-14 (p. 212); Daniel Kielty, '"For at her touch our lives had at last fallen into a pattern": Tactility in Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier*', *Feminist Modernist Studies,* 4 (2021), pp. 53-70 (p. 54).
[190] Imola Nagy-Seres, 'Malleable Sculptures in Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room* and Early Travel Diaries', *Journal of Modern Literature,* 42 (2019), pp. 149-66 (p. 150).
[191] Ibid. p. 158.

centring writers who offer 'alternative interpretation[s] of the body'.[192] This thesis contributes to this critical thread.

In studies of touch in modernism, it is rare to see the kiss as a critical focus, which is surprising given its prominence in such a variety of relevant texts. Garrington notes the kiss' quality of reciprocity by situating it within a certain historicity that reaches back to Pygmalion and Galatea. Das examines the dying kiss between soldiers and sheds light on the kiss by drawing attention to the evanescent qualities of touch, both in the context of life slipping away and of the kiss as a narrative device often employed as a 'climactic episode' or a 'pivot on which the story turns'.[193] Marcus (above) indeed suggests that Woolf understood the kiss as something that could close a scene or end a narrative. Nevertheless, on most of the few occasions that kissing receives extensive treatment in modernist studies, the haptic has been overlooked despite the fact that, as seen above, writers in the modernist period recognised the particular haptic qualities of the kiss, this intentional touch of the lips directed towards a person or an object. Gray has perhaps come close in his analysis of the 'osculatory tropes of chiasmus and polyptoton' in modernist poetry – each a technique that communicates the repetition (in the latter) and the mirrored structure (in the former) of a reciprocal embrace.[194] André le Vot, however, explicitly rejects the presence of touch in kissing in two aforementioned texts: Proust's *The Guermantes Way* and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Le Vot argues that the kisses in these texts have nothing to do with 'the contact of two skins,' but are a '*cosa mentale*, a thing of the mind.'[195] I have discussed above, in contrast, the tactile echoes of Pygmalion in *The Great Gatsby*, and the problems with

[192] Ibid. p. 163.
[193] Das, *Touch and Intimacy*, pp. 124, 33.
[194] Gray, *The Art of Love Poetry*, p. 114.
[195] André le Vot, 'Fitzgerald and Proust: Connoisseurs of Kisses', in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: New Perspectives,* ed. by Jackson R. Bryer, Alan Margolies, and Ruth Prigozy (Athens, GA; London: University of Georgia Press, 2000), pp. 90-101 (p. 92).

overlooking the tactile in *The Guermantes Way*. What le Vot does offer, however, is a reading of the kiss as a temporal experiment which is carried out through lingering on memories of the kiss and representing this in protracted prose. Perhaps the most well-discussed modernist kiss, that between Sally and Clarissa in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), exhibits similar temporal features: Clarissa recalls that 'Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips.'[196] In one other focused discussion of the kiss in a modernist text, Kate Haffey theorises the 'queer temporality' of this kiss. She argues that Clarissa's memory of the kiss constitutes a 'queer moment': a lyrical eddy in the flow of heteronormative narrative time.[197] In Chapter One, I discuss Lawrence's own distortion of temporality in his literary representations of kissing, and the relationship between the kiss and modern attitudes towards time and space. Haffey's application of queer theory to Clarissa and Sally's kiss enriches our understanding of queerness and temporality in modernist studies, but both Haffey and le Vot leave much to be said about modernist understanding of, and use for, the immediate experience of the kiss itself.

My emphasis on experience, as I have said, lends itself to a phenomenological lens. It is, in some ways, non-phenomenological to use phenomenology as a theoretical tool when analysing a text. To do so, as Mildenberg puts it, 'jars with the fact that phenomenology first and foremost returns us to the pre-reflective'.[198] Phenomenology, instead, offers to literary studies – and modernist studies in particular, given the contemporaneous emergence of phenomenology and modernism – a 'practice', rather than a theory.[199] In this thesis, phenomenology and literature coexist in their practices of experience description. I further discuss the dissonances between theory and phenomenology in Chapter Three. Mildenberg

[196] Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015 [1925]), p. 32.
[197] Kate Haffey, *Literary Modernism, Queer Temporality: Eddies in Time* (Cham: Springer, 2019), p. 40.
[198] Mildenberg, *Modernism and Phenomenology*, p. 3.
[199] Ibid.

argues that, as modernist texts challenge their readers with the 'new' and the experimental, they 'turn us into practical phenomenologists, "perpetual beginners"'.[200] We feel our way through the texts, like those who are learning to kiss in Joyce's writing (above), as well as Lawrence's (see Chapter One) and Radclyffe Hall's (see Chapter Three). The growing body of work in modernist studies that uses phenomenology as a way of thinking has, therefore, often been in the realm of sensory studies, such as that by Garrington and Hanaway-Oakley. In *Modernism and Physical Illness* (2020), too, Peter Fifield suggests that some modernist writers, such as Woolf, offer a 'phenomenological analysis' of illness as not only something that prompts new perspectives on a patient's bodily sensations but also 'as an event that modifies the very texture of that experience'.[201] To consider the dialogue between modernism and phenomenology, then, provides a window into contemporary strategies of expressing ideas about the body and its sensory capacities. The kiss is a vital part of this: with its immediacy and sometimes taken-for-grantedness, it surfaces at moments when writers attempt to register the sensory experiences of modernity.

Notably, most studies of modernism that look to phenomenology enact analysis based on Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, or, less frequently, invoke Husserl, Heidegger, or Derrida. Increasingly, however, critics are looking to the phenomenological writings of women, queer women, and women of colour. French phenomenologist Luce Irigaray criticises Merleau-Ponty for masculine constructions of power inherent in his views of perception: his idea, for example, that one hand anticipates the role of the other as toucher and as touched (discussed above). This idea of perception polarises the passive and the active, Irigaray argues, which constructs a zero-sum pattern of 'mastery' in which the active 'seer' or toucher is

[200] Ibid. p. 22.
[201] Peter Fifield, *Modernism and Physical Illness: Sick Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 92.

privileged.[202] Elsa Högberg shows that Irigaray's work offers a way to consider ethical practices of intimacy in modernist texts, specifically those of Woolf. This model of ethical interaction raises large questions concerning whether some modernist writing about intimacy can 'disrupt the frequently aggressive, even violent ways in which we tend to figure others as objects of our knowledge and imagination, so that we are literally compelled to see the world through another's eyes'.[203] In this light, I aim, in this thesis, to keep in mind the potential ethical frameworks that phenomenology might offer when it comes to the power dynamics of kissing and being kissed. As we have seen earlier in this Introduction, the subject and object of a kiss can be politically mobilised in statements such as 'the most kissed man in America'. Theorist Sara Ahmed also examines the power structures in phenomenology written by straight white men in *Queer Phenomenology* (2006). The practice of paying attention to what is directly before us – 'this-here' – is not neutral in a socio-political sense. It can depend upon a context of heterosexual culture in which we are supposed to 'turn toward' certain objects and 'turn away' from others.[204] Tellingly, Ahmed cites Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) in her discussion of the ways women might turn towards objects that are 'out of line' with what has been dictated to them in their socio-political contexts.[205] These considerations of non-canonical phenomenologists in relation to modernist studies suggests that modernism has much to offer us by way of relating alternative modes of experience, and of exploring how modes of experience are politicised. In Chapter Three, I return to Irigaray and Ahmed in a discussion of women kissing women in modernist texts.

[202] See Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (London; New York: Continuum, 2004 [1984]), p. 129.
[203] See Elsa Högberg, *Virginia Woolf and the Ethics of Intimacy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), p. 18.
[204] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 21.
[205] Ibid. pp. 11, 61.

The haptic is the main site of intervention for this project of reading the kiss, and recent work on modernism and its feelings, affects, and intimacies provides a significant context. Affect theory has proven a fruitful avenue for the consideration of modernist culture that produced new forms of embodied feeling. Locke's description of the 'quick nervous tempo and pace of the hectic civilization of ours' is, indeed, affectively charged, bringing to mind a body that is excited, or stressed, or startled. Julie Taylor suggests that the coldness often attributed to modernism can be 'refigured as an engagement with the world', in which case, 'feeling is not opposed to thinking but rather feeling bad becomes a knowledge-producing activity'.[206] This reconfiguration is useful when considered alongside Husserl's conception of phenomenology's return to experience as a way of questioning the possibility of knowledge itself. Indeed, the kiss-induced affects in this thesis encompass a full range of feeling, both positive and negative, and produce knowledge about objects of perception: a spectator is startled by a kiss at the cinema (Chapter Two); a young girl throws a pot at a kissing couple in a rage (Chapter Three); a dancer is sexually excited by a man whom she has kissed (Chapter Four). Building upon this attention to the feelings of modernism, Högberg has recently contended that this movement itself 'played a vital role in the constructions of intimacy specific to the age of modernity', including outward expression, publicity, and legibility.[207] Intimate feelings are often expressed outwardly, which will become apparent in the kisses discussed in this thesis in which bodies reach out to other bodies or objects. They are often expressed in public, an idea that generated concerns surrounding expectations of kissing culture, particularly when it came to questions of gender or sexuality, and they are

[206] Julie Taylor, 'Introduction: Modernism and Affect', in *Modernism and Affect,* ed. by Julie Taylor (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), pp. 1-19 (p. 11). For more on the relationship between affect and knowledge-production, and an argument that 'feeling matters' to modernism, see: Lisa Mendelman, *Modern Sentimentalism: Affect, Irony, and Female Authorship in Interwar America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).
[207] Elsa Högberg, 'Introduction', in *Modernist Intimacies,* ed. by Elsa Högberg (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), pp. 1-15 (p. 2).

often made legible in their recorded affects.[208] Reading the kiss aligns with the legibility of intimacy in the context of early twentieth-century modernity, in which writers prove to be preoccupied with conveying the haptic experience of the kiss amid modern conditions to their readers.

Kisses to come

So far in this Introduction, I have been gesturing towards questions of the relationship between modernity and experience in modernist writing on the kiss. Why would modernist writers turn to the kiss in a period apparently preoccupied with isolation and existential subjectivity? Of what use was the kiss for modernist writers: in their literary experiments, in their grapples with modernity? What can their use of the kiss tell us about modernist understanding of experience? And what can the kiss in modern experience tell us about the social, cultural, and political developments of the early twentieth century? In order to answer these questions, this thesis is comprised of four chapters that each approach significant contexts in which modernist writers turned to the kiss when relating experiences of modernity: technologies of speed, interracial intimacy on screen, kisses between women, and Black modern dance culture. As a project informed by phenomenology as a practice, these chapters each trace the body-subject engaging in a type of touch that is conspicuously intersubjective. The kiss is seen in specific iterations made possible only by the conditions of modernity.

[208] For more on 'the co-evolution of modernist affectivity and the shifting historical shape of modernity's public world', see: Justus Nieland, *Feeling Modern: The Eccentricities of Public Life* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008), p. 5.

In Chapter One, I draw attention to a previously unobserved feature of Lawrence's haptic writing: his repeated writings on kisses that happen at speed, in cars and on trains. Each example presents Lawrence's attempts to explore somatosensory experience of space when the body is flung out at unprecedented paces and encounters new haptic experiences. Such encounters were celebrated by subscribers to the artistic and social Futurist movement, who welcomed the dynamism and technology ushered in by the early twentieth century. In scientific writings, the body's sense of its position in space was given a name for the first time, 'proprioception', by neurophysiologist Charles Sherrington in 1906. Lawrence was (unsurprisingly, given his defining characteristic of passionate ambivalence) suspicious of these ideas about the body, but engages with both, directly and indirectly, in his kiss-interested texts.[209] These embodied contexts illuminate Lawrence's writings on the kiss. The overlooked kisses in his works establish the kiss as crucial to modernist understanding of experiences of the bodily subject and show that the task of relating how modern experience feels involves the very opposite of cerebral retreat. These kisses at speed show us a turn outwards to encounter the world, where, to use Merleau-Ponty's phrase, 'perceptions confirm each other' when the senses are consumed with novelty and the body's smooth experience of space is disrupted.[210] In 1912, Lawrence wrote that 'work is produced by passion with me, like kisses', and we see in his writings a generative relationship between the project of literary modernism and the kiss.[211]

[209] On Lawrence's 'changes of heart and understanding' see: Paul Eggert, 'Revising and Rewriting', in *The Edinburgh Companion To D. H. Lawrence and the Arts,* ed. by Catherine Brown and Susan Reid (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), pp. 219-30 (p. 220).
[210] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. xix.
[211] D. H. Lawrence to Ernest Collings, 24 December 1912, in *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, Volume I, September 1901 – May 1913*, ed. by James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 491-92 (p. 491).

In Chapter Two, we turn to the cinema, the technology most central to the cultural development of the kiss in the modernist period, and examine the intersection between race, cinema and the kiss. These elements converge in the interracial kiss on screen at a time when such kisses were represented, discussed, worried about and, in 1930, banned. I discuss the interracial screen kiss in the writings of Woolf and Huxley, who each portray a kiss between a Black and white subject in *Orlando* (1928) and *Brave New World*, respectively. Woolf and Huxley are two notably cinema-attuned and, as shown above, kiss-interested writers who were entrenched in a film culture that saw theorisations of the cinema itself as haptic. This was a quality that white film theorists particularly ascribed to Black actors. *Orlando* and *Brave New World* reveal that the modern experience of seeing a kiss on screen can be indexed to early twentieth-century concerns about race relations and the senses. The onscreen kisses in this chapter show a twofold moment of intersubjectivity, between actor and actress, and between actor and audience. The interracial kiss on screen emblematises how attitudes towards the kiss can tell us much about the socio-political conditions in which it is enacted – in this case, about the relationship between touch and racial politics, and white supremacist conceptualisations of skin and the senses.

In Chapter Three, we remain with questions of representability and taboo forms of touch by looking at women kissing women in interwar novels by women writers. In Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, Lehmann's *Dusty Answer* and Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* (1936), I show that writing the kiss between women gave these writers a narrative strategy through which to represent intersubjective experience beyond masculine realms of mastery and object relations. These novels emerged in a period when sexual relations between women were increasingly accepted but also resisted, denied and debated. The kiss between women, rather than men, is my specific area of concern in this chapter given that the tangle of acceptance,

resistance and denial left the kiss between women such an ambiguous act, both 'unrepresentable' and writable.[212] (I discuss kisses between men in Chapter Four.) In her discussion of women seeking alternatives to heteronormative life in Dorothy Richardson's writing, Bryony Randall finds 'mode[s] of intimacy made possible only by the social, political and economic changes of modernity'.[213] The kisses in my chosen texts present a similar relationship to modernity. In its interest in moving beyond masculine realms of intersubjective experience, this chapter is the most overtly phenomenological. I invoke both Irigaray and Ahmed's writings in order to explore how modernist writers experiment with relating experience beyond patriarchal models, and to gesture towards the work still to be done to bring modernism into dialogue with phenomenology that is informed by queer femininity.

The fourth and final chapter of this thesis brings the concerns of the first three together in a discussion that invokes movement, race, and queerness. Chapter Four looks at the relationship between kissing and Black dance culture in the writing of Nugent, an overlooked pioneer of literary kisses. Many of these writings remain unpublished or only partly-published, and this chapter makes use of both published texts and Nugent's rich and under-discussed archive. Nugent wrote flamboyant instances of kissing (particularly between men) in a contrasting context of Black racial uplift which called for a conservative, disembodied, middle-class performance of Blackness as a response to white racism. Kissing in Nugent's writing is about intersubjectivity, pleasure and intimacy. He moves these ideas about kissing into wider fields of feeling, in particular, that of dance. The dancing figure is one that is often reduced to an expressive but non-emotive subject in white modernist dance theory. As we

[212] Medd, *Lesbian Scandal and the Culture of Modernism*, p. 95.
[213] Bryony Randall, 'Angles and Surfaces Declared Themselves Intimately: Intimate Things in Dorothy Richardson's *The Trap*', in *Modernist Intimacies,* ed. Högberg, pp. 74-91 (p. 76).

shall see, the relationship between kissing and dancing in Nugent's writing presents an alternative to dominant modernist dance theories. It also subverts both the cultural expectations of racial uplift and wider capitalist imperatives regarding the accumulation of wealth and success. New experiences for the modern Black person in New York City, including modern dance and queer public intimacy, are related with an anti-capitalist and anti-racist ethos through the kiss. From the kiss, Nugent portrays a subject dancing in Harlem while negotiating racial uplift and finding joy amid racial oppression and the growing tides of capitalism.

All of the kisses in this thesis, in some way, negotiate actions of giving and receiving. In the literary form, particularly, grammatical rules occasionally dictate the presentation of a kiss as one-sided. Above, I have shown this in the construction of the 'most kissed man in America' sentence. A man in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, too, 'bestows one final patronising kiss' upon a typist whose indifference does not present a picture of enthusiastic consent, in a poem that otherwise explores themes of rape. The Conclusion picks up on the questions of consent that arise in numerous kisses throughout this thesis and discusses the forced kiss as a form of assault that has not been taken seriously in literary criticism, or wider culture, to this day. The 'stolen kiss' as a literary trope itself has deep historical roots and was well-known to the modernists. Forced kisses appear in Woolf's *The Voyage Out* (1915) and *Mrs Dalloway*, as well as *Ulysses*, and serve to highlight intersections of embodied oppressions and freedoms. By looking at the forced kisses of modernism and their transgressions of consent, I point towards new directions in studies of the kiss, particularly as it relates to phenomenological thinking.

In choosing this range of subjects and writers, I aim not to be exhaustive in examining modernist exploration of the kiss. Instead, I am choosing significant instances of modernist literary kisses in order to provide a suggestive basis for an argument that modernist writers were preoccupied with the relationship between the kiss and modernity, and that this relationship provides an insight into the cultural, social, and political structures of the Western Anglosphere in the early twentieth century. Furthermore, the wide scope of my authors affirms the pervasiveness of the kiss as a significant presence in modernist literature. These writers are not just selected from the echelon of high modernism, but are also those less explored, or those previously dismissed as sentimental. I discuss mainly modernist novels given their rich scope for the exploration of experience through narrative. The kiss, as discussed above, often forms a vital part of the structure of modernist narrative: it can be a turning point, or a narrative apotheosis. While the kiss on stage is often left to stage direction, the novel provides narrative insight into the minutiae of this particular kind of experience. Though embracing the limits of description is a feature of much modernist writing, the kiss is often something that modernist writers grapple over and describe meticulously – one moment over several pages, as we have seen in the cases of Proust and Joyce.[214] Furthermore, while Gray shows that '[a] poem is the natural correlative to a kiss', the kiss in novels remains surprisingly unexplored territory, despite its prevalence across myriad genres and literary periods. This thesis not only contributes to our understanding of modernism as something concerned with the experience of the body and its intersubjective encounters; as the first extended study of the kiss in prose, it also suggests that this underexplored territory can help us to glean insights from a huge variety of texts that can be situated in a long tradition of literary kisses. For Lawrence, writing and kissing are produced by the same passions. The

[214] See Dora Zhang, 'Naming the Indescribable: Woolf, Russell, James, and the Limits of Description', *New Literary History,* 45 (2014), pp.51-70.

kiss, as the modernist writers under discussion show us, proves to be a vital part of the production of narrative.

The Kiss at Speed: Somatosensory Experience of Space in D. H. Lawrence

A passenger's mouth is bound towards a 'pulsing neck'.[215] With this image, locomotion is dramatised in one of D. H. Lawrence's rarely-discussed poems, 'Kisses in the Train' (1913). Fields rush by in the opening stanza, 'stretching bare' as the train speeds through 'the midlands', the inexact location suggesting that an entire geographical space has been covered in a few lines of verse.[216] The 'sheep' in these fields certainly register this kind of speed: they 'tossed back in a scare' as the train scatters the bucolic autumnal scene. The startled sheep pre-empt the affect of Gerald Crich's mare in Lawrence novel *Women in Love* (1920), who bridles at the rush of a train and 'wince[s]' at the 'sharp blasts of the chuffing engine'.[217] Yet the poem does not dwell on ecology. As Lawrence draws back from this stretched out scenery, the reader is shown a kiss in the second stanza:

> And still as ever
> The world went round,
> My mouth on her pulsing neck was found,
> And my breast to her beating
> Breast was bound.[218]

To achieve this level of closeness in a train carriage – a mouth to a neck, a breast to a breast – the reader has to conceive that the passengers are sat adjacent, and that the mouth (and head, and body) of the kisser leans perpendicular to the motion of the train; or that the kisser is swooning onto the neck and the two bodies are horizontal. Another form of movement, the 'pulsing' and 'beating' of the kissed passenger's flesh, intensifies the trajectory of the mouth and breast to those palpitating touch-points. This final word 'bound' invokes historical

[215] D. H. Lawrence, 'Kisses in the Train', in *Poems III*, pp. 1620-1 (p. 1620). The poem was originally published in *Love Poems and Others* (1913).
[216] Ibid.
[217] D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987 [1920]), p. 110.
[218] Lawrence, 'Kisses in the Train', p. 1620.

resonances of the kiss as a pact – the kiss in marriage vows or the conferring kiss – that Lawrence then weaves into the embodied experience of this embrace.

The poem moves us forwards at speed, holds us still, leans us to the side and spins us round, and prompts us to ask how and why Lawrence uses the kiss to contend with the experience of the body in one of its most modern iterations: when it hurtles at speed. While the opening stanza of the poem is highly visual (note that the very first words are 'I saw'), Lawrence traces the body's sense of space during a kiss throughout the rest of the poem. He draws our attention to the kissers' ability to feel the position of the lips and head and use this felt perception to judge space and distance as they move towards each other. Indeed, while many critics have taken Lawrence at his word and read him as technophobic, with his hatred of cinema and his startled mare, modern bodily experiences facilitated by technology open up avenues of exploration for his embodied interests.[219] In the six stanzas of 'Kisses in the Train', Lawrence uses the kiss to highlight the particular bodily sense of space – or, more pithily, 'somatosensory experience of space' – during a beguiling, landscape-disturbing train journey.[220]

As the poem continues, each of these forms of motion coincide. Lawrence then introduces another, more vertiginous form: a rotation, which starts to spin in the second stanza (above) when the 'world went round'. It builds momentum in the third stanza '[a]s all the ground/ On its prowling orbit/ Shifted round', and reaches dizzying levels in the penultimate stanza:

> And the world all whirling
> Around in joy

[219] David Trotter has recently argued against a technophobic reading of Lawrence and suggests that, sometimes, life flows most freely for Lawrence under technology: David Trotter, 'Technology', in *D. H. Lawrence and the Arts,* ed. Brown and Reid, pp. 160-72 (p. 162).
[220] Throughout this chapter, I borrow this phrase from: Mark Paterson, *The Senses of Touch: Haptics, Affects, and Technologies* (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2007), p. 60.

Like the dance of a dervish
Did destroy
My sense – and my reason
Spun like a toy.[221]

At once, the kiss on a train returns us to and destroys the senses, prompting a loss of reason at the centre of swirling motion. Yet, crucially, the kiss is the anchor of the poem through which Lawrence attempts to express complex sensory experience. What, then, might we make of these eddies? While Kate Haffey has written elsewhere about the eddies of time that occur during a kiss (see Introduction), there are a number of other possible interpretations.[222] Despite Lawrence's aversion to the medium, there is something of the cinema in these rotations, the orbital kiss being a filmed trope in which the camera swivels around a kissing couple. The train and the cinema have always enjoyed something of a metaphorically intertwined relationship with their moving images, visual journeys, and juxtaposition of different locations. As Lynne Kirby puts it, 'passengers sit still as they rush through space and time', and so the cinema-goer, like the kissing passengers, must also calibrate their sense of space in response to sensory experience.[223] Early cinema converged with the train literally in exhibitions such as Hale's Tours, in which fairground-goers sat inside stationary railroad cars and watched a projection of films shot from trains to create the optical illusion of movement.[224] Lawrence can hardly have been unaware of the train as a 'protocinematic phenomenon'.[225] Some of the earliest films shown in Britain were locomotive, and couples kissing in carriages were a frequent feature, since the train carriage offered a particular social scenario in which people were brought together in a confined setting while passing through liminal space. George Albert Smith's *The Kiss in the Tunnel* (1899) is tellingly pre-emptive

[221] Lawrence, 'Kisses in the Train', p. 1621.
[222] Haffey, *Literary Modernism, Queer Temporality*, pp. 31-66.
[223] Lynne Kirby, *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1997), p. 2.
[224] Ibid. p. 8.
[225] Ibid. p. 2.

of Lawrence's poem, and was followed by S. Lubin's *Love in a Railroad Train* (1902) and Edwin S. Porter's *What Happened in the Tunnel* (1903) (see Chapter Two for more on this film). It is hence not implausible to read the cinema's camera in Lawrence's 360-degree rendering of the kiss on the train, attentive as the poem is to the moving image and the position of the 'spectator-passenger' in space.[226]

The kiss in this poem alone starts to build a sensory picture of how Lawrence contends with the body's experience of modern technologies. This word technology has an obsolete definition of 'a discourse or treatise on an art or arts', and the eddies in this poem also lead us to several artistic media: from film to the more established medium of sculpture.[227] Iris Barry, film critic and co-founder of the London Film Society (founded 1925), argues that the revolving trope of the cinematic camera is derived from the experience of viewing sculpture. In her 1926 apologia for cinema-going, *Let's go to the Pictures*, she writes that seeing an object 'in the round' creates the illusion of 'depth' and compares the experience of watching a film to looking at the Venus de Milo and assuring oneself that it 'is not hollow behind'.[228] We can find sculptural elements in Lawrence's 'Kisses in the Train' which is also read in the round, in a sense, in that the reader is constantly lead to imagine a world 'whirling' and 'spun'. There is something of the Ovidian sculptor-surveyor in the poem, as the speaker's body moves in a loop of touching and pulling back to observe ('still my wet mouth sought her *afresh*' [emphasis added]).[229] The kisser is attracted to the palpability of the 'flesh' yet maintains the view of the kissed subject. Lawrence was interested in the works of Rodin (something he has in common with F. Scott Fitzgerald, as we have seen in the Introduction),

[226] Lynne Kirby's term for the subject at the cinema and on the train, both watching and being taken for a ride: Ibid. p. 3.
[227] 'Technology', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <www.oed.com/view/Entry/198469> [accessed 2 May 2023].
[228] Iris Barry, *Let's Go to the Movies* (New York: Arno Press, 1972 [1926]), p. 43.
[229] Lawrence, 'Kisses in the Train', p. 1621.

hence the sculptural ancestry of the kiss cannot have been far from his osculatory imagination.[230] Throughout the poem, Lawrence pulls together both technical and aesthetic aspects of modern culture into this kiss on a train.

That 'prowling orbit' in the poem is indicative of both the image of the sculpture seen in the round and the camera filming the orbital kiss, but Lawrence's language also encourages an astronomical reading. In the second stanza, the speaker muses that 'still as ever/ The world went round', drawing the reader out from the kiss to the orbit of the earth. Lawrence invokes the astronomical models of metaphysical poets, particularly that of John Donne's lovers in 'The Sun Rising' (1633): '[m]ust to thy motions lovers' seasons run?'[231] Lawrence's lovers also heed the motions of the planets, though his model is less geocentric than Donne's ('this bed is thy centre'), but more philemacentric. The word 'still' in 'Kisses in the Train' could be read either as an adverb (up to and including the present time) or an adjective (not moving), the latter reading meaning that being 'still as ever' alludes to our perceptual experience of stillness on the earth as it moves 'round' in two ways: both rotational and orbital. This is reminiscent of T. S. Eliot's image of 'the still point of the turning world' in the first poem of *Four Quartets*, 'Burnt Norton' (1936).[232] There is a connection to be drawn between our stillness on the revolving earth and the idea that in a moving vehicle, such as a train, the body is both still and moving at the same time. For a poem intent on recording movement, Lawrence is particularly perceptive to stillness in 'Kisses in the Train'. He is insistent on stillness to the point of anaphora, and this continues into the fourth stanza:

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[230] In *Women in Love*, Rupert Birkin remarks that '[y]ou have to be like Rodin […] and leave a piece of raw rock unfinished to your figure': Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 356.
[231] John Donne, 'The Sun Rising', in *The Complete Poems of John Donne,* ed. by Robin Robbins (Harlow: Longman, 2008 [1633]), pp. 245-49 (p. 247).
[232] T. S. Eliot, 'Burnt Norton, 1935', in *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969 [1936]), pp. 171-76 (p. 173).

And still in my nostrils
The scent of her flesh,
And still my wet mouth sought her afresh;
And still one pulse
Through the world did thresh.[233]

The intensity of motion in the poem renders unstable the grammatical status of the word 'still'. It could be read as an adverb or an adjective at any point. This grammatical instability distorts the temporality of the poem, since the definition of 'still' as an adverb carries with it the concept of continuity up to a present moment – this in a poem already inherently invested in spatio-temporality in the image of the train and its passengers rushing through space and time (to reuse Kirby's phrase).

Aesthetic, technological, geometric and cultural allusions are at work in 'Kisses in the Train', but what they all do is highlight Lawrence's careful attention to the position of the kissing body in space. The various trajectories of motion (forwards, perpendicular, pulsing, static) converge in the poem's kiss, forming an eddy which swirls through to the final line ('closing the round').[234] Indeed, our bodies do not rely on sight to perceive their spatial contexts, but rather their full range of haptic capacities. Proprioception, kinaesthesia and the vestibular sense each contribute to the body's felt sense of itself in space. The body feels when it is upright, stable, moving or still, and feels its position in relation to other objects and, crucially in the case of the kiss, other bodies. Lawrence's evident interest in somatosensory experience of space can be better understood in the context of distinct modernist period advancements in looking at space as something felt in the body. The word 'proprioception' was coined in 1906 by neurophysiologist Charles Sherrington in a series of lectures published as *The Integrative Action of the Nervous System*. In these lectures, Sherrington contends that 'receptors which

[233] Lawrence, 'Kisses in the Train', p. 1621.
[234] Ibid.

lie in the depth of the organism' – 'proprioceptors' – are stimulated by the body itself and create our sense of the body's position in space.[235] These advances in thought about the integrated elements of the body's nervous system connected the body's everyday functions, in modernist-period understanding, with the space around it.[236] Lawrence was aware of such scientific writings. He writes about his specific suspicions of new ideas about the nervous system, but also maintains shared interests in the body's felt perception of space. Kissing, for him, was a way to explore this interest in the novel form, rather than in the scientific register. Proprioception can indeed be considered in a more prosaic than scientific sense as simply 'body awareness' – already, suggestively, an antithesis of 'sex-in the-head'.[237] The body, in feeling its spatial contexts, enacts a kind of embodied geometry – the branch of mathematics that considers spatial relations between objects and properties of the surrounding space – in its everyday motions. This is a point to which Lawrence, who taught geometry during his time as a school teacher, was attuned.[238] By reading the kiss, Lawrence's interests in the proprioceptive and the phenomenological become apparent, each a context of thought about the body circulating in the modernist period. That space was experienced in the body began to be understood both scientifically and philosophically, and the kiss was a way for Lawrence to explore this experientially in literary form.

The kisses through which Lawrence implicitly invokes these embodied contexts happen at speed, which itself initiated major intellectual developments about the body in the modernist

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[235] Charles Sherrington, *The Integrative Action of the Nervous System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948 [1906]), p. 132.
[236] Laura Salisbury and Andrew Shail argue more broadly that 'neurology [at this time] endorsed this notion of historical rupture by re-conceiving of the body as something exposed to a constant influx of new and often increasingly intense stimuli from the external world of technological modernity': Laura Salisbury and Andrew Shail, 'Introduction', in *Neurology and Modernity: A Cultural History of Nervous Systems, 1800-1950,* ed. by Laura Salisbury and Andrew Shail (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 1-40 (p. 7).
[237] Rachel Barlow, 'Proprioception in Dance: A Comparative Review of Understandings and Approaches to Research', *Research in Dance Education,* 19 (2018), pp. 39-56 (p. 41).
[238] In October 1908 Lawrence received a distinction in mathematics in his Teacher's Certificate, and not English: Andrew Harrison, *The Life of D. H. Lawrence: A Critical Biography* (Chicester: Wiley, 2016), p. 27.

period. The Futurist movement celebrated speed, dynamism and violence, and their associated technologies of transport and war. Futurist thinker Filippo Marinetti sets out this 'new aesthetic of speed' and calls for the roads to be cleared of the corpses of past times – tellingly, with 'speeding torpedoes, offering mouthfuls of deadly kisses'.[239] Marinetti frequently establishes Futurist aesthetics in bodily terms. 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism' (1909) illustrates a vigorous body behind the wheel of a car, 'stretched out', reviving the car with a 'caress' after a crash, 'exalt[ing] aggressive action' with a 'punch' and a 'slap'.[240] In a lecture published as 'Tactilism' (1924), he writes about educating his tactile senses (particularly by swimming and by wearing gloves) to enliven the body and make it sharper and more attuned to the possibilities of embodied knowledge.[241] As a thinker about speed, Marinetti, like Lawrence in 'Kisses in the Train' above, pulls together currents of technological and cultural thought to offer new ideas about embodied experience. Lawrence himself was reading Marinetti from 1914.[242] As with scientific writings on the nervous system, he was ambivalent about such ideas: both suspicious and engaged. Within the same letter, he calls the futurists 'silly' and 'infantile' and their work 'self conscious' and 'pseudo scientific', but still declares that '[i]t interests me very much' – he goes so far as to say 'I love it'.[243] Andrew Harrison argues that Lawrence 'admired [the Futurists'] appetite for change, but distrusted their brashness.'[244] Lawrence is not a writer that one might readily associate with speed, but he does, like the Futurists, frequently write about the train,

[239] Filippo Marinetti, 'The Birth of a Futurist Aesthetic', in *Marinetti: Selected Writings,* ed. by R. W. Flint (London: Secker & Warburg, 1972), pp. 80-83 (pp. 81, 83).
[240] Filippo Marinetti, 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', in *Marinetti: Selected Writings*, pp. 39-44 (pp. 40, 41).
[241] Filippo Marinetti, 'Tactilism', in *Marinetti: Selected Writings*, pp. 109-12 (p. 110).
[242] In a letter in 1914, he wrote, 'I have been interested in the futurists. I got a book of their poetry – a very fat book too – and . [*sic*] book of pictures – and I read Marinetti's and Paolo Buzzi's manifestations and essays': D. H. Lawrence to Arthur McLeod, 2 June 1914, in *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, Volume II*: *June 1913 – October 1916*, ed. by George J. Zytaruk and James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 180-82 (p. 180).
[243] Ibid, pp. 180-81.
[244] Andrew Harrison, *D. H. Lawrence and Italian Futurism: A Study of Influence* (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2003), p. 129.

motorcar, fairground rides and technologies of transport.[245] This chapter examines Lawrence's overlooked interest in speed and builds a different picture of the way modernist writers conveyed the relationship between technologies and their embodied contexts, particularly in terms of somatosensory experience of space.

This chapter hence discusses how Lawrentian kisses inform our understanding of how space was experienced and conveyed to a reader in the modernist period, and how Lawrence draws on contemporary currents of scientific, philosophical and aesthetic thought. By understanding speed as an embodied experience through Lawrentian kisses at speed, we can consider the calibration of new embodied experiences in modernist writing and use the kiss to refine our understanding of the everyday experiences of the modernist body in its spatial contexts. For Lawrence to preserve the rich cultural artefact of the kiss in this semi-Futuristic manner – with kissers aboard rushing cars and trains – is to attempt to think through and register the way bodies grasp their modern environment. To illustrate this idea, I revisit two well-known novels by Lawrence: *The Rainbow* (1915) and its sequel, *Women in Love* (completed 1916, published 1920), which both contain kisses in motorcars and engage with often taken-for-granted experiences of the body's position in space. The novels were in fact originally planned as one project – a project that Lawrence described in 1914 as 'a bit futuristic' – and this point illustrates how integral kisses are to their structure.[246] His contemporaneous writings, particularly the poem 'A Spiritual Woman' (1916), points to a significant cross-section of bodily interests in his work that underscores the importance of the kiss when reading Lawrence. Attending to the kiss, and particularly to the characterisation of Ursula

[245] See Andrew F. Humphries, *D. H. Lawrence, Transport and Cultural Transition: 'A Great Sense of Journeying'* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).
[246] D. H Lawrence to Edward Garnett, 5 June 1914, *Letters II*, pp. 182-84, p. 182. The novels grew from a project called 'The Sisters', and Lawrence considered issuing them as *Women In Love*, Vol. 1 and Vol. II: Charles L. Ross, *The Composition of the Rainbow and Women in Love: A History* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1979), p. 3.

through *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, demands that we view the kiss as crucial to the body's phenomenological perception of spatial contexts during the modernist period.

Speed, modernism and the body

This investigation of speed and somatosensory experience of space in Lawrence's writing engages with both bodily and spatial research in modernist studies. The spaces of modernism are diverse and, when reading modernist texts, we are taken from urban to rural, national to colonised, public to domestic, gendered or psychic spaces. Andrew Thacker has argued that 'movement between these various spaces […] is a key feature of modernism'.[247] This 'movement' is what differentiates space from place. Place 'implies an indication of stability' and becomes a space when its inert foundation is operated upon by a subject: 'a *movement* always seems to condition the production of a space'.[248] Space in this chapter is a context in which a moving body operates. A moving vehicle is therefore a notable example of a movement that actualises space, given that its motion is doubled by the moving body inside it. Spatial research has hence been emerged alongside several studies on speed and its crucial implications for modernist conceptualisation of space. Stephen Kern argues that technological and cultural developments from around 1880 to the First World War instigated 'distinctive new modes of thinking about and experiencing time and space', and speed, as we have already seen via Futurism, was crucial to these intellectual developments.[249] Kern writes that '[i]t was an age of speed', and developments from trains, planes and automobiles to 'a series of stills by cinema' fundamentally altered human perception of time and space: what

[247] Andrew Thacker, *Moving through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 5.
[248] Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) quoted in: Ibid. p. 31.
[249] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 1.

was far or close, quick or slow.[250] Marinetti, indeed, argues that the Futurist 'aesthetic of speed' has 'almost abolished the concept of space', pointing to the extremes of how speed might make one recalibrate their sense of space to the point of violent annihilation.[251] Embodied notions of space in this period were rapidly developing in aesthetic, technological and scientific contexts.

Despite the relationship between the body at speed and its spatial contexts, there has been surprisingly little modernist criticism about speed in bodily terms. Enda Duffy's study of speed usefully discusses 'the new sensation of hurtling through space at speed' by building upon Aldous Huxley's statement that speed 'provides the one genuinely modern pleasure'.[252] Speed is 'a tangible pleasure to be sensed in one's body'.[253] However, Duffy's ultimate argument is political and not corporeal, since he concludes that 'the experience of velocity was thoroughly politicised' in the contexts of colonialism and war after 1895.[254] Indeed, Marinetti's statements above have already illustrated the way speed might became mobilised in cultures of warmongering. Bodies also play more of a supporting role in *Moving Modernisms* (2016), another recent study that engages with similar touchpoints of spatial, affective, technological, locomotive, and aesthetic forms of modernist movement.[255] Steven Connor touches on the affective manifestations of movement in his assessment of the perception of speed and the modern compulsion to measure. His analysis points us towards tension in the modernist period between accurate measurement and the embodied processes

[250] Ibid. pp. 118, 30.
[251] Marinetti, 'The Birth of a Futurist Aesthetic', p. 31.
[252] Enda Duffy, *The Speed Handbook : Velocity, Pleasure, Modernism* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 2009), p. 5.
[253] Ibid. p. 270.
[254] Ibid. p. 46.
[255] Laura Marcus and David Bradshaw, 'Introduction: Modernism As "A Space That Is Filled with Moving"', in *Moving Modernisms: Motion, Technology, and Modernity,* ed. by Laura Marcus, David Bradshaw, and Rebecca Roach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 1-8 (p. 1).

of moving and measuring in our everyday spatial contexts.[256] Paul K. Saint-Amour more explicitly writes on the physiological in his essay on stillness, in which he argues that '[s]peed used to happen to the body', but in modernist conceptions 'it happens in the body'.[257] While Saint-Amour summarises this feeling as 'interoceptive', his analysis is not far removed from Sherrington's conception of the proprioceptors lying deep in the body. In an essay on stillness rather than speed, however, Saint-Amour invokes Roland Barthes' essay 'The Jet-Man' (1957) and his thesis that stillness involves a culmination of high speed. There is, then, some critical consensus that the body in the modernist period is at least in tension with less (seemingly) embodied contexts such as mathematics or politics.

Some sensory critics in modernist studies have explored this idea of the bodily registrations of speed. Abbie Garrington has used the term 'motorcar kinaesthetics' in her analysis of the 1914 epoch of *The Years* (1937), in which 'it is through the body that [Virginia] Woolf seeks to process the experience of travel at speed.'[258] The body getting used to a car must make 'micro-muscular adjustments' to combine 'predominant physical inertia with a registration of the body's apparently magical movement through space'.[259] Travelling at speed was related in haptic terms by some modernist writers, and Garrington shows that a car drive in a novel not otherwise occupied with speed can in fact tell us a lot about modernist conceptions of the body. Sara Danius analyses texts that take motorcars as their subject more conspicuously: Marcel Proust's 'Impressions de route en automobile' (1907) and Octave Mirbeau's *La 628-E8* (1907) (named after his car licence plate). Danius views writing about motoring as a 'stylistic exercise' for Proust and Mirbeau, who both 'convey an experience to which the

[256] See: Steven Connor, 'Numbers It Is: The Musemathematics of Modernism', in *Moving Modernisms,* ed. Marcus, Bradshaw, and Roach, pp. 98-108.
[257] Paul K. Saint-Amour, 'Stillness and Altitude: René Clair's *Paris Qui Dort*', in *Moving Modernisms,* ed. by Marcus, Bradshaw, and Roach, pp. 217-34 (p. 218).
[258] Garrington, *Haptic Modernism* p. 121.
[259] Ibid. p. 120.

medium of the printed word is stubbornly resistant: the bodily experience of speed'.[260] Danius pays attention to the haptic experience of the car journey in Mirbeau's vertiginous writing, in which 'everything around him, and inside him, dances, leaps, and gallops, in inverse proportion to his own movement'.[261] However, her concerns are more with visual perception than haptic matters (notwithstanding the fact that haptic vision, which perceives depth, space and texture, is an important element of driving).[262] Danius conceives of technologies of speed 'as visual technologies or, to be more specific, as visual framing devices on wheels.'[263] Lawrence's writing, however, is more akin to Woolf's in that it draws us to conceive of technologies of speed as haptic technologies. His own 'stylistic exercise' in writing about speed culminates in his repeated use of the kiss in a motorcar.

The Rainbow and proprioception

The Rainbow was published two years after 'Kisses in the Train', and Lawrence spends a significant portion of the novel tracing the development of Ursula Brangwen from birth to adolescence, a development that we can read in bodily terms. The hetero-centric threads of the novel lead us through her adolescence towards her courtship with family friend Anton Skrebensky. In the chapter entitled 'First Love', their relationship, quite literally, goes through the motions. One Friday, Anton meets her outside her Grammar School in a motorcar to take her to tea and drive her home. 'Her excitement at riding in a motor-car was greatest of all', suggesting that this is not only her 'first love' but also her first drive.[264] Describing their

[260] Sara Danius, 'Modernist Fictions of Speed', in *The Book of Touch,* ed. by Constance Classen (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2005), pp. 412-19 (pp. 414-15).
[261] Quoted in: Danius, *The Senses of Modernism*, p. 126.
[262] On driving and haptic vision see: Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 163.
[263] Danius, *The Senses of Modernism*, p. 5.
[264] D. H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 [1915]), p. 282.

motoring journey, Lawrence closely attends to Ursula and Anton's somatosensory experience:

> The car swerved round a corner, and Ursula was swung against Skrebensky. The contact made her aware of him. With a swift, foraging impulse she sought for his hand and clasped it in her own, so close, so combined, as if they were two children. But they were more than two children.
> The wind blew in on Ursula's face, the mud flew in a soft, wild rush from the wheels, the country was blackish green, with the silver of new hay here and there, and masses of trees under a silver-gleaming sky.
> Her hand tightened on his with a new consciousness, troubled. They did not speak for some time, but sat, handfast, with averted, shining faces.
> And every now and then the car swung her against him. And they waited for the motion to bring them together. Yet they stared out of the windows, mute.[265]

The driving bodies in this passage are sensitive to the motion of the car. More than sensitive, they are practically an impotent limb extending from the body of the car, 'swung' each time it turns a corner. Lawrence alters this verb 'swung' from passive voice ('Ursula was swung') to active ('the car swung her'), which maps neatly onto Ursula's gradual registration of the experience in the passenger seat. The first corner comes as a surprise, evoked by that sudden verb, 'swerved', and she is 'made […] aware' of the position of her body in contact with Skrebensky's. Soon she becomes attuned to the irregular rhythms of the car, waiting expectantly 'for the motion to bring them together'. As they 'rush' through the country, her tactile faculties experience something of an onslaught, holding Skrebensky's hand 'so close', feeling the wind blowing on her face, and registering the mud flying off the wheels. Lawrence describes the rush of the mud as 'soft', assigning a sensual tactile quality to the earthy offshoots of high speed which marks a departure from the kind of dust that E. M. Forster depicts in *Howards End* (1910), for example.[266] This wind that Ursula feels on her

[265] Ibid. p. 283.
[266] The dust in *Howards End* is ugly, disruptive, and even physically threatening. 'Without replying, [Charles Wilcox] turned round in his seat, and contemplated the cloud of dust that they had raised in their passage through the village. It was settling again, but not all into the road from which he had taken it. Some of it had percolated through the open windows, some had whitened the roses and gooseberries of the wayside gardens,

face reminds us again of Hale's Tours. These cinematically-simulated railway journeys were not just visual experiences, but also made use of a 'wind-producing machine' combined with a rocking movement to enhance the illusion of speed.[267] Lawrence, in *The Rainbow*, is equally aware that the touch of wind against skin is a vital element of the experience of speed. This comparison between an actual and a simulated journey prompts phenomenological questions: if we suspend judgement and attend to the perceptions of wind and swerves, how do we know whether we are travelling, or where we are in space? Hale's Tours assumed that patrons will associate previous experience of travel with their experience of the fairground attraction, and hence the illusion only works if patrons attend to pre-given judgements about the feeling of travel. In contrast, Ursula, above, enjoys a car journey without previous experience, so this journey shows Ursula consolidating her primary experience and relishing speed with wonder at her own body. Through Ursula's wonder, Lawrence conveys a process of registering the sensory experiences of modernity.

It is interpersonal tactility that acts as something of an anchor during this bodily experience of speed, recalling the kiss as the still centre of 'Kisses in the Train'. Ursula's wonder at the experience of her own body is consolidated particularly when she reaches out to touch another. Her 'foraging' hand reaches for one to clasp; that hand then gains 'a new consciousness', like the hand in Lawrence's essay 'Why the Novel Matters' (published posthumously 1936) that is 'absolutely alive'.[268] It is the motion of bodies being brought 'together' which regulates this otherwise confounding (and exhilarating) experience of speed. Ursula's somatosensory experience of space as she rushes through the country is born in

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while a certain proportion had entered the lungs of the villagers': E. M. Forster, *Howards End* (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998).

[267] Raymond Fielding, 'Hale's Tours: Ultrarealism in the Pre-1910 Motion Picture', in *Film before Griffith,* ed. by John L. Fell (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 116-30 (p. 120).

[268] D. H. Lawrence, 'Why the Novel Matters', in *The Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays,* ed. by Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985 [1936]), pp. 193-98 (p. 193).

relation to Anton's body: the spatial relation between them is described as 'close' while the rest of the countryside blurs. Nowhere is this more evident than when, as they near the end of their journey, she kisses him:

> She pressed his hand in utter delight, and he abided. And suddenly she stooped and kissed his hand, bent her head and caught it to her mouth, in generous homage. And the blood burned in him. Yet he remained still, he made no move.
> She started. They were swinging into Cossethay. […] [H]er cup was so full of bright wine, her eyes could only shine.[269]

Like in 'Kisses in the Train', Lawrence presents the forward speed of the motorcar (interrupted by those bumps and swerves) and the perpendicular trajectory of the mouth travelling towards the recipient of the kiss. One of the joys of Lawrence's writing is the way he conceptualises a simple kiss, and particularly the kiss at speed, as something akin to a physical feat. Amid this spatially exhilarating experience of 'the familiar country racing by' and repeated swinging and swerving, while 'her hair [is] chiselled back by the wind', Ursula orients her body, stoops in a perfect judgement of depth, and bends her head until her mouth reaches Anton's hand. The significance of the kiss in this encounter is reflected by Lawrence's allusion to the cup-kiss tradition (see Introduction) with the final image of the cup 'so full of bright wine'. Ursula's perfect motion is almost jeopardised: Anton's hand is 'caught', as though there is a brief possibility that her mouth might miss its mark. Yet Ursula's body has mastered the passenger experience enough to recover her sense of her body's position in space, and she catches Anton's hand against her mouth. While Edmund Husserl contends that phenomenology understands immanent perception as 'see[ing] and grasp[ing] precisely what we intend in the seeing and the grasping', Lawrence shows us that Ursula is attuned to what is immanent to her since she intends to kiss Anton's hand and

[269] Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, p. 284.

succeeds, as though delightedly confirming her own spatial perception.[270] The spell is quickly broken – Ursula 'start[s]' at another turn of the car, as they bumpily swing into Cossethay – but her sensory perception of her body position is acute.

If proprioception encompasses body awareness, then the kiss at speed is a proprioceptive triumph. Ursula's body swings as it absorbs bumps in the road; her senses are confounded as her spatial coordinates constantly evolve at high speed; she develops her awareness of her position in relation to other objects well enough to kiss Anton. Sherrington's contemporary work on proprioception is illuminating here. He takes as his starting point the idea that our nerves comprise of an 'integrative' system in which distant organs coordinate by a reflex action: a chain reaction to exciting stimuli. We are most conscious of the work of our extero-ceptors, which react to stimuli from our external environment such as light and sound. However, as noted earlier in the chapter, 'the receptors which lie in the depth of the organism are adapted for excitation consonantly with changes going on in the organism itself' and 'their field may be called the *proprio-ceptive field*' [original emphasis].[271] Proprioceptors are hence differentiated from extero-ceptors which receive external stimuli, since proprioceptors are stimulated by the body itself. One example is the adjustment of a change in normal posture. Movement is one of the body's principle reflex reactions to external stimuli, and the proprio-ceptors are stimulated by weight and mechanical inertia; they work to adjust the body and create our sense of the body's position in space.[272] Ursula's adjustments – swinging and touching – can be read as stimulated by her own body. Lawrence was explicitly suspicious of this kind of scientific thought. He starts the fifth chapter of *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922), 'The Five Senses', with: '[s]cience is wretched in its treatment of the human body as

[270] Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, p. 38.
[271] Charles Sherrington, *The Integrative Action of the Nervous System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948 [1906]), p. 132.
[272] Ibid. p. 339.

a sort of complex mechanism made up of numerous little machines working automatically'.[273] Nevertheless, as is often the case with Lawrence, his aversion is so specific and so reminiscent of Sherrington's writing that it is plausible that Lawrence was familiar with its contents. His titular concerns with unconsciousness also concede links with proprioception given that proprioception is the sense of which people are generally unconscious (apart from in the case of damage to the nerves).[274] Proprioception, though Lawrence never names it, is present conceptually in his writing, and his kiss in a car in *The Rainbow* seems an antidote to 'wretched science' by presenting body awareness experientially rather than mechanically – Ursula feels 'delight' and pays 'homage'. The kiss at speed consolidates Ursula's phenomenological coordinates of the world around her; that is, her bodily observations of space.

This kiss in a car is in fact a culmination of Lawrence's attention to Ursula's somatosensory experience of space throughout the novel. From her earliest years of childhood, her father**,** Will Brangwen, 'would take her on his back as he went swimming, and she clung close, feeling his strong movement under her'.[275] Lawrence's haptic descriptions of swimming convey a bodily education for Ursula. Initially, her somatosensory faculties are reliant on her father's as she clings to him. Lawrence's choice to focus Ursula's embodied learning in water points us towards Marinetti's 'Tactilism' in which he describes swimming 'naked in a sea of flexible steel'.[276] In this full-bodied sensory experience of coldness, sharpness and silkiness, Marinetti describes a tactile education in which he 'localise[s] the confused phenomena of

[273] D. H. Lawrence, 'Fantasia of the Unconscious', in *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious,* ed. by Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004 [1922]), pp. 45-204 (p. 95).
[274] For more on proprioceptive loss, see: R. Chris Miall et al., 'Proprioceptive Loss and the Perception, Control and Learning of Arm Movements in Humans: Evidence from Sensory Neuronopathy', *Experimental Brain Research,* 236 (2018). 2137-55.
[275] Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, p. 208.
[276] Marinetti, 'Tactilism, p. 110.

thought and imagination on the different parts of my body' – noting his use of the word 'phenomena' in a description of playing close attention to immediate experience.[277] Searching for clarity amid sensory confusion indeed aligns with phenomenology's aims to return to a 'this-here' and examine taken-for-granted dimensions of experience. Marinetti's learning is also conducive to the contemporary language of proprioception since it is due to the neuroplasticity of the nervous system that we develop our proprioceptive sense.[278] Marinetti exercises the nervous system's ability to adapt while swimming, localising different 'phenomena […] on the different parts of my body' in a stunning narration of awakening body awareness.[279] Ursula swimming with her father could almost be a prototype for Marinetti's swimming in 'Tactilism'. In *The Rainbow*, it is not just Ursula's tactile sense that is educated by her father, but also her proprioceptive sense:

> He leapt, and down they went. The crash of water as they went under struck through the child's small body, with a sort of unconsciousness. But she remained fixed.[280]

Ursula experiences this change in latitude through water unconsciously, 'unconsciousness' being one of the most distinctive qualities of proprioception. In the water, then, she undergoes something of a somatosensory education, touching her father's back, feeling the movement through watery space in her body. As a child, however, she is as yet unable to move through it with bodily autonomy: 'she remained fixed'. Her fledgling somatosensory experience of space does not yet allow her to move freely through water.

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[277] Filippo Marinetti, 'Tactilism', in *Marinetti: Selected Writings*, pp. 109-12 (p. 110).
[278] The term 'plasticity' was used to describe neural activity in: William James, *The Principles of Psychology, Vol. I* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1901 [1890]), p. 105.
[279] Marinetti, 'Tactilism, p. 110. Swimming has become a significant area of study in proprioception research. See, for example: Nora M. Y. Cho et al., 'Proprioception and Flexibility Profiles of Elite Synchronized Swimmers', *Perceptual and Motor Skills,* 124 (2017), 1151-63; Kenta Kusanagi et al., 'Water Sensation During Passive Propulsion for Expert and Nonexpert Swimmers', *Perceptual and Motor Skills,* 124 (2017), 662-73; Jia Han et al., 'Sport Attainment and Proprioception', *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching,* 9 (2014), 159-70.
[280] Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, p. 209.

Ursula's narrative trajectory can be traced in terms of her proprioceptive development. Her embodied experiences of swimming continue into her adolescence when Lawrence portrays her queer relationship with her class-mistress, Winifred Inger. Ursula's intellectual education from Miss Inger has received much critical attention with regards to science, religion, philosophy, and most notably the Women's Movement.[281] Yet Ursula also receives a physical education from Winifred who swims and rows as a member of 'various athletic clubs'.[282] 'Ursula developed rapidly during the few months of her intimacy with her mistress', not just intellectually, but somatosensorily. During this time, Ursula develops a 'queer awareness' of Miss Inger, whereby Lawrence writes adjacent to the language of proprioception ('body awareness').[283] Miss Inger gives Ursula and the rest of her class a swimming lesson in which 'the girl moved her limbs voluptuously, and swam by herself'.[284] The experience is the converse of her swimming as a child. Ursula now has command of her limbs, aware of her body enough to swim independently. Moving through the water, Ursula is struck by the desire 'to touch the other, to touch her, to feel her.'[285] Her desire to reach out is no longer motivated by a need for buoyancy, but from queer desire. Lawrence's somatosensory narrative of Ursula's development continues in the water later when she pays a visit Miss Inger's bungalow. The pair go for a bathe in the 'cloud-black darkness' and Miss Inger 'put[s] her arms round her, and kisse[s] her', before carrying her into the water.[286] While, in the car, Ursula orients her body towards Anton, her body here is oriented such that she is within reach of Miss Inger's kiss. Sara Ahmed's writing on queer phenomenology argues that '[q]ueer orientations are those that put within reach bodies that have been made unreachable'

[281] For an account of Lawrence's depiction of the Women's Movement in *The Rainbow*, see: Elizabeth M. Fox, 'Edwardian Feminisms and Suffragism', in *D. H. Lawrence in Context,* ed. by Andrew Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 192-202.
[282] Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, p. 316.
[283] Ibid. p. 311.
[284] Ibid. p. 313.
[285] Ibid.
[286] Ibid. p. 315.

amid society's heterosexual dictations.[287] I discuss these ideas further in Chapter Three. Ursula's embodied autonomy has placed her within reach of a kiss with a woman (though, beyond the text, this chapter was cited by the Magistrate as particularly obscene when Methuen, *The Rainbow*'s publisher, was prosecuted under the Obscene Publications Act and the destruction of copies of the novel was ordered).[288] The queer threads of *The Rainbow* trace the haptics of water: Ursula clings to her father, later swims after her class-mistress in a swimming lesson, and then is kissed by a lake and carried in by a different set of arms. A kiss marks this apotheosis.

What it means to kiss in a motorcar

Following a more patriarchal narrative arc, Lawrence depicts Ursula growing up as a passenger with men on increasingly motorised forms of transport: she sits beside her father on a cart to market, and later sits beside Anton in a dog cart, and finally in a motorcar. These journeys prompt us to read Ursula and Anton's courtship in somatosensory terms. During the 'First Love' chapter, Anton sits on a rocking chair in the Brangwen household and speaks to Gudrun and Ursula. 'You look really floppy,' Gudrun observes, 'as if you hadn't a bone in your body'.[289] The more obvious reading of this observation is of flaccidity, and Lawrence's writing does often encourage phallocentricism, but his characterisation of Anton in this context is arguably more proprioceptive than phallocentric. Anton responds that '[t]hat's how I like to feel', unable to stop rocking, moving in '*perpetuum mobile*'.[290] As a fairground-enthusiast and car-driver, Anton is indeed in perpetual motion throughout the chapter, and Ursula herself finds that he gives her 'a sense of distances', as though the speeds of

[287] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 106.
[288] 'An Objectionable Novel', *Daily Telegraph*, 15 November 1915, p. 12.
[289] Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, p. 273.
[290] Ibid.

modernity to which he introduces her extends and informs her bodily sense of space. The sensation in question is floppiness, bringing to mind a compromised version of proprioception. Indeed, Gudrun remarks that this makes him look boneless, and, as Sherrington tells us in tactile terms, 'the receptors of the proprio-ceptive field itself […] are in particularly close touch with the skeletal musculature'.[291] To feel floppy, and to look as if without a bone in the body, is to experimentally imagine the body without proprioception. Lawrence's pause on the bodily sensation of motion in a rocking chair, while Ursula closely observes, provides a prolepsis for the somatosensory experience of the kiss in the car.

Anton takes Ursula to 'Derby in a dog-cart', where the feeling of the swingboats and roundabouts invigorate their senses: '[t]he motion seemed to fan their blood to fire'.[292] The swingboats, which Ursula also rides with her father as a child, 'rushed through the bright air', and the 'whirling carousels' make us recall the 'revolving' motion in 'Kisses in the Train'. Indeed, the fairground is rather a Lawrentian arena. He wrote a play called *The Merry-Go-Round* (1911), describes fairs in short stories such as 'Tickets, Please' (1918), and in *Women in Love*, the artist Loerke describes to Gudrun his granite frieze of peasants 'kissing and staggering' through a fairground in 'a frenzy of chaotic motion'.[293] This frieze is a reimagining of Mark Gertler's painting, *Merry-Go-Round* (1916), which Lawrence described in a letter to Gertler himself as 'the best *modern* picture I have seen' [original emphasis].[294] Fairs are associated with folk culture – combining ritual, goods-trading, and festival – and modern advertising had begun to appropriate its old structures of sociality to conceptualise it

[291] Sherrington, *The Integrative Action of the Nervous System*, p. 321.
[292] Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, p. 274.
[293] D. H. Lawrence, 'Tickets, Please', in *England, My England and Other Stories,* ed. by Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990 [1918]), pp. 34-45 (pp. 37-38); Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 423.
[294] D. H. Lawrence to Mark Gertler, 9 October 1916, *Letters II*, p. 660. Jane Costin argues that Lawrence turns Gertler's painting into Loerke's sculpture: Jane Costin, 'Sculpture', in *D. H. Lawrence and the Arts,* ed. Brown and Reid, pp. 338-53 (p. 343).

as a new arena for the possibilities of romantic touch.[295] Lawrence draws these historical elements of the fair towards a modern embodied context, underscored by mechanical rides, since his fairground invigorates the kinaesthetic and proprioceptive senses. Suitably stimulated by this experience, Ursula and Anton drive home again in the dog-cart, and Lawrence's narrative attention to their motion becomes a prototype for their motorcar drive later:

> As they drove home, he sat near to her. And when he swayed to the cart, he swayed in a voluptuous, lingering way, against her, lingering as he swung away to recover balance. Without speaking, he took her hand across, under the wrap, and with his unseeing face lifted to the road, his soul intent, he began with his one hand to unfasten the buttons of her glove, to push back her glove from her hand, carefully, laying bare her hand. […] Then his hand closed over hers, so firm, so close, as if the flesh knitted to one thing, his hand and hers.[296]

As Anton and Ursula's bodies are lightly jostled along the road, Lawrence draws attention to the purpose of the haptic senses: to 'recover balance'; absorb and correct alterations to the position of our body; retain a sense of space as it relates to distance and direction; grasp external objects and bodies. The interpersonal touch provides such an anchor that the distinctions of subject and object are 'knitted' as their hands become 'one' – not a kiss, yet a prototype of a kiss, in which the mouth is absent. We are reminded of the participants in the Solidarity Service in *Brave New World* 'ready to be made one' (see Introduction).[297] Indeed, soon after the drive, Anton and Ursula share their first kiss, described as 'a delicious swoon of motion'.[298] Lawrence conceives of the kiss not as the sign, symbol, contract or greeting inherited from his literary predecessors, but as an experience of motion; as something that

[295] Philips, Deborah, *Fairground Attractions: A Genealogy of the Pleasure Ground* (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), pp. 4-5. An advertisement for a ride in one of Coney Island's amusement parks (a more permanent fair fixture) in the USA enticed young lovers by saying: 'Will she throw her arms around your neck and yell? Well, I guess, yes': Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, p. 133.
[296] Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, pp. 275-76.
[297] Huxley, *Brave New World*, p. 69.
[298] Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, p. 278.

relates to our phenomenological experience of the world – in this case, embodied observations of space. In these kisses in *The Rainbow*, which exemplify what Santanu Das means when he says that the kiss was slipping from a sign to a sensation at the turn of the twentieth century, we see how the kiss brings modernism in dialogue with the phenomenological.[299]

Attention to motion and space in this novel shows us that the trajectory of Ursula's developmental narrative is leading towards the kiss in a motorcar.[300] While it has been debated whether the term *Bildungsroman* applies to this novel, the development that does occur arguably occurs in terms of Ursula's proprioceptive sense. Contrary to what Vincent Sherry has argued, the *Bildung* does not purely occur 'in the internal sphere'.[301] My aim in this somatosensory mode of analysis is to jettison the common but reductive reading of the kiss as a culmination of a romantic endeavour for its own sake. Rather than reading past the kiss by uncritically accepting this inevitable climax of a romantic sequence of events, the structure of Lawrence's novels encourages us to see that kisses, as narrative climaxes, must be read as a result of the centrality of embodied experience in modernist aesthetics. As we can see from Lawrence's osculatory representations of speed, the modernist kiss in this case works to consolidate and convey the phenomenological coordinates of space. That this culminates in a kiss in a car in Lawrence's writing is significant, since this is a new romantic format available to modernists. For lovers to drive in a car – as opposed to a dog-cart – implies the ability to drive far enough to somewhere that they can behave more freely, without danger of identification or discovery, but with time to get home again without the

[299] Das, *Touch and Intimacy*, p. 120.
[300] For more on the modernist *Bildungsroman*, see: Gregory Castle, *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2006).
[301] Vincent Sherry, 'Romanticism, Decadence, History', in *D. H. Lawrence and the Arts,* ed. Brown and Reid, pp. 39-51 (p. 44).

complications or prohibitions of spending a night together.[302] The 'distinctive new modes of thinking about and experiencing time and space' in the modernist period evidently have crucial implications for romance.[303] Just over a decade after the publication of *The Rainbow*, Rosamond Lehmann's *Dusty Answer* (1927) (which, unlike Lawrence's novel, was not prosecuted for obscenity) provides a notable example of what the romantic drive in a motorcar made available to modernist writers. Judith Earle, Lehmann's protagonist, is a student at Girton College, Cambridge, and Lehmann uses a drive in a motorcar with Roddy, one of the novel's male love interests and a 'sensation hunter', to briefly escape the confines of Cambridge's largely gender-segregated jurisdiction.[304] Lehmann's depiction of the drive is both startlingly similar to Lawrence's – Judith 'saw his hand lying on the wheel […] and her own crept out and lay beside it' – and yet diverges from it, as Judith tells Roddy that 'I don't feel – anything.'[305] While speed confounds Ursula's senses to the point of hyperawareness, Judith's senses are confounded to the point of numbness. Lehmann was, indeed, influenced by Lawrence's novels.[306] I discuss this novel further in Chapter Three. We can trace this trajectory even further when we look at another modernist text that makes conspicuous use of cars. The characters in Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies* (1930) are a 'fast set', literally and figuratively, who drive between parties and romantic tête-a-têtes to the point of the 'Quest set' being rendered 'intangible'.[307] When Lawrence writes car-kisses in his novels, therefore, he is an overlooked pioneer of automobilic writing, perhaps because of his reputation in literary criticism for being technophobic, or because his representations of kissing have not

[302] Ursula and Rupert do spend a night together in the car in *Women in Love*, which makes Ursula both 'glad and frightened'; it raises the complications of having to telegram her father, buy provisions, and sleep in the car in a forest: Lawrence, *Women in Love*, pp. 318-20.
[303] Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918*, p. 1.
[304] Rosamond Lehmann, *Dusty Answer* (London: Virago Press, 2014), p. 246.
[305] Ibid. p. 144.
[306] Selina Hastings, *Rosamond Lehmann* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2002), p. 70. Judy Simons suggests that Geraldine in *Dusty Answer* could be a callback to Gerald in *Women in Love:* Judy Simons, *Rosamond Lehmann* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), p. 19.
[307] Evelyn Waugh, *Vile Bodies* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 97.

before been properly distinguished from his sexual writings. By laying aside these critical prejudices when reading his kisses, it becomes clearer that Lawrence lays foundations for a particular type of bodily experience at speed that writers will both render and evolve through the modernist period and beyond.

As relatively novel as this is, the kiss at speed is not without its predecessors. In *Anna Karenina* (1878), a novel that Lawrence read several times, Leo Tolstoy experiments with the literary possibilities that technologies of speed afford.[308] Anna and Count Vronsky meet aboard a train, after which he is 'struck' by watching her give her brother a 'vigorous kiss'; their mutual attraction is cemented during a train journey towards Petersburg; he declares his love as he hands her into a train carriage, and 'kissed the palm of his hand where she had touched it'.[309] I discuss more examples of kisses in train carriages in Chapter Two. To pursue an example with which Lawrence was intimately familiar, Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) contains a kiss on wheels that can be read as a horse-drawn predecessor of Lawrence's kisses at speed. Near the beginning of the novel, Alec d'Urberville drives Tess 'rapidly' through the Wessex roads. Tess is frightened by the speed: 'the least irregularity of motion startled her', as though her aptitude for speed is underdeveloped, coupled with her trauma from the crash that kills her family's horse earlier in the novel.[310] In exchange for slowing the cart, Alec presents a sinister blackmail: to 'let me put one little kiss on those holmberry lips'. Tess acquiesces, and he gives her 'the kiss of mastery'.[311] I return to the

[308] In 1909 Lawrence implores Blanche Jennings to '[r]ead *Anna Karenina* – no matter, read it again, and if you dare to fall out with it, I'll – I'll swear aloud': D. H. Lawrence to Blanche Jennings, 8 May 1909, *Letters I*, pp. 126-128 (p. 127). By 1916 he acknowledges that Tolstoy and his Russian contemporaries had 'meant an enormous amount' to him, but that he now finds 'a certain crudity and thick, uncivilised, insensitive stupidity about them': D. H. Lawrence to Catherine Carswell, 2 December 1916, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, Volume III: October 1916 – June 1921*, ed. by James T. Boulton and Andrew Robertson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 44-45 (p. 45).
[309] Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina* (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995), pp. 57, 94, 129.
[310] Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (London: Longman, 1993), pp. 30, 55.
[311] Ibid. pp. 57-8.

gendered dynamics of 'mastery' in Chapter Three. Lawrence's version, though more an image of female autonomy than male 'mastery', is a speedier successor of Hardy's. He was in fact writing his 'Study of Thomas Hardy' (1914) while working on the final version of *The Rainbow*.[312] Lawrence is therefore part of a lineage of writers using the kiss to grasp what Alain Locke would later describe as the 'tempo and pace' of modernisation (see Introduction), while he also draws together transhistorical connections with metaphysical poets and the sociality of the fairground. What Lawrence is doing with the kiss is taking something with a rich and specific cultural history, and transposing it into a modern environment, but in such a way that positions him as conscious of his predecessors. Jessica R. Feldman has contended that 'we must try to hear, within [modernism's] rallying cry of "make it new," the harmonic of "preserve it through change."'[313] The kiss has been inherited, and Lawrence preserves it through representations of embodied speed.

Driving through *Women in Love* with Marinetti

Lawrence's conception of speed, nevertheless, is decidedly contemporary, and he draws particularly on Futurist automobilism in *Women in Love*. This sequel to *The Rainbow* has been regarded as his most technophobic novel – recalling the bridling mare discussed at the beginning of this chapter – which perhaps accounts for what has been, to my knowledge, a critical oversight of his portrayal of the car.[314] In a similar scenario to Ursula and Anton's motoring activities, Gerald Crich and 'the Pussum' share a moment of touch as passengers in a taxi-cab driving through London to Rupert Birkin and Julius Halliday's flat:

[312] Bruce Steele, 'Introduction', in *Study of Thomas Hardy*, pp. xix-liv (pp. xxiii-xxiv).
[313] Jessica R. Feldman, 'Modernism's Victorian Bric-a-Brac', *Modernism/modernity,* 8 (2001), pp. 453-70 (p. 453).
[314] Erwin Rosinberg discusses how, amid the 'mechanistic impulse of modern civilization', Lawrence manifests his hope for the future in *Women in Love*: Erwin Rosinberg, '"After Us, Not out of Us": Wrestling with the Future in D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*', *Modern Fiction Studies,* 59 (2013), pp. 1-25 (p. 7).

> They felt the swift, muffled motion of the car.
> The Pussum sat near to Gerald, and she seemed to become soft, subtly to infuse herself into his bones, as if she were passing into him in a black, electric flow. […] Then she found his hand, and grasped it in her own firm, small clasp. […] And as she swung her head, her fine mane of hair just swept his face, and all his nerves were on fire, as with a subtle friction of electricity. But the great centre of his force held steady, a magnificent pride to him, at the base of his spine.[315]

Like in *The Rainbow*, Lawrence's technique for writing about speed is not to focus on the visual experience of the world racing by, but on the somatosensory experience. The bodies in the car 'felt the swift, muffled motion', and the change that undergoes the Pussum is akin to Anton's experience in the rocking chair in *The Rainbow*, though a galvanised version – indeed, Armstrong has noted how frequently Lawrence uses 'electrical metaphors'.[316] The Pussum's body 'become[s] soft', as a cat, perhaps, for her namesake. Like Anton in *The Rainbow*, she is 'floppy', as though she 'hadn't got a bone in [her] body'. So, she 'infuse[s] herself into [Gerald's] bones'. As discussed above, the contemporary science of proprioception tied this sense to the skeletal muscles, and so for Lawrence to write in this way is to experiment with proprioception: its loss, its necessity. There is a change in the Pussum's embodiment during the journey, however, pivoting around the word 'then': '[t]hen she found his hand'. With a similar function to the word 'caught' in *The Rainbow*, the word 'found' seems conditional, as though there was a chance that the hand might have been lost. Her gradual registration of her sense of space supports her motion. As for Gerald, his proprioceptive sense is practically magisterial. His nerves are titillated, but the 'centre of his force held steady […] at the base of his spine', the site of conductors in the nervous system that make proprioception possible. In a novel that does, in many ways, push against

[315] Lawrence, *Women in Love*, pp. 72-73.
[316] Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body*, p. 19.

machinery, it is striking that Lawrence's 'stylistic exercise' (to use Danius' term) in his representation of speed is to view the car as a haptic technology.

Crucially, when the car's destination is reached, Gerald looks around the flat and inspects 'one or two new pictures in the room, in the Futurist manner'.[317] Lawrence's invocation of Futurism immediately after a car journey is no accident. *Women in Love* is explicitly entrenched in the writings of Futurism, a point that Harrison connects to the 'novel's new self-consciousness, as Futurism becomes an artistic factor encountered at the conscious level by characters in the text' as opposed to a more unconscious similarity of outlook in *The Rainbow*.[318] I suggest that Futurism is approached particularly consciously in Lawrence's embodied representations of motoring at high speed. Although 'Tactilism' is Marinetti's most obviously haptic text, his account of getting behind the wheel in his 'Manifesto' is actually very proprioceptive in its language: 'I stretched out on my car like a corpse on its bier, but revived at once under the steering wheel, a guillotine blade that threatened my stomach.'[319] In narrating the experience of stretching out across the car, Marinetti renders the car a space rather than just an object. He is not so much lounging on something inert as operating upon it by aligning his body. He notices the position of his stomach relative to the wheel and feels its threat (realised by the imminent car crash), rendering this passage proprioceptive in its purposeful positioning of the body in automobilic space. When Lawrence has Gerald inspect Futurist-style pictures after getting out of a car, he invokes Marinetti's somatosensory notion of motoring. The presence of Futurism in *Women in Love* encourages us to find the proprioceptive qualities in Marinetti's writing. This is not such a leap, since *The Integrative Action of the Nervous System* is actually written in a rather proto-Futurist manner.

[317] Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 74.
[318] Harrison, *D. H. Lawrence and Italian Futurism*, p. 129.
[319] Marinetti, 'Futurist Manifesto', p. 40.

Sherrington writes that 'the spaces and times bridged across by conductors are quite large', to which we might hear Marinetti reply that Futurism's beloved speed has 'almost abolished the concept of space'.[320] Verging on uncharacteristic excitement in a mostly rather sober scientific volume, Sherrington goes on to say that nerve conduction is a process 'in which the qualities of speed and freedom from inertia of reaction have been attained to a degree not reached elsewhere'.[321] A bodily-interested Futurist would thrill to read Sherrington's text. When Lawrence gives Futurism an explicit presence in *Women in Love*, therefore, contemporary currents of somatosensory writings converge and encourage us to conceive of Futurism as an embodied *movement* – with all the corporeal implications of the word.

Further along in *Women in Love*, we once again reach a kiss in a motorcar, this time between Ursula and Rupert. In a chapter tellingly titled 'Excurse', which evokes the concept of space (as opposed to place) in its verbal meaning of 'to journey or pass through', Rupert drives Ursula out in his motorcar to present her with an engagement ring.[322] (The third draft of the book project was in fact titled 'The Wedding Ring' which suggests the significance of this section of the novel.)[323] Rupert is 'a careless driver' – the car tilts on its side as it swerves – and yet '[d]riving in a motor-car excited' Ursula, as though the novelty has not worn off since Anton first drove her in *The Rainbow*.[324] After Rupert stops the car for a passionate argument, the drive continues, and Ursula bestows a kiss not dissimilar to the one she gave Anton:

> "So am I," she cried in sudden ecstasy, putting her arm round him and clutching him violently against her, as he steered the motor-car.

[320] Sherrington, *The Integrative Action of the Nervous System*, p. 6.
[321] Ibid.
[322] 'Excurse', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/65948> [accessed 16 November 2020].
[323] Sherry, 'Romanticism, Decadence, History', p. 39.
[324] Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 303.

> "Don't drive much more," she said. "I don't want you to be always doing something."
> "No," he said. "We'll finish up this little trip, and then we'll be free."
> "We will, my love, we will," she cried in delight, kissing him as he turned to her.
> He drove on in a strange new wakefulness, the tension of his consciousness broken. He seemed to be conscious all over, all his body awake with a simple, glimmering awareness, as if he had just come awake, like a thing that is born, like a bird when it comes out of an egg, into a new universe.[325]

While in *The Rainbow* Ursula's kiss in a car invigorates her own sense of her body in space, in *Women in Love* it is Rupert for whom the kiss evokes a 'body awake[ning]'. His 'strange new wakefulness' invokes both the incarnation of Ovid's Galatea, and the trope of the Sleeping Beauty kiss, but his is not a literal awakening. Rather, it a bodily awakening from the kind of self-consciousness – 'sex-in-the-head' – that Lawrence condemned. Noting again that a distinctive element of proprioception is that we are unconscious of it, Rupert's fairytale transformation to a feeling of 'be[ing] conscious all over' is a proprioceptive one, as though he becomes aware of elements of his body that had been buried (reminding us of Marinetti in the water attempting to sort and localise sensory stimulation). Structurally, the Sleeping Beauty allusion is significant, since Ursula identifies as this princess figure during her first kiss with Anton in *The Rainbow,* for which 'she waited, in her swoon and her drifting, waited, like the Sleeping Beauty in the story'.[326] I discuss Sleeping Beauty further in Chapter Four. In this passage we see that Lawrence develops Ursula's narrative from receiving to enacting the awakening kiss, and so when *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* are read together, the car-kisses appear integral to their structure. The novels build towards this kiss when Ursula breaks Rupert's 'tension of consciousness'.

Lawrence's use of the car preserves the fairytale from an age-old trope to something decidedly contemporary, and it is unsurprising that this image of awakening can also be

[325] Ibid. pp. 311-12.
[326] Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, p. 278.

found in Marinetti's 'Manifesto'. Marinetti argues that '[u]p to now literature has exalted a pensive immobility, ecstasy, and sleep.'[327] According to him, the Futurists aim to 'exalt aggressive action, a feverish insomnia,' the kind of 'glimmering awareness' that Rupert feels having been kissed while driving.[328] Yet Lawrence's attention to speed through touching and kissing in *Women in Love* cannot be reduced to simply an endorsement of Futurist values. Indeed, when Gudrun quizzes Loerke on his artistic preferences, she finds that '[t]hey were almost of the same ideas. He […] was not satisfied with the Futurists'.[329] As discussed above, Gudrun admires Loerke's granite frieze, that 'frenzy of chaotic motion', and yet both feel something lacking in Futurism, as if 'aggressive action' and 'feverish insomnia' does not satisfactorily produce the sort of art for which modern development calls. Of course, we cannot align Lawrence's own artistic preferences with Gudrun and Loerke's, but we do see in their dissatisfaction that Lawrence uses Futurism in *Women in Love* to build tension between embodied experience and contemporary understandings of its modern contexts.

'Immobility, ecstasy'

While in *Women in Love* Lawrence portrays several kisses at speed, he also reverses this in his representation of still kisses. Rupert stops the car early on in the 'Excurse' chapter in the middle of a passionate argument, 'to have it out'; spatially, he and Ursula are suspended, stopped 'in the middle of the country lane'.[330] A kiss pacifies the argument. This kiss is 'very still': 'he was kissing her quietly, repeatedly, with a soft, still happiness'. Ursula demands to know whether he loves her, speaking 'quickly, impulsively', but Rupert does 'not [heed] her

[327] Marinetti, 'Futurist Manifesto', p. 41.
[328] Ibid.
[329] Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 448.
[330] Ibid. p. 306.

motion, only her stillness.'[331] Her still female form after a kiss returns us to Galatea who, conversely, is kissed to dynamic life by Pygmalion. Ursula's stillness contrasts the driving and swimming and moving earlier in *Women in Love* and *The Rainbow* – this moment is an exception that reinforces the way motion has been framing the kisses in these novels. Yet in this focus on stillness, Lawrence is not jettisoning his representation of the kiss as something to which our somatosensory experience of space is imperative. Ursula's uneasiness from the absence of passion in Rupert's kisses is still described in spatial terms: 'this was so still and frail, as space is more frightening than force'.[332] Recalling that stillness in 'Kisses in the Train' evokes the idea that in a moving vehicle the body is both still and moving at the same time, Ursula's sense of space is intensified in the stillness. With the removal of 'force', the body is left to feel the space it inhabits. Indeed, it is often only when a vehicle stops that we become aware that our body was hurtling at speed at all. In 'Excurse', the vehicle has stopped, bodies are suspended in rural space, and a kiss becomes what a Futurist thinker might condemn: immobile.

This is not an isolated incident in *Women in Love*. In fact, stillness is a crucial element of Lawrence's characterisation of Rupert. It is what attracts Ursula to him from the outset. She observes 'stillness in his motion that hushed the activities of her heart' .[333] This is in stark contrast to Anton, who had been in '*perpetuum mobile*'. Lawrence goes on to describe their kisses while they walk alone in the middle of the Criches' water-party as 'soft, blind kisses, perfect in their stillness'.[334] These adjectives ('soft, blind') – both haptic in the way they focus on texture without seeing – cause the line to falter before the final 'stillness'. In his 'Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature' (1912), which Lawrence read in the original

[331] Ibid. p. 311.
[332] Ibid.
[333] Ibid. p. 36.
[334] Ibid. p. 187.

Italian, Marinetti appeals to writers to 'abolish the adjective' because they are 'incompatible with our dynamic vision, because it supposes a pause, a meditation'.[335] This is exactly the function of the adjective in Lawrence's 'soft, blind kisses'. Above, we saw the grammatical instability of the word 'still' in 'Kisses in the Train', in which reading it as an adjective rather than an adverb slows the motion of the poem. Lawrence, whether or not deliberately refuting this Futurist appeal, converges with the dissatisfaction with Futurism that he portrays in *Women in Love* by using immobility as a way to register modern iterations of space.[336] Later in the novel, when Rupert returns from the South of France after his period of illness, he kisses Ursula again, wanting 'to be together in happy stillness' and inviting her to 'be still'.[337] Finally, during the kisses that pacify the argument in the middle of the car journey, Rupert finds that '[s]he had learned at last to be still and perfect', a direct echo of the kisses earlier that were 'perfect in their stillness'.[338] It is tempting to see in this stillness the kind that Barthes theorises in 'The Jet-Man', in which he proposes the paradox that 'an excess of speed turns into repose'.[339] But finding stillness at the extreme of speed is not what Lawrence attempts; neither is the stillness a simple rejection of speed. In stillness, Lawrence demands that a somatosensory experience of space is attended to in a manner akin to phenomenological practice.

A kiss for good measure

[335] Filippo Marinetti, 'Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature', in *Marinetti: Selected Writings*, pp. 84-89 (p. 84). Lawrence read *I Poeti Futuristi* (1912) in 1914. See: Harrison, *D. H. Lawrence and Italian Futurism*, pp. 38-39. Lawrence writes in 1914 to Edward Garnett that he 'translate[s] [Marinetti] clumsily', and quotes from this 'Technical Manifesto' using his own translation: *Letters II*, 182-83.
[336] Harrison argues that, in contrast, in *The Rainbow*, 'Lawrence has his heroin [Ursula] develop towards self-responsibility in the fashion laid down by Marinetti' in 'Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature': Harrison, *D. H. Lawrence and Italian Futurism*, p. 117.
[337] Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 252.
[338] Ibid. p. 315.
[339] Roland Barthes, 'The Jet-Man', in *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), pp. 71-72 (p. 71).

Lawrentian kisses happen when the body becomes attuned to speed, and when the body stops and suspends this rush by recalibrating to the feeling of space. The kiss itself is an embodied experience that Lawrence uses to examine the body's haptic processes of experiencing and navigating its 'somatic spatial contexts'.[340] Best articulated by his term 'sex-in-the-head', Lawrence frequently expressed concern about the advances of modernity causing bodily processes to become self-conscious and visual. This is apparent in a poem that he published the same year that he first finished writing *Women in Love,* 'A Spiritual Woman' (1916). The speaker in the poem berates the visual inclinations of the woman addressed:

> Close your eyes, my love, let me make you blind;
> They have taught you to see
> Only a mean arithmetic on the face of things,
> A cunning algebra in the faces of men,
> And God like geometry
> Completing his circles, and working cleverly.
>
> I'll kiss you over the eyes till I kiss you blind;
> If I can – if any one could.
> Then perhaps in the dark you'll have got what you want to find.[341]

In this poem, it is a kiss that is offered as the antidote for 'mean' and 'cunning' processes of measuring that depend on the visual rather than haptic senses. The kiss shuts the measuring woman's eyes and makes her dependent on her somatosensory faculties. Late in the modernist period, the Hungarian psychologist Géza Révész explored the problems with emphasising space as a visual concept rather than an embodied one, arguing that 'in visual space one *estimates* spatial size', while in 'haptic space the opposite takes place; there, distance and size are *measured*' [original emphases].[342] Geometry, the mathematical branch that Lawrence names in 'A Spiritual Woman' that is concerned with properties of space,

[340] Paterson, *The Senses of Touch*, p. 74.
[341] D. H. Lawrence, 'A Spiritual Woman', in *Poems III*, pp. 1694-95.
[342] Géza Révész, 'The Problem of Space with Particular Emphasis on Specific Sensory Spaces', *The American Journal of Psychology,* 50 (1937), pp. 429-44 (p. 439).

originally entailed haptic perception 'before it becomes an abstracted, visual set of symbols on a surface'.[343] Space was felt by the body in walking and pacing, land measuring, stonecutting and sculpting. Lawrence's poem returns the body to the processes of what Mark Paterson has called 'somatosensory phenomenology', since it explores the world-as-it-is-experienced and not measured with 'mean arithmetic'.[344] The kiss marks the wonder embedded in this kind of experience: one body meets another in the dark, finally experiencing what they 'want to find'. In 'A Spiritual Woman', 'they have taught you to *see*' [emphasis added] geometry, something that Lawrence and other contemporary thinkers would prefer to repatriate to feeling.

Lawrence had fairly sound knowledge of geometry. He began his career as a school teacher, and his writings on education incorporate ideas about the body and geometry in his notions of learning. His essay 'Education of the People' (1920) gives a geometrical description of students learning embodied gestures: '[t]he volitional centre is the pole that relates us, kinetically, to the earth's centre. The sympathetic plexus is the source whence the movement-impulse leaps out.'[345] This recalls the astronomical descriptions of motion and space in 'Kisses in the Train'. Indeed, the links made above between the astronomical elements of this poem and the metaphysical poets are reinforced by Lawrence's interests in geometry. Geometrical themes arise in metaphysical love poetry.[346] In Donne's 'A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning' (written 1611, published 1633), he uses 'stiff twin compasses' as an analogy for a pair of lovers who return home to each other after a journey and draw a perfect circle.[347] In 'The Definition of Love' (1649-51), Andrew Marvell compares forbidden love to

[343] Paterson, *The Senses of Touch*, p. 60.
[344] Ibid. p. 75.
[345] D. H. Lawrence, 'Education of the People', in *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine*, pp. 87-166 (p. 143).
[346] Carmen Dörge, *The Notion of Turning in Metaphysical Poetry*, (Zürich: LIT Verlag, 2018), p. 25.
[347] John Donne, 'A Valedicton: Forbidding Mourning', in *The Complete Poems of John Donne*, pp. 257-62 (p. 260).

infinite, parallel lines, and contrasts such painful perfection with 'loves oblique [that] may well/ Themselves in every angle greet'; in contrast, George Herbert suggests in 'The Search' (1633) that 'the poles do kisse,/ And parallels meet'.[348] While Lawrence modernises the geometric conceit, he uses the kiss to turn to contemporary ideas about geometry as embodied, concerned with 'haptic space' rather than 'visual space'. As such, his kiss is distinctively sensational in contrast with Herbert's kiss of two poles, or the behaviours of lovers as analogised in geometric drawing techniques. Sarah Bouttier has noted Lawrence's geometrically-inclined attitudes in his writings on education, and argues that 'Lawrence thinks of education as primarily aimed at teaching bodies how to occupy space'.[349] Reading the kiss in 'A Spiritual Woman' enriches this view of Lawrence, but also augments it by showing that Lawrence conceives of a whole anatomy of desire in his fictional and poetic writings that align with his views of the body occupying space in an educational context. This attention to spatial experience and bodily education aligns with Lawrence's treatment of the kiss set out in this chapter.

In *Women in Love*, like in 'A Spiritual Woman', Lawrence writes about a woman who is occupied with measuring and removed from the inclinations of somatosensory phenomenology. A 'tape measurer', the antithesis of embodied forms of measure, is produced in the twelfth chapter of *Women in Love*.[350] In a chapter titled 'Carpeting', Hermione Roddice measures Rupert's new rooms at the mill for furniture. Ursula is awkwardly present, and Rupert is sulkily acquiescent, but Hermione carries on: '[t]hey measured and discussed in the

[348] Andrew Marvell, 'The Definition of Love', in *The Poems of Andrew Marvell,* ed. by Nigel Smith (Harlow: Longman, 2007 [1649-51]), pp. 107-11 (p. 111); George Herbert, 'The Search', in *The English Poems of George Herbert,* ed. by Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007 [1633]), pp. 555-59 (p. 557).
[349] Sarah Bouttier, 'The Geometrics of Education in D. H. Lawrence', *Études Lawrenciennes,* 47 (2016) <https://journals.openedition.org/lawrence/255> [accessed 1 December 2020].
[350] Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 136.

dining-room'.[351] She takes militant ownership of her accurate, visual device, refusing to let Gerald 'take the end of the tape'.[352] Connor, relatedly, argues that 'modernity is a matter of measurement.'[353] 'Carpeting' in *Women in Love* is, at first glance, a typical scenario of the novel in which Hermione orchestrates and furnishes her social environment, but her actions with a tape measurer actually reveal a more pressing significance when read in relation to 'A Spiritual Woman'. The woman in this poem is plausibly Lawrence's deliberate prototype for Hermione. This claim reinforces this chapter's sense of kiss as central to Lawrence's writings on somatosensory experience of space. The end of the poem is intense in its hateful tone, and in the final stanza the speaker orders, 'stop carping at me.– But God, how I hate you!'.[354] In the 'Prologue' to *Women in Love* (not published with the original text), Rupert actually refers to Hermione as 'the spiritual woman' and contemplates her in an unmistakeably similar tone.[355] 'He hated her, for her incapacity for love […]. Her desire was all spiritual, all in the consciousness. She wanted him all, all through the consciousness, never through the senses.'[356] Paul Eggert has recently encouraged readers of Lawrence to 'take a cross-section of his contemporaneous writings at any one creative moment' given archival evidence that Lawrence's work often sprang directly from already-started pieces.[357] Since Lawrence was writing both this poem and *Women in Love* at the same time, it is highly probable that he conceived of the poem with Rupert in mind as the speaker and Hermione in mind as the 'spiritual woman'. Hermione personifies Lawrence's fears about abandoning the body for the mind and its visual cognates. The kiss in 'A Spiritual Woman' is the antidote to such

[351] Ibid. p. 137.
[352] Ibid.
[353] Connor, 'The Musemathematics of Modernism', p. 98.
[354] Lawrence, 'A Spiritual Woman', p. 1695.
[355] D. H. Lawrence, 'The "Prologue" and "Wedding" Chapters', in *Women in Love,* ed. by David Farmer, Lindeth Vasey, and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 487-518 (p. 492).
[356] Ibid. p. 498.
[357] Eggert, 'Revising and Rewriting', p. 219.

processes. It is the kiss that we can therefore conceive of as central to the turn from the tape measurer – from visualistic geometry – to the body.

Lawrence uses the kiss in his overlooked automobilic writings to grasp the phenomenon of speed. The kiss at speed is a proprioceptive feat, carried out by a body that must have command of its sense of space as its position changes at rates more rapid than ever before. Scientific understanding of proprioception emerged in the writings of Sherrington not long before Lawrence published *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, in which Ursula's developmental narrative, punctuated by kisses, can be traced in proprioceptive terms. Reading the kiss in this way posits Lawrence's osculatory writings as a modernist vision of the somatosensory experience of space since the body calibrates to the fast experiences of modernity, but also a point of connection with his literary forbearers who wrote about love using themes of geometry and speed. This osculatory analysis allows for a sharper reading of Ursula in *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, as well as Skrebensky, and the relationship between Rupert and Hermione which makes an appearance across contemporaneous texts. The speaker of 'A Spiritual Woman' – plausibly Rupert – hopes that a kiss in the dark, whether literally or metaphorically in blindness, will allow lovers to throw off the meanness and rigidity of visuality and return to an embodied sense of space. In the next chapter, I expand kisses in the dark in the writings of Virginia Woolf and Aldous Huxley. These writers share Lawrence's interests in the technological advances of modernity that influence and alter the way kissing was thought and written about, but they turn to the development of cinema, while retaining Lawrence's themes of motion in the train and a more hidden site of locomotion, the tunnel. These sites offer both Woolf and Huxley a way to consider not just the body's phenomenological perceptions, but to explore questions of race and skin that were raised as people were brought together in new ways in the liminal spaces of modernity.

Virginia Woolf and Aldous Huxley: the Interracial Screen Kiss

A kiss forms the punchline of Edwin S. Porter's one-minute comedy film, *What Happened in the Tunnel* (1903). A white man (Gilbert M. "Broncho Billy" Anderson) flirts with (or, harasses) a white woman in a train carriage, while her Black maid (Bertha Regustus) looks on. The train passes through a tunnel and the screen plunges into darkness. As the train emerges into light, the white man is revealed kissing the maid who has switched places with the other woman in order to play a 'joke' on the man. The two women laugh, apparently in league with one another. The 'joke' at face value both collapses class hierarchy and hinges upon the racist assumption that a Black woman would not be a proper object of desire for a white man.[358] The kiss-gone-wrong gag would have been familiar to contemporary audiences, but in this film, possibly for the first time, it is an interracial kiss that forms the 'joke'.[359] This film was not a one-off but an example of a significant sub-genre that Susan Courtney has called the 'racial "switch" comedies', in which a white man kisses a Black woman in the dark, or as a result of otherwise obstructed vision, by mistake. We see this trope again in the Biograph-produced *The Mis-Directed Kiss* (1904), *A Kiss in the Dark* (1904), and *Under the Old Apple Tree* (1907), for example.[360] The key edit that takes place in

[358] Jacqueline Najuma Stewart has written a full account of the nuances of Black spectatorship in the context of racist jokes and interracial or white-only intimacy on screen: 'Black cinematic pleasure can be enhanced (enabling a joke) and/or destroyed (confirming one's segregation and demonization) when African American spectators try to insert their physical selves, unchanged, into the fictional world of the classical cinema text' (105): Jacqueline Najuma Stewart, *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity* (Berkeley, CA; London: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 93-113.

[359] There are countless examples of early films that make up a 'kiss-gone-wrong' comedy genre, often with sexist, racist or homophobic undertones, including: *A Victim of Misfortune* (Paul's Animatograph Works, 1905), *The Tenderfoot* (Kalen, 1907), *A Dearly Paid for Kiss* (Vitagraph, 1908), *He Can't Help it* (Williamson & Co., 1909).

[360] Susan Courtney, *Hollywood Fantasies of Miscegenation: Spectacular Narratives of Gender and Race, 1903-1967* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 23-24. In 2016, artist Martine Syms gave a performative lecture at the Broad Museum in Los Angeles titled *Misdirected Kiss* about the movement, performance and language of Black female entertainers. She used this set of films 'as a starting point to think through the ways that everybody wants to be a black woman, but nobody wants to be a black woman': <https://www.thebroad.org/events/tip-her-tongue-martine-syms-misdirected-kiss> [accessed 2 March 2021].

What Happened in the Tunnel, thus inaugurating this family of comedies, is its fade in and out of a fully dark screen. Filmmakers were at this time moving away from the 'actuality film[s]' that had constituted the majority of the first decade of cinema and learning to create deliberate effects.[361] With its period of darkness in the middle, *What Happened in the Tunnel* was, in fact, one of the first examples of multi-shot storytelling.[362] In these comedies, white filmmakers were fading in to and out from black to work through their prejudices against and interests in interracial intimacy.[363] A taboo form of touch occurs in the dark.

This chapter illustrates the haptic import of the interracial kiss on screen during the modernist period. As such, it argues that cinematic modernist writing perpetuates the relationship between touch and racial politics. By tracing new connections between the Black figure on screen and haptic conceptions of film spectatorship, it shows that these connections are made most legible in the interracial screen kiss. Two texts by notably cinema-attuned writers portray a kiss between a Black and white subject: Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928) and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), which were published within a few years of each other, straddle the 1930 publication of the Hollywood Production Code that stated that 'miscegenation (sex relationship between the white and black races) is forbidden', and hence demonstrate a sustained cultural interest in the type of kiss that cinematic institutions were, by this time, censoring.[364] What follows is a haptic analysis of both texts in their previously

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[361] Eileen Bowser, 'Toward Narrative, 1907: *The Mill Girl*', in *Film before Griffith,* ed. Fell, pp. 330-38 (p. 330).
[362] Jane Gaines, *Fire and Desire: Mixed-Race Movies in the Silent Era* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 54-56.
[363] Laws against interracial marriage were instituted in the United States from the seventeenth century and ruled unconstitutional in 1967. See Elise Lemire, *"Miscegenation"*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), p. 10. The United Kingdom did not have anti-miscegenation laws.
[364] See 'Hays' Film Regulations', p. 9. There is no definitive version of the code; this copy does not specify 'the white and black races', but several other reprints did: Courtney, *Hollywood Fantasies of Miscegenation*, p. 115. The code was sometimes invoked to censor representations of sexual encounters between white and Asian people: Ibid. p. 103. As discussed in the Introduction, the code also banned 'excessive and lustful kissing'. This was an American set of guidelines, but, given the ubiquity of American cinema by this point, this would have implications for what cinema-goers all over the world saw during this period.

undiscussed context of cinematic discourses on race and touch. This analysis shows that the modern experience of seeing a kiss close up was at the centre of broader concerns about sensation and race relations in the early twentieth century.

The relationship between film and touch was being newly theorised in the modernist period. In 'The Cinema' (1926), Woolf sketches haptic spectatorship in her image of 'the eye [that licks]'.[365] She anticipates Walter Benjamin's assertion in 1935 that film is 'primarily tactile, being based on changes of place and focus which periodically assail the spectator […]. No sooner has his eye grasped a scene than it is already changed.'[366] Benjamin illustrates cinema spectatorship that is not based on distant judgement, but on embodying the slippage between grasp (to lay hold of with the mind) and grasp (to seize and hold with the hand) when confronted with the moving image. It is notable that 'grasping' is precisely the term that Edmund Husserl uses to describe phenomenological perception, suggesting that this modernist conception of cinema shares concerns with the phenomenological desire to align embodied perceptions with intentions.[367] As I discussed in Chapter One, Iris Barry also wrote (in the same year 'The Cinema' was published) of how 'the objects [on the screen] are revolved for us', allowing spectators to perceive 'the depth of the scene' when 'the screen is flat'.[368] The eye that watches modernist cinema is reaching out to the screen, taking in shape and texture as a hand does, and grasping depth on this flat surface.

Recent film theory has consolidated this link between film and touch. Laura U. Marks has crystallised a theory of 'haptic visuality' which describes a fully embodied manner of

[365] Woolf, 'The Cinema', p. 172.
[366] Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations,* ed. by Hannah Arendt (London: Fontana/Collins, 1979 [1935]), pp. 219-53 (p. 240).
[367] Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, p. 38.
[368] Barry, *Let's Go to the Movies*, p. 43.

perceiving images on the screen rather than passively looking.[369] A haptic image, whether through puzzling obscurity or detail, 'evades a distant view, instead pulling the viewer in close' such that 'the viewer perceives texture as much as the objects imaged' and becomes engaged with the image as a surface while coming 'to the surface' of their own body.[370] Abbie Garrington has shown that recent haptic film theory is in close contact with Woolf's licking eye and other modernist notions of cinema spectatorship.[371] In this chapter I illustrate that this haptic force was seen to be particularly marked by the presentation of Black actors' physicality on screen. It is in this context that the screen kiss and its literary cognates should be understood.

Modernist cinema, interracial touch

As 'the only magazine devoted to films as an art' (as it announces itself on its covers), an important source that contains an abundance of theorisations about Blackness on screen is *Close Up*, published by the Pool Group: the artistic trio of H.D., Bryher and Kenneth Macpherson. In August 1929 the magazine published a special issue titled 'The Negro in Film'. This issue contains contributions from cinema's prolific African American commentators, among them journalist and editor Geraldyn Dismond (pen-name Gerri Major), Walter White (Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), and Elmer Anderson Carter (editor of *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life*). Articles touch upon the conditions that have hindered Black cinema, such as the meagre offerings of roles to Black actors ('fools and servants') and the derogatory practice of white

[369] Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, p. 162.
[370] Ibid. pp. 163, 84. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick elaborates on the relationship between texture, sight and touch: 'to perceive texture is to know or hypothesise whether a thing will be easy or hard, safe or dangerous to grasp, to stack, to fold, to shred, to climb on, to stretch, to slide, to soak': Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 14.
[371] Garrington, *Haptic Modernism* p. 142.

actors in blackface.[372] On the other hand, the issue analyses productive developments for Black cinema, such as the use of New Jersey film lots abandoned by white California-bound firms, and the advent of the 'talkie'.[373] The issue centres the Black figure on screen as a significant part of the possibilities of 'films as an art'.

The writers in the issue agree on their eagerness for authentic Black cinema ('the real thing' as opposed to white-made, -patronised or -acted), a cultural impetus already set in motion by several Black pioneers who are discussed in the articles.[374] Such eagerness aligns with a wider context of a 'cult of authenticity' surrounding primitivist ideas of Blackness at this time.[375] In his editorial, for example, Macpherson lauds the 'beauty' and 'splendour' of actor Stepin Fetchit.[376] Macpherson's descriptions of his 'beauty' are entrenched in uncomfortably essentialist white notions of Black physicality, manifesting in his portrayal of Fetchit's 'jungle, lissom lankness'.[377] Macpherson goes on to ascribe this physicality to the sense of touch: '[Fetchit] waves loose racial hands and they, like life, touch everything the world contains.'[378] What is most striking about this description is not the way Macpherson assigns the haptic to Black physicality (a well-known feature of white modernism), but how snugly this description actually fits when contextualised by other white-authored articles in *Close Up*.[379] In fact, there can be found in 'The Negro in Film' issue, and subsequent issues, several

[372] Geraldyn Dismond, 'The Negro Actor and the American Movies', *Close Up,* August 1929, pp. 90-97 (p. 96).
[373] Harry A. Potamkin, 'The Aframerican Cinema', *Close Up,* August 1929, pp. 107-17 (p. 108). Dismond writes that '[w]ith the talkie the Negro is at his best. Now he can be heard in song and speech': Dismond, 'The Negro Actor and the American Movies', p. 94.
[374] Robert Herring, 'Black Shadows', *Close Up,* August 1929, pp. 97-104 (p.104).
[375] Elisa F. Glick, 'Harlem's Queer Dandy: African-American Modernism and the Artifice of Blackness', *Modern Fiction Studies,* 49 (2003), pp. 414-42 (p. 415).
[376] Kenneth Macpherson, 'As Is', *Close Up,* August 1929, pp. 85-90 (p. 87).
[377] Ibid.
[378] Ibid. p. 88.
[379] At the forefront of this physical focus on Blackness is Joseph Conrad's descriptions of Black men whose 'bodies streamed with perspiration', the 'joints of their limbs […] like knots in a rope' (Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2017), pp. 14-16) or Lawrence's 'negro statues' representing 'the extreme of physical sensation' (Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p. 74).

haptic descriptions of Black skin on screen, from some of *Close Up*'s most familiar contributors. Oswell Blakeston, for example, paints a picture of 'greased glintings of majestic torso; black faces and white pearls and red lips', detailing both a visual play of light on skin and an almost revoltingly slippery textual experience[380] Dorothy Richardson writes, similarly, of Black 'bodies whose disforming western garb could not conceal the tiger-flow of muscles', picking out this textured detail as though her white gaze allows her to feel the skin below clothing that she deems racially inauthentic.[381] While Dismond and Carter praise less body-oriented qualities of Black entertainers such as 'dialect', 'colloquialisms', 'humour' and 'emotions', several white contributors associate Black actors on the cinema screen with glinting, waving, muscular, touchable skin.[382] In this way, to white theorists of film in the early twentieth century, the Black figure on screen seems to call particular attention to the newly theorised haptic capacity of film itself.

Perhaps the most conspicuous of these haptic commentaries in *Close Up* is Harry A. Potamkin's 'The Aframerican Cinema':

> The negro is plastically interesting when he is most negroid. In the films he will be plastically interesting only when the makers of the films know thoroughly the treatment of the negro structure in the African plastic […]. The theatre has not the capabilities to reveal the textural effects necessary to the drama, such as the increasing sheen of sweat on the bare body. Here is your "photogenic" opportunity! […] The negroes must be selected for their plastic, negroid structures. [*The Emperor*] Jones should not be mulatto or Napoleonic, however psychological requirements demand it. He should be black so that the sweat may glisten the more and the skin be apprehended more keenly.[383]

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[380] Oswell Blakeston, 'Black Fanfare', *Close Up,* August 1929, pp. 122-26 (p. 123). In *The Emperor Jones* (which was first staged in New York in 1920, toured to London starring Paul Robeson in 1925, and was adapted into a film starring Robeson in 1933), 'Jones is stripped bare physically, tearing off his clothes to reveal a male body, whose blackness was highlighted by setting it against a blank white cyclorama': James Donald, *Some of These Days: Black Stars, Jazz Aesthetics, and Modernist Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 41.
[381] Dorothy Richardson, 'Dialogue in Dixie', *Close Up,* September 1929, pp. 211-18 (p. 214).
[382] Dismond, 'The Negro Actor and the American Movies', 94; Elmer Anderson Carter, 'Of Negro Motion Pictures', *Close Up,* August 1929, pp. 118-22 (p. 121).
[383] Potamkin, 'The Aframerican Cinema', pp. 109, 114.

Potamkin's article embraces the issue's urge for 'the real thing'. This urge reflects a widespread, primitivist attribution of qualities of 'reality', 'authenticity' and 'naturalness' to Black people which, as James Donald has argued, became a balm for the increasingly virtualised '"hollowing out" of modern experience'.[384] Crucially, Potamkin associates the urge for reality with the solidity and tangibility of three-dimensional, 'plastic' representation. He calls for filmmakers who understand 'the treatment of the negro structure in African plastic', as though his ideal directors would entrench themselves within the modernist landscape of primitivism, of which African art objects such as masks and mannequins (looted from colonies and brought to Europe during this period) formed the foundation.[385] Potamkin's writing features several epidermic qualities that suggest an engagement with Black skin as surface: he is drawn to 'structure', 'texture', and the 'sheen of sweat'. The actor must apparently exhibit a quality of being 'so black', the better the skin can be 'apprehended'. He makes these comments notwithstanding the fact that race as a construct encompasses far more than the epidermis, as contemporary representations of the concept of 'passing' in literature, theatre and film suggest, such as Nella Larsen's novel *Passing* (1929) and the musical *Show Boat* (on Broadway in 1927, adapted to film in 1936). This latter verb 'apprehended' might at first seem more in keeping with the realm of the visual, but the word 'apprehend' actually has a haptic etymology. Its Latin root is *apprehendĕre*, means 'to lay hold of, seize', reminding us of Benjamin's 'grasp'.[386] Potamkin's apparent desire to clutch at Black skin rather than simply look resonates with Blakeston's representation of 'majestic torso' and Richardson's fixation on a 'tiger-flow of muscles'. Together, these *Close Up*

[384] Donald, *Some of These Days*, p. 227.
[385] For example, the tribal artefacts in the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro that Picasso saw in 1907. See Hal Foster, 'The "Primitive" Unconscious of Modern Art', *October,* 34 (1985), pp. 45-70.
[386] 'Apprehend', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/9799> [accessed 26 January 2021].

articles paint a picture of the way, to white cinema-goers in this period, Black actors were seen as a sort of flashpoint illuminating the haptic aspects of cinema.

Orlando and *Brave New World* draw on these attitudes towards Blackness on screen. Given that they were published near-contemporaneously with the Hollywood Production Code, both novels emerged amid a cinematic 'landscape' that reached the height of anxiety regarding the portrayal of 'miscegenation' at this time, a topic that had been directly approached in the era of classical Hollywood cinema by directors such as Oscar Micheaux and D. W. Griffith. I borrow this term 'landscape' from Andrew Shail, who argues that cinema did not simply offer a 'stylistic toolkit' to modernist writers but altered the 'everyday mental landscape of whole populations'.[387] It is in this sense of the common contexts of modernist literature and early cinema that I approach *Orlando* and *Brave New World*. This latter novel contains a much-cited scene involving the feelies, a multi-sensory cinema experience in the year AF (After Ford) 632, in which spectators place their hands on metal knobs and feel the sensations of the tactile action on the screen. In *Three Weeks in a Helicopter,* the film attended by white protagonists 'John the Savage' and his enraptured escort Lenina Crowne, a kiss plays out between a Black man and a white woman:

> Those fiery letters, meanwhile, had disappeared; there were ten seconds of complete darkness; then suddenly, dazzling and incomparably more solid-looking than they would have seemed in actual flesh and blood, far more real than reality, there stood the stereoscopic images, locked in one another's arms, of a gigantic Negro and a golden-haired young brachycephalic Beta-Plus female.
> The Savage started. That sensation on his lips! He lifted a hand to his mouth; the titillation ceased; let his hand fall back on the metal knob; it began again. […] [T]he stereoscopic lips came together again, and once more the facial erogenous zones of the six thousand spectators in the Alhambra tingled with almost intolerable galvanic pleasure.[388]

[387] Andrew Shail, *The Cinema and the Origins of Literary Modernism* (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 1-4.
[388] Huxley, *Brave New World*, p. 146.

As soon as the feelie begins, John 'the Savage' feels the onscreen kiss with the keen intensity towards which Potamkin (above) is gesturing. Laura Frost argues that the 'sensual stimulation' – as distinct from cerebral analysis – that constitutes modernist cinema spectatorship epitomises 'the modernist conception of the trouble with mass culture pleasure'.[389] It is hence striking that this stimulation operates both on the scale of mass market cinema for Huxley and at the level of art cinema in *Close Up*. On the topic of Black skin, the themes of these two literary sources also converge. It is possible that Huxley was at least aware of the 'Negro in Film' issue of *Close Up*. Richardson wrote to Bryher suggesting that they ask Huxley to 'write about Pickshers [*sic* – joke]' for *Close Up*.[390] *Brave New World* certainly shares some of the issue's images; the glinting, solid, muscular skin newly dazzles out of the pages of the novel under the cinema's lights. As we begin to see in the above passage, Huxley indexes contemporary currents of racial anxiety surrounding cinema to the kiss. It is indeed the kiss between 'stereoscopic lips' on which John remains fixated as the novel progresses; later, he recalls the 'stupid and horrible' feelies where 'you feel the people kissing'.[391] While in the jazz club (another early twentieth-century site of interracial encounter) Mina Loy writes that 'the white flesh quakes to the negro soul', in the cinemas of *Brave New World*, the white flesh quakes to the 'negro' flesh.[392]

In fact, Huxley's own 'flesh crept' at an amalgamation of jazz and cinema, having been confronted with a ballooned projection of Al Jolson singing 'the most penetratingly vulgar

[389] Laura Frost, *The Problem with Pleasure: Modernism and Its Discontents* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), p. 133.
[390] Dorothy Richardson to Bryher, 20 June 1927, 'Modernist Networks', *Dorothy Richardson: An Online Exhibition* <http://dorothyrichardsonexhibition.org/mn/mn_08.htm> [accessed February 17 2021]. I have not been able to confirm whether Richardson or Bryher did ask him.
[391] Huxley, *Brave New World*, p. 193.
[392] Mina Loy, 'The Widow's Jazz', *Pagany: A Native Quarterly,* Spring 1931, p. 68. Note that Frantz Fanon later writes that 'what is often called the black soul is a white man's artifact': Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto, 2008 [1952]), p. 6.

mammy-song' in blackface in *The Jazz Singer* (1927).[393] His embodied aversion to this spectacle, as he reports in his essay 'Silence is Golden' (1929), tells us much about his choice to include a Black actor in his feelies that revolve around sensory experience. For him, the first feature-length 'talkie' displays 'disembodied entertainers gesticulating flatly on the screen and making gramophone-like noises'.[394] His flesh creeps less for the practice of blackface than for the coarse production of a white actor's voice. In contrast, *Close Up*'s contributors repeatedly tell us that the 'rich' tone of Black voices recorded for screen sounded, comparatively, exceptionally pleasurable.[395] The Black voice in film, as Donald argues, was supposed to be the remedy for the 'disquieting' experience of listening to mechanically reproduced speech disembodied from its source.[396] Huxley evidently has such a 'disquieting' experience when seeing a 'disembodied' white man in blackface with a voice that sounds like a gramophone, the ultimate divorce of body from sound. In *Brave New World*, the feelies return embodiment to entertainers. They also return embodiment to the spectators, and even to the mechanisms of the feelie itself insofar as we could (following Vivian Carol Sobchack) describe the 'body' of the feelie that both perceives the touch of its actors and expresses this touch to the spectator.[397] A 'gigantic Negro', as opposed to a white reedy singer in blackface, is both a vital and troubling part of this return. Taking over yet another element of the somatic system, the Black actor, for Huxley, emblematises embodiment and solidity. Whether John's 'start' at the feelies is triggered more by the affective impulses of racist aversion or by the tactile technology of the feelies, Huxley

[393] Aldous Huxley, 'Silence Is Golden', in *Aldous Huxley: Complete Essays: Volume II, 1926-1929,* ed. by Robert S. Baker and James Sexton (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, 2000 [1929]), pp. 19-24 (p. 23).
[394] Ibid. p. 20.
[395] Dismond, 'The Negro Actor and the American Movies', p. 94; Carter, 'Of Negro Motion Pictures', p. 119; Richardson, 'Dialogue in Dixie', p. 214.
[396] Donald, *Some of These Days*, p. 136.
[397] Vivian Carol Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley, CA; London: University of California Press, 2004), p. 149.

chooses to write an interracial kiss into the action played out on screen in order to compound the felt experience of his white protagonists.

If Black skin was felt by white cinema-goers amid this context of cinema conceptualised as haptic, then the experience of watching an interracial kiss on screen was felt twofold. As we have seen in *What Happened in the Tunnel* and in *Brave New World*, representations of interracial kisses engaged with the social mores and prohibitions set by racist attitudes – attitudes framed by eugenic discourse surrounding 'racial degeneration and race suicide'.[398] Cinematic interracial kisses incited eugenics-adjacent anxiety since audiences read kisses as 'synecdoches for the whole sex act', as discussed in the Introduction, though the particular haptic experience and cultural histories of the kiss render it far more than simply a penultimate, sexual proxy.[399] Michel Foucault's notion of a heterotopia is helpful in taking this eugenic discourse into account. Cinema as discussed in this chapter tends towards a heterotopia, a real space that operates as a kind of counter-site that represents, contests and inverts the reality outside it.[400] Filmed interracial kisses in the modernist period hence run almost heterotopically to racial hierarchies and policies in the Western world. This is not to say that interracial love and attraction did not exist in reality, because it did, including between *Close Up* editor Macpherson and several Black men such as actor Jimmie Daniels.[401] It is to say that reading *Brave New World* and *Orlando* in this new context presents a picture of white audiences for whom to see an interracial kiss was to see a surrogate of themselves, in a space in which this form of touch could be vicariously

[398] Donald J. Childs, *Modernism and Eugenics: Woolf, Eliot, Yeats, and the Culture of Degeneration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 2.
[399] Williams, 'Of Kisses and Ellipses', p. 294.
[400] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics,* 16 (1986 [1967]), pp. 22-27 (p. 24). Foucault does include the cinema as an example of a heterotopia, but focuses on its material, technological aspects rather than its institutional aspects: 'The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single, real place several spaces […] thus it is that the cinema is a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space' (p. 25).
[401] Donald, *Some of These Days*, p. 135.

experienced in a mirror of reality, but not in reality itself – particularly given that Black audiences might have been 'out of sight (and beyond the broader field of sensory perception) of whites' in a theatre space.[402] The racial politics of the cinema spectator experience are compounded by the notion that disciplining the senses had, by this time, come to be one of the cultural imperatives of whiteness in the white supremacist imagination.[403] These are contexts that would have been known to Woolf and Huxley and, even in two white-authored works that do not attempt full explicit discussions of racial politics, can be understood by reading their representations of an interracial kiss.[404]

Racial configurations of haptic cinema

Huxley's cinematic interventions allow us to see a relationship between race and touch, and in this, he was not alone. Before the advent of cinema, Black skin was already treated as a touchable surface in white supremacist schemes. As Hortense J. Spillers has said, 'European hegemonies stole bodies', but 'we regard this human and social irreparability as high crimes against the *flesh*' [original emphasis], the distinction being the former's 'degree of social

[402] Stewart, *Migrating to the Movies*, p. 109. The parties of Harlem that fostered interracial intimacy can be read as another heterotopia. In Wallace Thurman's *Infants of the Spring* (1932) the narrator observes that, at these parties, '[w]hites and blacks clung passionately together […]. [A]t last they have had a chance to do openly what they had only dared to do clandestinely before': Wallace Thurman, *Infants of the Spring* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2012 [1932]), p. 91. I discuss these parties further in Chapter Four.
[403] Kyla Schuller, *The Biopolitics of Feeling: Race, Sex, and Science in the Nineteenth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), p. 4.
[404] This chapter only considers (with the exception of Linda and Popé in *Brave New World*) heterosexual relations between Black and white people. I am led to this by the language from the Production Code, currents of early-twentieth-century discourse that circulated around matters of race in relation to Black cinema, and by the textual evidence itself from Huxley and Woolf. I am unable to find examples of queer interracial kissing on screen in this period, although we cannot be sure that such films were not made. There are several examples of films that represent love and desire between white and Asian people in the period preceding the publication of *Brave New World* and *Orlando* including Cecil B. DeMille's *The Cheat* (1915) in which a white woman's skin is actually branded, Griffith's *Broken Blossoms* (1919), and E. A DuPont's *Piccadilly* (1929) in which a kiss is strongly suggested between a white nightclub owner and a Chinese dancer (Anna May Wong), but the camera cuts away just as they lean in.

conceptualisation' in contrast with the latter's 'seared, divided, ripped-apartness'.[405] Though bodies were transplanted into a new social and cultural order, it is the flesh that registers and narrates this trauma. Touch itself of course facilitates 'miscegenation'. This was central to the subsistence of enslavement and the spread of imperialism with regards to white men raping and exploiting Black women, although the stereotype of the 'seductive' Black woman, as we shall see in *Orlando*, was (and remains) a common narrative.[406] It is hence important to note that interracial touch has been 'disavowed but institutionally sanctioned', an important context for films such as *What Happened in the Tunnel* that both hide and display interracial kisses.[407] It historically enriched white enslavers and was also a taboo that would eventually be banned on the cinema screen. The idea that flesh registers and narrates this trauma has initiated responses from scholars of nineteenth-century race relations and the senses. Mark M. Smith has argued that touch 'was central to the very construction of the idea of "race" in the modern world and critical to the ways "race" was used to exploit labor and establish hierarchy': white enslavers, for instance, 'maintained that blackness was not simply a color but a tactile condition […] thicker and tougher than white skin and, ergo, much better suited to hard manual labor.'[408] These tactile ideologies, as we know, saw white people rendering Black skin a site of violent touch, and the survival of these ideologies in both medical settings and instances of racist brutality in our contemporary moment speak to the urgency of deepening our understanding of the relationship between race and touch.[409]

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[405] Hortense J. Spillers, 'Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book', *Diacritics,* 17 (1987), pp. 65-81 (p. 67).
[406] Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015 [1928]), p. 150.
[407] Courtney, *Hollywood Fantasies of Miscegenation*, p. 3.
[408] Mark M. Smith, *Sensing the Past: Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching in History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), p. 109.
[409] For example, the racist construction of the idea that Black women 'are relatively unaffected by the expected pains of labor and childbirth': Khiara Bridges, *Reproducing Race: An Ethnography of Pregnancy as a Site of Racialization* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), p. 117.

In contrast, nineteenth-century white supremacist discourse linked sensitivity and, crucially, the regulation of sensitivity, to whiteness. In 1847, German naturalist Lorenz Oken wrote a hierarchy of five races and made each correspond to a sense. At the bottom, '[t]he Skin-Man is the *Black*, African', and at the top, 'The Eye-Man is the *White*, European' [original emphasis].[410] As such, Oken applies Aristotle's sensory hierarchy to the project of white supremacy.[411] While Aristotle reasons that touch is the basest sense experienced by every living being, Oken attempts to ascribe a more superior sensitive spectrum to white people. Citing Oken, Kyla Schuller argues that an apparent capacity for sentimentalism indicated in the nineteenth century an 'evolved' body that could 'discipline their sensory susceptibility' (we are reminded of Cesare Lombroso's shock towards white women letting go of this discipline via the kiss, as discussed in the Introduction).[412] What Schuller terms 'sentimental biopower' is a system in which bodies signify the collective health of the population, and white-perceived capacities for sentimentalism indicated those most 'evolved' bodies (defined in terms of race, sex and species) that could discipline their senses to be reconciled to the needs of others. These were the bodies that were deemed worthy of protection from the 'coarse, rigid, savage elements of the population suspended in the eternal state of flesh'.[413] Erica Fretwell's recent reading of Oken chimes with Schuller in her exploration of how perceptual sensitivity was meant to equate to 'racial progress'.[414] Oken influenced nineteenth-century practitioners of psychophysics, a science that tested subjective sensory experience and operated asymptotically to evolutionary racial sciences. In the nineteenth century, then, white constructions of race hinged on the idea that Blackness was related to touch, the basest sense that could be felt even by those with the least acute sensory capacities.

[410] Lorenz Oken, *Elements of Physiophilosophy* (London: The Ray Society, 1847), p. 653.
[411] Aristotle, *De Anima* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2017 [c. 350 BC]), p. 25.
[412] Schuller, *The Biopolitics of Feeling*, p. 4.
[413] Ibid. p. 8.
[414] Erica Fretwell, *Sensory Experiments: Psychophysics, Race, and the Aesthetics of Feeling* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), p. 19.

In contrast, white people were deemed both sensitive, and able to discipline those senses. Such ideas worked to endorse atrocities, including the epidermic, committed against Black people.

The trope of a Black person 'revelling in sensuality' with capacities of 'dully sensitive touch' continued well into the twentieth century.[415] This was a trope that some Black thinkers reclaimed as a particular offering to a modernising world (see Chapter Four). Relatedly, it is well documented that, by the early twentieth century, 'negrophilia [was] sweeping Europe'.[416] Though in a different political and social environment, Dismond writes in *Close Up* that in America, too, 'Black became the fad', an important context for the complicated mixture of enthralment and repulsion to the interracial kiss on screen.[417] 'Negrophilia' is in some ways on a continuum with, rather than a departure from, nineteenth-century white supremacist rhetoric. Indeed, Frantz Fanon asserts that 'the man who adores the Negro is as "sick" as the man who abominates him'.[418] Building upon Fanon's theory of racism as an 'epidermal schema', a process in which racism gives the outer layer of the body a narrative, it is telling that Anne Anlin Cheng identifies 'the surfacism of black skin' as the epidermal root of 'negrophilia' in the modernist period.[419] That is, as something upon which the surface-oriented visuality of modernist aesthetics often settled, Black skin became a site of aesthetic and philosophical debate about surfaces. As such, Cheng both centralises race in aesthetic discussions of skin and connects more familiar histories of Black skin (of commodification,

[415] Thomas Kirksey, letter in 'Open Forum: A Voice for Supporter and Opponent', *The Messenger*, June 1926, p. 191; Charles S. Johnson, 'Black Workers and the City', *Survey Graphic*, March 1925, pp. 641-643 (p. 641).
[416] Cheng, *Second Skin*, p. 14.
[417] Dismond, 'The Negro Actor and the American Movies', 91. Elsewhere she comments that people of '[a]ll classes and colors' mixing at parties was evidence of a 'social revolution': quoted in Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea: An Autobiography* (London: Pluto, 1986 [1940]), p. 243.
[418] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 2. Recent screen portrayals of this complex include the wild coveting of Black bodies in Jordan Peele's horror blockbuster *Get Out* (2017).
[419] Ibid. p. 84; Cheng, *Second Skin*, p. 110.

primitivism, fetishism and liberation) to its 'surfacism'.[420] This, as I have discussed in the Introduction, is embodied for Cheng by Josephine Baker dancing and entertaining in Paris, draped in gold cloth or fur or basking in dark shadows. The notion of Black skin as a central component of modernism's primary interests in skin and surface are foundational for my analysis in this chapter.

For Michelle Ann Stephens, this stylisation of one's own skin is applicable to Black male entertainers in the modernist period and beyond who perform what she calls 'skin acts': a mode of performance in which skin is subjectively experienced in tension with being the object of a gaze, enacted by a 'process of simultaneously witnessing and performing, seeing and being seen.'[421] I discuss similar modes of performance in Chapter Four. For Stephens, the mode of a skin act applies to Paul Robeson in *Borderline* (1930), the only film created by the Pool Group, in which his 'gestures, expressing affect, physical action, and motion, lure the spectator into a self-reflexive experience of corporeality'.[422] *Borderline* itself explores interracial desire, and Woolf, incidentally, describes Robeson as 'malleable' in 1937 in another touch-related description of a Black film star by a modernist writer.[423] It is no wonder that articles enamoured by Black physicality and skin find a home in the Pool Group's magazine; Macpherson's portrayal of Fetchit waving his hands and touching the world describes a 'skin act', performing with awareness of the 'miscegenated gaze'.[424] In these white-authored articles in *Close Up*, we find early examples of how screen-oriented

[420] Cheng, *Second Skin*, p. 14.
[421] Michelle Ann Stephens, *Skin Acts: Race, Psychoanalysis, and the Black Male Performer* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 30.
[422] Ibid. p. 80.
[423] In this diary entry Woolf uses an explicitly racist slur to describe Robeson: diary entry, June 25 1937, in *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume V: 1936-1941* ed. by Anne Olivier Bell (London: The Hogarth Press, 1984) pp. 98-99 (p. 99). Kabe Wilson points towards this comment in: Kabe Wilson, 'On Being Still', *The Modernist Review* (2020) <https://modernistreviewcouk.wordpress.com/on-being-still> [accessed 1 March 2021].
[424] This term was coined in: Christian Walker, 'The Miscegenated Gaze', *SF Camerawork Quarterly,* 18 (1991), pp. 13-16.

manifestations of 'negrophilia' maintain a continuum with the violent ideologies of white supremacy. Blakeston's 'greased glintings of majestic torso' and Richardson's penetrating inspection of the 'tiger-flow of muscles' may remind us disturbingly of auctions of enslaved people. Potamkin's idea that 'the negroes must be selected for their plastic, negroid structures' could as easily be the words of a white enslaver as a casting director. The white writers of *Close Up*'s apparently celebratory issue place the Black actor as particularly embodied and with marked tactile appetites, as well as vulnerable to the skin-focused 'licking eye' from others. The interracial kisses in Woolf and Huxley's writings therefore did not emerge as out of a vacuum, but as part of this history of the relationship between tactility and racial politics – histories that were re-subjectified and restyled by performers such as Baker and Robeson.

Rereading the feelies

With its well-documented colonial content, *Brave New World* seems conscious of the tactile legacies of racial politics in its representation of interracial kisses. The onscreen kiss is not the first such act in the novel: John witnesses his mother, Linda, being sexually abused by Popé, an Indigenous inhabitant of Malpais, a Reserve in New Mexico. Malpais, like the cinema, is another heterotopia, given that its inhabitants live 'in a state of crisis' – they are viewed as a 'deviation' from society's norms – and one's presence there is either 'compulsory (for its inhabitants) or achieved by carrying out certain 'rites' (acquiring a signed permit from the warden).[425] Paying attention to tactility clarifies the way Huxley uses the Reserve to establish racial boundaries before John is shocked by the kiss on screen later in the novel. After grim scenes of Linda shouting 'No! No!', and being fed alcohol before

[425] Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', pp. 24-26; Huxley, *Brave New World*, p. 87.

sex, Huxley presents Linda and Popé through the by-then standard racist pairing of a white helpless woman and a predatory non-white man: 'white Linda and Popé almost black beside her'.[426] John's memory of this abuse could be neatly contained in the summary of *Three Weeks in a Helicopter*: 'she protested. He persisted'.[427] The entire feelie hinges upon this mythologised power imbalance, with the 'black madman' developing 'for the Beta blonde an exclusive and maniacal passion', culminating in assault and kidnap (though the 'maniacal' judgement of his passion is based heavily on its exclusivity, and not purely its intensity, in the World State's polygamous culture).[428]

The role of cinema in perpetuating this Black-man-as-predator myth is addressed in *Close Up*: Dismond observes that though 'the Negro had been given his freedom […] we find him depicted everywhere as a rapist'.[429] She undoubtedly refers implicitly to films such as Griffith's white supremacist epic *Birth of a Nation* (1915) which, as her fellow contributor Carter puts it, 'has done the Negro irreparable harm'.[430] In the film, a white girl jumps off a cliff to avoid being pursued by a Black man (played by a white actor in blackface), and later another white woman faints while a 'mulatto' man (also a white actor in blackface) tries to force her to marry him. As he holds her unconscious body and leans in, there is a suggestion that he is about to kiss her before being interrupted by a knock on the door. *Birth of a Nation* traces the replacement of 'the historical legacy of sexual exploitation sanctioned under slavery […] with the Jim Crow era fantasy of the black rapist'.[431] This was a narrative that cinema sought to correct as well as perpetuate: Micheaux's *Within Our Gates* (1920), for example, shows the white man as a sexual threat when Sylvia, who has a Black mother,

[426] Huxley, *Brave New World*, pp. 107-08, 114.
[427] Ibid. p. 146.
[428] Ibid. pp. 146-47.
[429] Dismond, 'The Negro Actor and the American Movies', p. 91.
[430] Carter, 'Of Negro Motion Pictures', p. 118.
[431] Courtney, *Hollywood Fantasies of Miscegenation*, p. 65.

escapes rape after the perpetrator is revealed to be her father. Whether Huxley had watched such counternarratives, he himself wrote about *Birth of a Nation* in a letter in 1916, commenting that it 'is said to mark quite a new epoch in cinematic art'.[432] Having seen the non-white-man-as-rapist represented in this film and, undoubtedly, other avenues, Huxley translate this damaging formula to scenes on the Reserve and, later, to the kiss that so shocks John.

These details from *Brave New World* support John Greenberg's sardonic point that 'Huxley's prophetic vision' does not extend to 'the fight for racial equality' but endorses the fear of what eugenics-aligned thinkers called 'race suicide'.[433] Extending Greenberg's argument, I want to suggest that Huxley draws on these not just by malrepresenting a Black man in a film, but by the tactile nature of the film itself. In the novel's World State society, the interracial kiss is one of the last remaining sexual prohibitions, but the audience at the feelie are released to feel the kiss (a futuristic nod, perhaps, to the fact that it was banned in Hollywood at Huxley's time of writing and therefore unlikely to be shown in a mainstream film). The audience's sensory experience is entirely underpinned by the tactile constructions of racial politics. The auditorium full of six thousand spectators experience 'intolerable pleasure' from an interracial kiss. The word 'intolerable' suggests both pleasure at unbearable extremes and pleasure that should not be tolerated. The racial demographic of the audience is not given, but Huxley's narrative largely ignores any other than white experiences in his choice of protagonists and neglect of non-white characters in Europe beyond peripheral mention. Operating in a cinematic heterotopia, the spectators present the inverse of the sensorially-disciplined, white racial ideal. Only John 'the Savage' is repulsed by the

[432] Aldous Huxley to Leonard Huxley, 19 March 1916, *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, ed. by Grover Smith (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969), pp. 94-95 (p. 95).
[433] Jonathan Greenberg, 'What Huxley Got Wrong', in *'Brave New World': Contexts and Legacies,* ed. by Jonathan Greenberg and Nathan Waddel (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 109-26 (pp. 113-14).

'galvanic' sensation; his epithet automatically links him to the novel's colonialist themes, and he is so named, as Garrington points out, partly because he favours the 'deferral of contact' and deplores the divorce of 'feeling (sensory stimulation) […] from feeling (emotional response)'.[434] In other words, John is ironically deemed 'Savage' by a sexually liberal society because he advocates for the 'discipline' of the senses (his desire for delay, as discussed in the Introduction, forms part of this ideology).[435] In AF 632, this makes him a relic of the racist discourse which assigns this disciplined quality to 'evolved', white bodies.

Frost's argument that 'Huxley's feelies link cultural degeneration and aesthetic decadence' is useful in this context, but at this moment in *Brave New World*, the fears of degeneration run deeper than decadence (though decadence, as we will further see in Chapter Four, was associated at the time with interracial intimacy).[436] Huxley's ironic use of the 'Savage' epithet is supposed to suggest that John is not 'Savage' at all, thereby upholding the idea that whiteness was meant to equate to sensory control and self-denial of gratuitous touch. This kiss hence allows us to see how white supremacy develops and functions in embodied contexts – its regulatory attempts are not just legal, political, and social, but also sensory in order to do the work of managing (or not) who should kiss whom and in what context. Relatedly, Woolf's own squeamish presentation of sensory control uses similar language: her 'savages of the twentieth century watching the pictures' were the spectators taking mindless pleasure in goggling at the screen with which they maintained a close relation.[437] More

[434] Garrington, *Haptic Modernism* pp. 42, 45.
[435] Several critics have suggested that Huxley is using John to think through D. H. Lawrence's attitudes to the senses. Peter Firchow argues that Lawrence 'helped shape the spirit of the Savage': Peter Firchow, 'Wells and Lawrence in Huxley's *Brave New World*', *Journal of Modern Literature,* 5 (1976), pp. 260-78 (p. 275); Brad Buchanan writes that 'we may draw several analogies between John "the Savage" and Lawrence himself': Brad Buchanan, 'Oedipus in Dystopia: Freud and Lawrence in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*', *Journal of Modern Literature,* 25 (2002), pp. 75-89 (p. 86).
[436] Frost, *The Problem with Pleasure*, p. 140.
[437] Woolf, 'The Cinema', p. 172.

vicariously, in *Brave New World*'s cinematic heterotopia, the audience let their senses run riot. Despite – or because of – the apparent absence of interracial relationships in *Brave New World*'s society, Lenina comes away from the feelies with flushed cheeks, bright eyes, and 'shuddering roads of anxiety and pleasure across her skin'; a 'ghost [of a kiss] still fluttered against her lips'.[438] The Black actor in *Three Weeks in a Helicopter* emphasises the tactile effects of the feelies, and hence Lenina's anxious thrill is not only one of sensory pleasure, but of tactile effects of the interracial kiss compounded by the racial politics of feeling. The cinematic context authorises her to feel a kiss that racist social mores prohibit.

Though the fingers are the technological operators of the feelies, the lips are very much the primary sensors as Huxley navigates cinematic interactions with surfaces of various forms. The 'sensation on his lips' jolts John into a comprehension of the bewildering technology: he learns how to interact with the feelies by moving 'a hand to his mouth' and letting it fall 'back on the metal knob'.[439] In this sense, the feelies represent a literal depiction of Jennifer Barker's notion of 'cinematic tactility' which describes 'the palpable tactility of the contact between the film's skin [the mechanical sites of the film where perception and expression take place] and the viewer's skin'.[440] During this process John is grasping the scene in Benjamin's sense, and is also literally seeing and grasping. Husserl's contention is that perception 'makes contact with what is immanent' and gains absolute knowledge by 'see[ing] and grasp[ing] precisely what we intend in the seeing and the grasping', and John learns how to experience the feelies by making contact with the metal knobs, looking at the screen, and going through an immediate, phenomenologically-aligned process of startled realisation. This startle is prompted by the kiss. It is notable that Huxley locates the 'sensation *on* his lips'

[438] Huxley, *Brave New World*, p. 147.
[439] Ibid. p. 146.
[440] Jennifer M. Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley, CA; London: University of California Press, 2009), p. 34.

[emphasis added], not *in*. John's lips operate as a surface which is enacted up*on*, not a container for subcutaneous nervous activity but an externalisation of it. Huxley's construction of the kiss on the surface reinforces the secularisation of the kiss discussed in the Introduction. The sensation being *on* rather than *in* emphatically draws the kiss away from internal spirituality and out towards externalised experience. John's affective response – one that Silvan Tomkins would name 'surprise-startle' – reminds us of Havelock Ellis' theorisation of the lips as a 'highly sensitive' region (see Introduction).[441] Huxley's description of the 'facial erogenous zones of the six thousand spectators' converges with Ellis' sexological vocabulary (and it is important to note that Ellis was a vocal and active supporter of eugenics).[442] There is some sensory slippage between the kiss and all the surface interactions in this scene. How and by whom is the kiss felt? Is it felt by the 'stereoscopic lips', or the hands curving on metal knobs, or the eyes facing the screen? The twofold intersubjectivity of the scene raises these questions: the actors feel each other, and the audience feels the actors via technology. Such questions and confusions map well onto the nature of cinema itself that 'causes the spectator to question the nature of reality and perception' (if I feel this kiss, who is really kissing?).[443] This quality prompts viewers to 'step outside their ordinary perceptual stance in order to see things afresh', which, as Cleo Hanaway-Oakley argues, is a similar process to phenomenological reflection.[444] This is especially true in the feelies as John not only observes but feels, as close to experiencing a close-up kiss as possible without actually partaking. Huxley represents Black skin to emphasise this felt experience.

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[441] Silvan S. Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness* (New York: Springer, 2008 [1962]), p. 273.
[442] Ellis was Vice-President of the Eugenics Education Society, author of *The Task of Social Hygiene* (1912) and served on the General Committee of the First International Eugenics Congress: see Ivan Crozier, 'Havelock Ellis, Eugenicist', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences,* 39 (2008), pp. 187-94.
[443] Hanaway-Oakley, *James Joyce and the Phenomenology of Film*, p. 15.
[444] Ibid. pp. 15-16.

It is another kind of skin, the bearskin, however, that partially steals the spotlight at the feelies, and its presence underscores the experience of the kiss. We are first introduced to the concept near the beginning of the novel, when the Assistant Predestinator gives Henry Foster his rave review of the film's 'amazing tactual effects', the most significant being that 'every hair of the bear [is] reproduced.'[445] In Didier Anzieu's theorisation of fur in *The Skin Ego* he introduces the notion that stroking fur is a 'return to a contact of skin with skin'.[446] Garrington uses this theorisation as a way to read the bearskin rug and put it in contact with modernism's epidermic interests.[447] In Jennifer Malone's analysis of Méret Oppenheim's surrealist art piece, *Object* (1936), which depicts a teacup covered in the pelt of a gazelle – a descendant, perhaps, of the cup-kiss – she contends that 'the sensory appeal of fur' comes from its 'everted rather than inverted' orientation: the hairs, originally attached to sense receptors, extend out to the world in assurance that they once existed to feel rather than be felt.[448] Fur can in this sense be touched as a phenomenological practice, in which one can anticipate the fur as toucher when it is touched. Huxley certainly harnesses this sense of uncertain agency in his insistent references to the animalistic origins of the 'bearskin' (he actually does not use the word 'fur'). As such, he ascribes to this surface a quality that Renu Bora would call 'texxture': 'the kind of texture that is dense with offered information about how, substantively, historically, materially, it came into being', as opposed to 'texture […] that defiantly or even invisibly blocks or refuses such information'.[449] Materially, the bearskin of course recalls the bear. Historically, the presence of bearskin on a British film

[445] Huxley, *Brave New World*, p. 29.
[446] Didier Anzieu, *The Skin Ego* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 42.
[447] Garrington, *Haptic Modernism* p. 40.
[448] Jennifer Malone, 'Ready to Eat? Modernist Food Objects and the Sculptural Avant-Garde', *Modernism/Modernity Print Plus,* 4 (May 2019) <https://modernismmodernity.org/forums/posts/ready-eat> [accessed 17 February 2021].
[449] Quoted in Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, pp. 14-15.

screen recalls the legacies of colonialism. This rug both offers information about its origins and takes its place as part of the racialised surfacescape of *Three Weeks in a Helicopter*. The remarkable quality of the reproduced bearskin is not its plushness, however, but its discreteness. Even John acquiesces in this particular technological wonder (that quality that phenomenology is meant to restore to perception): 'every hair […] – the Assistant Predestinator was perfectly right – could be separately and distinctly felt'.[450] The insistence upon the discrete hair is endemic to the kisses performed on top of it, since kisses, as Erik Gray points out, 'tend to be discrete, and therefore quantifiable, acts', in contrast to continuous embrace or penetrative sex.[451] The individually felt hairs of the bearskin rug are a quantifiable reflection of the kisses which are enacted in series ('the stereoscopic lips came together *again*' [emphasis added]).[452] This bearskin forms a trinity of surface interaction with the interracial skin and the kiss, and imbues the experience with wonder at something otherwise as ordinary as feeling texture.

Each instance of surface contact refers to the inaugural surface of the film: the skin of the actors engaged in the interracial kiss. Their skin is 'dazzling and incomparably more solid-looking than […] actual flesh'.[453] This word 'dazzling' has crucial implications for the racial contexts of the surfaces at the feelies. The dazzle both repels and invites sight, and raises questions about how this film set has been lit. In his study of cultural representations of whiteness, Richard Dyer tells us that orthochromatic film stock failed to reproduce 'the whiteness of the white face' because it was 'insensitive to red and yellow, rendering both colours dark'.[454] In order to achieve whiteness on white skin – and blondeness on blonde hair

[450] Huxley, *Brave New World*, p. 146.
[451] Gray, *The Art of Love Poetry*, p. 95.
[452] Huxley, *Brave New World*, p. 146.
[453] Ibid.
[454] Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 91.

– film technicians instituted a three-point lighting system using carbon arcs. Incandescent tungsten light was cheaper and less uncomfortably hot for actors, but its mixture of red and yellow light had a 'blacking effect' on film stock.[455] Under the carbon arcs, white actors would 'glow rather than shine'.[456] That same light would bounce 'back off the surface' of Black skin.[457] This also meant that it was difficult to shoot 'very light and very dark people in the same frame', meaning that even if racist attitudes of audiences and filmmakers had not impeded interracial kisses on screen, lighting technology would. In essence, racist film technology practices ensured that white people were represented as though light radiated from within, emanating a vision of spirit associated with classical (and erroneously white) images of the Virgin Mary and Christ, while the shine on Black skin produced an image of external light bouncing off a solid surface. While *Brave New World* was written shortly after orthochromatic film stock fell out of use, the dazzle in the feelie invokes this specific intertwined history of how film lighting etherealised white skin and solidified Black skin. When Huxley writes that the skin at the feelies is 'dazzling and incomparably more solid-looking', we could hence infer that it is 'solid-looking' *because* it is 'dazzling'.

This dazzle reminds us of Blakeston and Potamkin's descriptions of 'greased glintings' and 'sheen[s] of sweat' that 'glisten'. Their physical pleasure in the textural effects of labour and sweat suggest that for a white person to enjoy shine on Black skin during this period is partly to uphold labour-related legacies of white supremacy**.** This dazzle hence emphasises the asymmetric power relations in an interracial kiss between a Black and white person, underscored by the gendered aspect of the Black man depicted as an abusive kidnapper. Cheng finds a contrasting narrative in the shine that dazzles out of stunning images of Baker

[455] Ibid. p. 92.
[456] Ibid. p. 122.
[457] Ibid.

wearing various shiny materials with oiled skin and hair. Shine, according to sculptural artists of the period, was supposed to 'release sculpture from its material condition and open it up to new meanings'.[458] Baker, then, letting 'modern surfaces (bronze, metal, shellac, film) flow casually into […] skin, cloth, hair', reclaims and glamorises the quality of shine on photographed Black skin.[459] Her 'flesh reveals itself as style' which 'allows her image to deflect misogynist and racist logic.'[460] Huxley, however, does not infuse his actor's dazzle with glamour and agency while he plays a 'madman' who assaults and kidnaps people. In fact, Huxley compounds the representation of racial difference with the other offshoot of the inferred lighting technology in *Three Weeks in a Helicopter*: the insistence on the blondness of the 'golden-haired' actress engaged in the kiss.[461] Her hair is racially significant not just because racial categorisations had by then associated blondeness with Europeanness – particularly of the Nordic race, one of the 'two contrasted races' mentioned in Huxley's 'Silence is Golden' – but because the three-point lighting system that makes the actress look blonde is the same system that makes the Black actor look shiny.[462] It is no wonder that Lenina and John are left feeling the kiss on their lips long after the end of the feelies, since Huxley's lighting composition of the film both intensifies the vision of racial difference between the actors engaged in the kiss, and renders the skin 'incomparably more solid looking than' reality.

This idea of reality is an equally loaded term when we consider the kiss as the link between race and touch at the cinema. Woolf's fugue on photographic verisimilitude in 'The Cinema'

[458] Cheng, *Second Skin*, p. 115.
[459] Ibid. pp. 110-11.
[460] Ibid. pp. 119, 20.
[461] Huxley, *Brave New World*, p. 146.
[462] The *OED* records an 1833 *Penny Cyclopaedia* entry for 'Albino', which distinguishes '[t]he blonds of the European race' from albinos: 'Blonde', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <https://oed.com/view/Entry/20381> [accessed 15 February 2021]; Huxley, 'Silence Is Golden', p. 21.

resonates remarkably with the feelies, since the images that she contemplates are 'more real, or real with a different reality'.[463] The feelie goes one step beyond verisimilitude, being 'far more real than reality'.[464] Huxley affixes such a quality to the Black actor when a kiss between John and Lenina later in the novel triggers John's memory: 'he felt her lips soft against his own', and 'inevitably he found himself thinking of the embraces in *Three Weeks in a Helicopter* […]! The more than real blackamoor. Horror, horror, horror…'[465] This 'blackamoor' term, a derogatory portmanteau of a race (Black) and an ethnicity (a Christian European label for the Muslim inhabitants of North Africa), is of course a reference to Othello who, '[John] remembered, was like the hero of *Three Weeks in a Helicopter*'.[466] Evidently, though, reading *Othello* after the film, and thus attempting to process the interracial screen kiss in this 'civilised' white male realm, does not dilute the 'horror' in John's memory. This word 'horror', as Steven Connor suggests, 'signified in Latin the lifting or horripilation of the skin', so for John to feel horror is to associate his shock with a bristle of the skin.[467] Indeed, Barker argues that horror at the cinema arises from the skin, which both conceals the gore inside us and brings us into contact with the horrifying things before us.[468] In a striking parallel, a contemporary reviewer of one of the 'racial "switch" comedies', *Under the Old Apple Tree*, had a very similar reaction to an interracial kiss as John: '[o]h, horror! Horror upon horror!'.[469] Such legacies of film culture directly account for John's affect. That kiss between John and Lenina is John's tactile madeleine which jolts his involuntary memory of the film and leads to the same horrified vitriol that can be found in contemporary reviews of films containing interracial kisses. This affective response of

[463] Woolf, 'The Cinema, p. 172.
[464] Huxley, *Brave New World*, p. 146.
[465] Ibid. p. 168.
[466] Ibid. p. 149.
[467] Steven Connor, *The Book of Skin* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), p. 12. For more on horror and horripilation see: Garrington, *Haptic Modernism* pp. 172-73.
[468] Barker, *The Tactile Eye*, p. 55.
[469] Lubin, 'Film Review', *Moving Picture World,* 9 November 1907, pp. 581-85 (p. 583).

'horror' is underscored by verisimilitude when it comes to Black skin on screen: it is specifically the 'more than real' quality of the Black actor that haunts John's memories.

In contrast, in *Close Up*, Robert Herring (who also acted in *Borderline*) seems to celebrate this quality. Akin to the other white contributors, he sees Blackness almost as a metonym for the senses, suggesting that 'speed and sensitiveness and saltness […] is locked in the word "black".'[470] He goes on to disparage the 'black films passing white', and the 'white films passing for black', and 'demands the real thing […] and heaven knows there is enough reality waiting there'.[471] Something 'more real than reality', in fact, might be Huxley's answer. If, as discussed above, film prompts spectators to question reality and perception, then because Blackness on screen was meant to harness a distinct reality, the racialised configurations of this feelie are bound up in the phenomenological reflection on what is real and what is not and seeing things afresh. Sara Ahmed has argued that a 'phenomenology of race and sex shows us how bodies become racialized and sexualized in how they "extend" into space: differences are shaped in how we take up space, or how we orient ourselves towards objects and others.'[472] In this feelie, as a Black actor is oriented towards a white actress in a kiss, John's horrified response emphasises the sense that this is meant to be a taboo orientation because of racial difference. The racial difference between John and the Black actor is emphasised as the tactile experience of the kiss extends beyond the screen onto John's horrified body. It is significant that Huxley indexes these anxieties about hyperreality to the kiss, since, as discussed in the Introduction, verisimilitude is a crucial part of the kiss' cinematic history. The excited reviewer of Thomas Edison's *May Irwin Kiss*, who reported that it was possible 'to see what a kiss looks like' for the first time, concluded that 'the *real*

[470] Herring, 'Black Shadows', p. 98.
[471] Ibid. p. 104.
[472] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 99.

kiss is a revelation' [emphasis added].[473] The statement compounds the irony of the fact that it describes a kiss originally performed on stage in unmediated flesh. Indeed, as Potamkin (above) shows, when it came to representations of skin, ideas were circulating in the modernist period that 'theatre has not the capabilities to reveal the textural effects necessary to the drama' in the way that film does. In the feelies' warped verisimilitude, we therefore see how the kiss' history intersects with racial anxiety in order to produce the effect of touchability. Huxley writes a Black man performing the 'real kiss', apparently compounding reality to the point of the actor becoming 'more than real'.

Woolf in the dark: *Orlando* and tunnel films

Bearing in mind the high stakes of the cinema's portrayal of tactile racial politics – white supremacist attempts to regulate who kisses whom and how – it is important to note that the kiss has in fact played a part in racial representational practices since the birth of cinema. In 2017, the nitrate print of a twenty-nine-second film, *Something Good – Negro Kiss* (1898), was rediscovered after having been acquired from an estate sale in Louisiana.[474] The film shows a man (Saint Suttle) and a woman (Gertie Brown) joyfully embracing, holding hands, laughing, and kissing. One early description of the film reads as a 'Burlesque on the John Rice and May Irwin Kiss'.[475] In addition to this history of inter-filmic reference, we might look to Stephens for vocabulary with which to analyse *Something Good – Negro Kiss*: this

[473] M'Guirk, 'The Anatomy of a Kiss', p. 21.
[474] See a full account in Allyson Nadia Field, 'Archival Rediscovery and the Production of History: Solving the Mystery of *Something Good – Negro Kiss* (1898)', *Film History: An International Journal,* 33 (2021), pp. 1-33. Field, in fact, finds 'a small yet notable subset of the kiss film genre involving African Americans' (p. 6).
[475] Ibid. p. 6. Kiki Loveday argues that *Something Good – Negro Kiss* was in fact 'a burlesque of a burlesque' since *The May Irwin Kiss* was itself a spoof of a kiss performed by queer actress Olga Nethersole in *Carmen* in 1895 that caused a sensation in the press given widespread scrutiny of her sexuality and hence her performance of kisses: Kiki Loveday, 'The Kiss: Forgetting Film History', *Feminist Media Histories,* 8 (2022), pp. 178-215 (p. 198).

film is arguably an example of the 're-subjectification […] of black skin'.[476] This is made all the more significant given the historical context of attempts to attribute the kiss to whiteness (see Introduction). Skin in this film is a site of tender touch, not violent touch. Although some of its original racist catalogue descriptions advertise it as comedic, reflecting the contemporary film market's associations with Blackness and comedy, this film is a remarkable alternative to the caricature and comedy of many available Black roles in this period.[477] Regustus' comedy role in *What Happened in the Tunnel* is a case in point, although, as Jane Gaines has argued, her character expresses agency by 'making the lady-killer the target of the joke'.[478] Courtney, too, argues that the 'racial "switch" comedies' rely on 'the repeated insistence on white male insufficiency, particularly failures of vision that lead to the breakdown of racial codes.'[479] This is illuminating in the context of reading avid cinema-goer Woolf's writing, since Woolf herself is no stranger to the exposure of 'white male insufficiency'. It is practically the *raison d'être* of *A Room of One's Own* (1929), born out of lectures given at Newnham and Girton Colleges at Cambridge in the week of *Orlando*'s publication. These films, of course, belong to an earlier era of filmmaking than that contemporary to *Brave New World* and *Orlando*, but Huxley and Woolf were part of a film culture in which the racial histories of an onscreen kiss would have been immediately known and legible. And though it would be reductive to read a Woolf novel through the plot-driven question of 'what happened', it is here that we find an intersection between Woolf's *Orlando* and the switch comedies with their deployment of darkness and visual impairment – *What Happened in the Tunnel* in particular.

[476] Stephens, *Skin Acts*, p. 2.
[477] On comedy, see: Field, 'Solving the Mystery of *Something Good – Negro Kiss* (1898)', p. 14.
[478] Gaines, *Fire and Desire*, p. 55.
[479] Courtney, *Hollywood Fantasies of Miscegenation*, pp. 24-25.

Woolf draws on the freighted history of the interracial kiss in *Orlando*. In a passage that has received little critical attention, Orlando asks her fiancé, Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine, to recount the tales of his sea expeditions to Cape Horn:

> he would go on, and she would listen to every word; interpreting them rightly, so as to see, that is to say, without his having to tell her […] how he went to the top of the mast in a gale; there reflected on the destiny of man; came down again; had a whisky and soda; went on shore; was trapped by a black woman; repented […] and so when she replied, Yes, negresses are seductive, aren't they? he having told her that the supply of biscuits now gave out, he was surprised and delighted to find how well she had taken his meaning. […] And so they would go on talking or rather, understanding, which has become the main art of speech in an age when words are growing daily so scanty in comparison with ideas that 'the biscuits ran out' has to stand in for kissing a negress in the dark […].[480]

Of course, the kiss in *Brave New World* is more obviously cinematic than that in *Orlando*. My claim, however, is that Woolf's enigmatic passage about 'kissing a negress in the dark' is part of the specific cinematic 'landscape' of the 'racial "switch" comedies' that includes *What Happened in the Tunnel*, in which a Black woman is indeed kissed in the dark by a white man. There is also a change in the enactor of the kiss compared to the kiss in the feelies since, grammatically, it is the white man who gets to do the 'kissing' (though this grammar tangles with Orlando's remark that 'negresses are seductive').[481] Shelmerdine is not, that is to say, 'kissed *by* a negress in the dark', and the unnamed woman is apparently active and yet ultimately passive when it comes to the kiss. Fanon has theorised the power imbalance that constitutes the binary of active white man and passive Black woman, 'since he is the master and more simply the male', while, in contrast, 'when a white woman accepts a black man there is automatically a romantic aspect.'[482] Though this has of course been revised as a simplification in the context of interracial love –not least due to Fanon's contested

[480] Woolf, *Orlando*, pp. 149-50.
[481] The kiss in *Orlando* itself has queer connotations, since Orlando-as-woman finds Black women 'seductive', and since Shelmerdine's own status as a man is sometimes in flux. Orlando cries, 'You're a woman, Shel!': Ibid. p. 146.
[482] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 32.

misogynistic implications – this resonates with Lenina's uncritical pleasure in the feelies, and with Shelmerdine's active kiss as part of his colonising presence in Cape Horn.[483]

The tunnel is especially useful for our purposes, as I will go on to show, since as well as being a very Woolfian territory it operates as all of: a device in cinematic lighting and editing, an established space for tactile encounters – particularly in the context of the relationship between sightlessness and touch – and a metaphor for a joke. We know that Woolf did conceive of *Orlando* as comedic under its enigmatic layers: in response to one friend's puzzled reading, Woolf asked, '[w]hy is Orlando difficult? It was a joke, I thought. Perhaps a bad one.'[484] It is possible that her friend found this passage about 'kissing a negress in the dark' particularly 'difficult'; Jane Marcus has identified it as such, one that 'readers stumble over'.[485] But this kiss in a dark corner of *Orlando* actually sheds light on what was a 'bad joke' in some of the earliest comedies of silent cinema – noting, again, presumptions of Blackness as comedic in contemporary, white popular culture.[486] Woolf's sense of a 'joke' in this passage does also slyly ridicule the imperialist misogyny of white men. However, like in the 'racial "switch" comedies', it depends upon a view of the apparent inferiority of the Black woman – or the 'negress', a term which, as Marcus has commented, 'seems to feminize the Black woman but not to "womanize" her' – to a white woman, exercising a misogyny of its own kind and baring Woolf's complicity in the oppression of Black women in her pursuit of the liberation of white women.[487] What reading this kiss side-by-side with *Brave New World* shows us is that Woolf's obvious curiosity in the onscreen kiss was not localised to 'The

[483] For an outline of a critique of Fanon's writing on gender, see: Tracy Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Frantz Fanon: Conflicts and Feminisms* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), pp. 9-30.
[484] Virginia Woolf to Lady Eleanor Cecil (née Lambton), 28 October 1928, *A Change of Perspective: The Letters of Virginia Woolf, Volume III: 1923-1928* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1977), p. 553.
[485] Jane Marcus, *Hearts of Darkness: White Women Write Race* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), p. 44.
[486] Woolf also referred to *Orlando* as a 'bad joke' in a letter to her nephew Quentin Bell, 5 June 1928, *Letters III*, p. 506.
[487] Marcus, *White Women Write Race*, p. 41.

Cinema' or her telescope stories (see Introduction). If Huxley's feelies magnify the haptic reception of filmed interracial intimacy, then Woolf's use of a tunnel-like trope sheds further light on the deployment of darkness in portraying an interracial kiss on screen.

It is possible that Woolf (and Huxley) may have seen *What Happened in the Tunnel*, though the evidence is sparse, as is often the case when tracing the exhibition history of early films. As an Edison Manufacturing Company film, *What Happened in the Tunnel* is American, but there is evidence that this film had made it to Britain by January 1904: the *Western Mail* reels off a list of 'bioscope pictures [that] formed part of the evening's entertainment' at a dinner function in Cardiff, and *What Happened in the Tunnel* is among them.[488] It is therefore probable that this film was circulating around British town halls and auditoriums showing films at this time, as other Edison films certainly were. *The Great Train Robbery*, for example, is advertised in the British film magazine *Optical Lantern and Cinematograph Journal* in November 1904.[489] Against the grain of the often ephemeral nature of film culture (new films being made, old ones being forgotten), train films also had a revival while Hale's Tours, the amusement attraction discussed in Chapter One that showed films inside railroad cars, rose to popularity.[490] Hale's Tours opened a franchise on Oxford Street in 1906, and soon reached 'Hammersmith and the provinces', becoming 'the first permanent, widespread, specialised motion picture show to appear'; it hence played 'an important role in introducing the British public to the motion picture medium.'[491] It is not known for certain whether *What Happened in the Tunnel* was shown during British Hale's Tours, but it is possible that it

[488] 'Cardiff Law Society: Features of the Convivial Annual Dinner', *Western Mail,* 28 January 1904, p. 4.
[489] See 'Genuine Edison Original Films' advertisement, *Optical Lantern and the Cinematograph,* (15 November 1904), p. 6.
[490] American newspapers advertised Edison train films as 'Tour Car Productions', with *What Happened in the Tunnel* listed under 'Humorous Railway Scenes', presumably to Hale's Tours practitioners and rip-offs looking for more films to play in their stationary railway cars: Edison Film advertisement, *New York Clipper,* 28 April 1906, p. 281.
[491] Fielding, 'Hale's Tours', p. 125.

resurfaced during this time when train films catalysed cinema's integration into British public entertainment, all while Woolf was in her early twenties. I aim not, however, to make the slip of viewing *Orlando* as a direct response to, or analogy for, *What Happened in the Tunnel*. David Trotter has argued elsewhere that Woolf drew on 'a fund of shared preoccupation' with cinematic form, and I approach *Orlando* through the lens of Woolf's and early twentieth century filmmakers' shared preoccupations.[492] Shelmerdine's osculatory journey into the dark with a Black woman forms a particular 'landscape' with a derogatory 'joke' – a 'landscape' that reveals the extent to which the kiss was used by writers and filmmakers to emblematise racial (and hence, following Fanon, epidermal) boundaries in the modernist period.

We may question the appropriateness of attributing *Orlando* to a shared 'landscape' with such an early cinematic trope. It is useful, therefore, to consider the fact that both Woolf and her contemporary reviewers described *Orlando* in terms that are commonly applied to cinema in its fledgling form. Woolf herself wrote that her novel was 'freakish'; an ambivalent review from the *Observer* informed readers that it was a 'spectacle'.[493] These terms draw us to conceive of *Orlando* within the landscape of the 'cinema of attractions', as Tom Gunning has famously termed it: the early forms of film derived from vaudeville, freakshows and fairgrounds.[494] Indeed, Woolf wrote *Orlando* in a period during which early cinema was being revived in the 'Resurrection Series' of the London Film Society, which attracted several Bloomsbury Group members and showed an eclectic mix of films from the twee to the avant-garde. In fact, the Resurrection Series' inaugural film, *Why Broncho Billy Left Bear*

[492] David Trotter, *Cinema and Modernism* (Malden; Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p. 160.
[493] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf: Volume III: 1925-1930* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1980), p. 184; J. C. Squire, 'Prose-De-Société', *Observer,* 21 October 1928, p. 6.
[494] Tom Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde', *Wide Angle,* 8 (1986), pp. 63-70 (p. 64).

Country, features the same star who plays the male train passenger in *What Happened in the Tunnel*.[495] Woolf herself was occasionally in the Film Society's audience, as we can extrapolate from her account of watching *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919) in 'The Cinema', which was shown during the Resurrection Series in March 1926.[496] Though her viewing of this film has understandably attracted much critical attention, Woolf, more significantly in our context, also saw a 'switch comedy' of a different kind during this same programme: Griffith's *The Sheriff's Baby* (1909), in which a group of outlaws find themselves taking care of a baby thinking it the child of an old settler.[497] When we contemplate Woolf writing among this cultural landscape of revitalising early (and often American) cinema, *Orlando* begins to appear conducive to its inclusion in a discussion of early films more designed for 'spectacle' than narrative.

If, then, we consider *Orlando* as a 'spectacle' with its 'freakish' gloss, this gives us room to reread Woolf's use of darkness in which the kiss with a Black woman takes place – not forgetting the irony, and the applicability to cinema, of a 'spectacle' taking place in darkness. This leads us back into the tunnel, that motif with which I want to read the kiss in Woolfian terms. I briefly note that Sigmund Freud's conception of joke-work as a process of 'bewilderment being succeeded by illumination' means that a joke itself – however 'bad' – can be conceived of as a tunnel: plunging through darkness and coming into light on the other side.[498] John's immediate experience of the feelies in fact follows a similar pattern, bewildered by the technology, but illuminated as he moves his hand from mouth to metal knob and back again. In a more literal sense, tunnels were in fact part of the relatively recent

[495] *The Film Society Programmes: 1925-1939* (New York: Arno Press, 1972), p. 2.
[496] This is a claim originally made in: Trotter, *Cinema and Modernism*, p. 166; see *The Film Society Programmes*, p. 22.
[497] Ibid.
[498] Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1960 [1905]), p. 12.

(for Woolf) literary and cultural history of the kiss. In *The Literature of Kissing* (1876), which surveys the kiss in 'history, poetry, fiction, and anecdote', Charles C. Bombaugh dedicates an entire subsection of anecdotes to 'tunnel stories' found in newspapers and books. Notably, he recalls that in *The Newcomes* (1854) by William Thackeray – with whom Woolf had familial and literary ties – 'Mr Clive had given Miss Ethel a kiss in the tunnel'.[499] Accompanying Bombaugh's examples of mistaken or illicit kisses is a letter from a London newspaper by a correspondent who 'illustrates the necessity of providing more light in the carriages of the Metropolitan Underground Railway' to protect women from being kissed.[500] This anxiety was in fact so prominent by the turn of the twentieth century that London's *Weekly Dispatch* actually had a section titled 'What Happened in the Tunnel' to report such kiss-crimes.[501]

It was hence in the tunnel that early filmmakers found an osculatory formula. George Albert Smith's *The Kiss in the Tunnel* (1899) is one of the earliest examples of the silent cinematic treatment of railway and features a couple like Clive and Ethel taking the opportunity to kiss in tunnel-induced privacy, setting a precedent for the interracial iteration to come.[502] I have explored the osculatory implications of the proto-cinematic railroad in Chapter One in relation to motion and space. In *Orlando* and *What Happened in the Tunnel*, however, it is so-called 'miscegenation', rather than motion, that is at stake in the kiss. And though, when Shelmerdine himself kisses 'a negress in the dark' in *Orlando*, he makes no explicit mention of tunnels encountered on his journeys to shore, we recall that Woolf herself had a

[499] Bombaugh, *The Literature of Kissing*, p. 281. Leslie Stephen's first wife was 'Minny' Thackeray, William Thackeray's daughter. Woolf mentions Thackeray's novels in several of her works, for example, to *Pendennis* (1848) in *Three Guineas* (1938): Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1991 [1938]), pp. 7, 28.
[500] Ibid. p. 279.
[501] For example, '[s]hortly after entering the Standedge Tunnel the defendant seized hold of her and kissed her twice': 'What Happened in the Tunnel', *Weekly Dispatch,* 19 June 1904, p. 2.
[502] Kirby, *Parallel Tracks*, pp. 84-99.

'tunnelling process' for her writing, 'by which [she] tell[s] the past by instalments', as she describes in earlier diary entries.[503] In these diary entries, she conceives of her literary experiments with memory – bringing events from the past to surface in the present – as a form of excavation. Between August and October 1923, she refined her analogy from 'caves' ('I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters') to tunnels, but her attention to light in this analogy was always consistently tunnelistic ('the caves shall connect, & each comes to daylight at the present moment').[504] She was not the only modernist writer with such interests. E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924), which could be subtitled 'What Happened in the Tunnel', uses this same paradigm in which to explore interracial encounters when Adela Quested is 'insulted' in the Marabar Caves.[505] Forster's approach to interracial intimacy is far more enigmatic than Woolf's – though, in an earlier draft, Adela is explicitly 'forced […] against the wall' – but he, too, digs out and connects the caves.[506] Darkness for both Forster and Woolf is the space in which interracial touch occurs. When Shelmerdine unearths his experience of being 'trapped by a black woman', therefore, Woolf at this moment has tunnel vision, by which I mean that she excavates the past under the cover of darkness before the kiss emerges into the light.

There is more to these tunnel kisses than the manufacturing of opportunity in the darkness, however. This niche in the kiss-literature tradition constitutes a node in the evolution of ideas about tactile encounters in darkness, or analogical darkness in the case of impaired vision, particularly explored by Enlightenment philosophers who were concerned with visual and tactile perception. This was initiated by William Molyneux's famous question posed to John

[503] Virginia Woolf, 15 October 1923, in *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume II: 1920-1924*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell (London: The Hogarth Press, 1978), pp. 270-72 (p. 272).
[504] Virginia Woolf, 30 August 1923, Ibid. p. 263.
[505] E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978 [1924]), p. 154.
[506] E. M. Forster, *The Manuscripts of a Passage to India*, ed. by Oliver Stallybrass (London: Edward Arnold, 1978), p. 243.

Locke in 1688: whether someone born blind, who could distinguish a cube and a sphere by touch, would be able to distinguish the shapes by sight if given the ability to see.[507] In 1749, when successful medical procedures to counteract cataracts meant that this question was no longer purely hypothetical, Denis Diderot published his *Letter on the Blind* in which he explored the 'richness of the sensory world for the blind', for whom it is necessary to exercise discriminatory tactile practices.[508] It is worth swiftly noting that the appropriateness of the hypothetical blind man as a 'prop for theories of consciousness' has been firmly put to bed ('rest in peace') by disability theorist Georgina Kleege.[509] Nevertheless, it is possible to see some relation between the lovers who kiss in tunnels and the hypothetical blind figure, since what these philosophers, writers and filmmakers have in common is the way they harness visual deprivation for the purpose of sensory experimentation – an experimentation through which touch intersected with racial anxiety in the modernist period. By considering this relation, it is apparent that tunnel kisses denote a particular development in literature and film that explores the dependency on and sensitivity to touch in darkness.

It should be observed that kisses often take place in skin-shuttered darkness, as lovers shut their eyes. In some modernist writings, however, such as Marcel Proust's *The Guermantes Way* (1920), we find beautiful tactile-oriented experiments that work to unravel this requisite: 'I let my eyes glide over the charming pink globe of her cheek'.[510] It cannot be ignored that Albertine's whiteness is supposed to be a key element of the charm. Her 'pink' cheeks blush which, whether in shyness or arousal, indicate something of the apparent emotional readability of white skin to a white audience. The slippery eyeball caressing a cheek becomes

[507] Michael J. Morgan, *Molyneux's Question: Vision, Touch and the Philosophy of Perception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 6.
[508] Quoted in Paterson, *The Senses of Touch*, p. 46.
[509] Georgina Kleege, 'Blindness and Visual Culture: An Eyewitness Account', *Journal of Visual Culture,* 4 (2005), pp. 179-90 (pp. 180, 189).
[510] Proust, *The Guermantes Way*, p. 350.

an analogue for the wandering gaze that selects the skin to be kissed: Proust's gaze-that-touches is, in this way, a predecessor of Woolf's 'eye [that] licks'. Woolf's own experience of reading *The Guermantes Way* was, she describes, like '*tunnelling* […] into the obscurity of the young man's emotions', where finally 'the eye lights up that cave of darkness and we are shown the hard *tangible* material shapes' [emphases added].[511] It is the relief of something perceptible by touch that greets us in Woolf's tunnel excavation. Indeed, her diary descriptions of her 'tunnelling process' are stunningly haptic: 'I've only been *feeling* my way into it'; 'it took me a year's *groping* to discover' [emphases added].[512] And, like in Porter's *What Happened in the Tunnel*, it is only at the end of the tunnel that 'the eye lights up' and reveals who or what is being touched. In her writings on Woolf and cinema, Leslie Kathleen Hankins interprets Woolf's tunnelling as evidence of her interest in spatiality, figuring 'her narrative methods in terms of dimension, movement, and volume'.[513] But at this point of 'kissing a negress in the dark' in *Orlando*, Woolf is not so much negotiating the implied vastness of 'volume' than (oppressively) navigating racial boundaries in a manner that is more claustrophilic – a term first recorded in 1926 – than claustrophobic.[514] She recedes distant markers of 'dimension' and 'volume' to something more proximal: the touch that emerges at a tunnel's edges, that boundary which demarcates what is and is not revealed. This negotiation of revealing is, as Trotter argues, a key aspect of Woolf's particular understanding of cinema: it taught her 'how to imagine eyelessness as an element of the human condition'.[515] Indeed, imagining 'eyelessness' is what the aforementioned Enlightenment philosophers were doing, in essence. It is hence at this dark threshold that

[511] Virginia Woolf, 'Pictures', in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume IV, 1925-1928,* ed. by Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1994 [1925]), pp. 243-46 (p. 244).
[512] Virginia Woolf, 15 October 1923, *Diaries II*, p. 272.
[513] Leslie Kathleen Hankins, '"Across the Screen of My Brain": Virginia Woolf's "The Cinema" And Film Forums of the Twenties', in *The Multiple Muses of Virginia Woolf,* ed. by Diane F. Gillespie (Columbia, MO; London: University of Missouri Press, 1993), pp. 148-79 (p. 150).
[514] 'Claustrophilia', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/33957> [accessed 25 May 2020].
[515] Trotter, *Cinema and Modernism*, p. 172.

Shelmerdine's kiss with a Black woman intersects with a troubling form of interracial representation, and where this form reveals itself as born out of a literary tradition of tunnel kisses and, by extension, a longer history of thought on tactility circumscribed by obscured vision.

I emphasise the tactile lineage of the interracial kiss in *Orlando* since it cannot be mistaken that, in using this term 'negress', it is skin about which Woolf is writing. When the kiss occurs in both *Orlando* and *What Happened in the Tunnel*, two continent skins make contact at their surface. While skin tropes enter histories of modern surfaces, such as in architectural theory, and even though gendered aspects of skin have been addressed, Cheng makes the important case that race is rarely observed in the aesthetic history of the skin and that, when we talk of race in the modernist period, we cannot extricate that conversation from that of surface, particularly when that skin is 'black female skin'.[516] Linking her notion of 'haptic visuality' to the 'cinema of attractions' – that 'freakish' genre through which we must read *Orlando* – Marks claims that this latter phenomenon 'describes an embodied response, in which the illusion that permits distanced identification with the action onscreen gives way to an immediate bodily response to the screen'.[517] In other words, although the 'cinema of attractions' authorises an audience to look rather than partake, the onscreen action is registered through such bodily sensations as shock, pleasure, or aversion, to name a few. Interestingly, Marks' corporeal reading of the 'cinema of attractions' is in accord with Sergei Mikhailovich Eisenstein's original use of the word 'attraction' in his writing on fairground rides, picked up and explicated by Tom Gunning: 'an attraction [that] aggressively subjected

[516] Cheng, *Second Skin*, p. 11.
[517] Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, p. 170.

the spectator to "sensual or psychological impact".'[518] (Lawrence, as we saw in Chapter One, similarly sees the fairground as an arena of immediate sensory experience.) Reading *Orlando* via the 'cinema of attractions' links the skin in this novel to these epidermic contexts that Woolf would have observed in her own film culture.

Sitting at the threshold of the 'cinema of attractions' and narrative storytelling, *What Happened in the Tunnel* has never to my knowledge received critical treatment in haptic terms. Yet there are subtleties beyond the overtly revealed kiss that tempt us to see (or feel) 'haptic visuality' in Porter's film: the exchange of a delicate handkerchief between gloved and un-gloved hands; the voluptuous folds of skirt that Regustus fiddles with using her thumb and forefinger; and the shine on her skin as light intermittently catches her cheekbone (the spot the white man's lips will touch). In short, the film encourages embodied viewing, an experience that, Marks asserts, 'semiotic approaches cannot take into account'.[519] We are reminded that Woolf's own embryonic version of film theory is partly semiotic. She disappointedly ponders that 'a kiss is love' when she lists the cinema's weak assortment of available signs, although, as argued in the Introduction, this can also be read as disappointment in the one-dimensional use of such a multifaceted act.[520] Yet Woolf's observations of photographic verisimilitude (above), and her 'eye [that] licks', do encourage embodied readings of the cinema. As Woolf turned from explicit reflection on film in 'The Cinema' to write *Orlando*, this kiss with a Black woman approaches an 'embodied nature' of viewing (and, momentarily, not viewing) in its attention to feeling in darkness. In the lips of

[518] Quoted in: Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attractions', 66. Gunning refers to Sergei Mikhailovich Eisenstein, 'Montage of Attractions: For "Enough Stupidity in Every Wiseman"', trans. Daniel Gerould, *The Drama Review*, 18 (1974), pp.77-85.
[519] Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, p. 146.
[520] Woolf, 'The Cinema', p. 174.

Black and white people that touch in the dark, but pull away in the light, Woolf tunnels through a surface to meet racialised bodies – another kind of surface.

Interracial kisses on the modernist screen

In the conclusion to his article in the 'Negro in Film' issue of *Close Up*, Blakeston turns to the kiss to argue that a film cannot be judged by its individual scenes, but in terms of 'what you think of it at the end […] when the enormous kissing close-up' has melted away in the 'fade-out'.[521] While much of his article lauds the authentic portrayal of Black life in film, it is the kiss that makes the lasting impression. Sitting alongside the image of 'greased glintings of majestic torso', we must align his attention to the close-up kiss with the felt responses to Black skin on screen during this period. John and Lenina in *Brave New World*, like Blakeston, know that a kiss lingers in the impression (both cognitive and tactile) that a film leaves after it is over. Having watched a Black man kiss a white woman on screen, the kiss still flutters on Lenina's lips as they leave the Alhambra and makes John shudder with horror later in the novel. When Huxley represents the interracial kiss, he does so with this epithet 'horror': horror at one form of touch that transgresses the bounds even of his supposed pleasure-without-limits dystopia, and horror at the form of haptic spectatorship in which white audiences let go of the sensory discipline that was a vital part of white supremacist discourse. The feelie has been engineered such that 'you feel the people kissing' in a specifically racialised context, with the lighting creating a dazzle of shiny skin and a cloud of golden hair, and a touch of the hand on a metal knob initiating a sensation on the lips that authorises the audience to feel the interracial kiss projected in front of them.

[521] Blakeston, 'Black Fanfare', p. 126.

To feel an interracial kiss on screen was not, as I have outlined, restricted to the pages of a fictional tactile cinema, but can be traced from the feelies to wider cinematic contexts such as the racial switch comedies. These are contexts (both earlier and contemporary) of which Woolf as well as Huxley were likely aware: John's reaction to *Three Weeks in a Helicopter* chimes remarkably with *Moving Picture World*'s review of one of the 'racial "switch" comedies', and the young Woolf plausibly encountered *What Happened in the Tunnel* when Edison's train films became a fixture of London's cinema scene. Her literary sketch of a white man 'kissing a negress in the dark' hence draws us to conceive of her 'tunnelling process' not just as a literary experiment but as part of this cinematic landscape – a landscape that is foregrounded by a wealth of newspapers, books and films that all represent the tunnel as a space in which socially prohibited kisses take place. Writings contemporary to *Orlando* that conceptualised Black skin as calling attention to the haptic capacity of the cinema allow us to contextualise Woolf's addition of the interracial kiss within wider representations of touch that occurs in the dark. Reading of 'kissing a negress in the dark' in *Orlando* leads us to read the meeting of racialised surfaces (or, following Cheng, surfacised races) through the lens of the landscape of film 'jokes'.

Examining interracial kisses written by Woolf and Huxley side-by-side shows us that white modernist writers and film theorists feel and record these haptic effects at the intersection of the celebration of Black cinema and a tactile history of racism. The interracial kiss seems to be the bridge that repeatedly links the burgeoning modernist idea of haptic cinema spectatorship with racialised cinematic representation, given its opportunity for vicarious experience and its provocation of anxieties about so-called 'miscegenation', including racial degeneration and predator myths perpetuated by cinema itself. If the centrality of race to haptic responses to cinema in the modernist period calls us to observe race in the aesthetic

history of skin, then reading the interracial kiss on screen urgently calls our attention to the manifold connections between tactility and racial politics. These currents of oppression lead us to question ideas about queerness in the kiss. Orlando, as a woman, understands that Shelmerdine kisses a Black woman because she, too, finds Black women 'seductive'. The next chapter focuses on instances of women kissing women and sees that modernist writers found in the kiss ways to experiment with relating experiences of seducing and being seduced by other women.

Women Kissing Women: Radclyffe Hall, Rosamond Lehmann and Djuna Barnes

Towards the close of Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* (1936), the reader is disorientated as they are spun through Nora Flood's obscure dialogue with Dr Matthew O'Connor. At this point in the novel, Nora is attempting to come to terms with the failure of her intense relationship with Robin Vote, and she and the doctor painstakingly hash out her sense of loss. Nora says to him, '[a] man is another person – a woman is yourself, caught as you turn in panic; on her mouth you kiss your own.'[522] Containing echoes of the gothic circuses of the novel, the woman spins around and meets the female other on which the self is felt. This is enacted in the kiss between two women after the reader trips, dizzy, over a semicolon. While dizzying, though, the kiss returns us to a simple, even taken-for-granted experience of feeling one's own lips, as lips sit suggestively in touch already. By honing in on this experience, Barnes presents us with a tangle of subject and object. The image of kissing oneself on the mouth of another person shows us a subject touching an object and experiencing oneself as an object. This recalls Maurice Merleau-Ponty's chiasm, a reversible mode of perception in which the left hand can touch the right and 'turn its palpation back upon it'.[523] Nora and the reader's disorientation is perpetuated by Barnes' choice of second-person address – something that itself proves to be phenomenologically-aligned – which further tangles up any clear idea of who is kissing whom. 'You' implicates not just Nora as the apparent second-person subject, or Robin as the other kisser, but also the doctor as Nora's interlocutor, or the reader, whose proximity to the text makes them another potential addressee. This strange, imagined kiss, and the form of address, collapses a clear division of subject and object. What Barnes writes

[522] Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007 [1936]), p. 129.
[523] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 141.

hence differs from a Merleau-Pontian model of phenomenological perception. The kiss is not so much reversed when one kisser feels themselves kissed by another. That is, Barnes does not write that 'on her mouth you feel her kissing your own'. Rather, we see a woman touching another woman and thereby touching herself.[524]

This kiss in *Nightwood* departs from a model of passive object perceived by an active subject by collapsing a division between the two. Barnes uses the touching of two pairs of lips to represent a mode of intimacy in which the touch of one is not anticipated by another, but rather folds back on itself. So far in this thesis we have seen several examples in which kissing is enacted specifically by one and not the other, often underscored by gendered or racial power dynamics, but the kiss also lends itself to a simultaneous reciprocity that does not necessitate a giver and a receiver. The kiss that Nora recalls between herself and Robin reconfigures zero-sum patriarchal thinking about intimate interaction (one 'giving' while the other 'receives'). Indeed, feminist phenomenologists contend that the consideration of experience by privileging the subject in subject-object relations – even when there is a suggestion of reversibility in the chiasm – constructs a patriarchal mode of 'mastery'.[525] In Luce Irigaray's essay-come-monologue, 'When Our Lips Speak Together' ['*Quand nose lèvres se parlent'*] (1976), a female speaker wonders how women would speak, touch, and

[524] This could be interpreted as a form of autoeroticism, but such an interpretation leads us towards tropes of 'seeing lesbian partners as […] narcissistic doubles […] bound to each other through mutual identification': Elizabeth Grosz, 'Refiguring Lesbian Desire', in *The Lesbian Postmodern,* ed. by Laura Doan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 67-84 (p. 77). Such an interpretation also recalls the objectionable links between masturbation and homosexuality that predate modernism. French physician Moreau de Tours, Austro-German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Irish psychiatrist Dr Conolly Norman, American surgeon Dr G. Frank Lydston and his colleague James G. Kiernan were in agreement that masturbation caused 'over stimulation' and hence 'sexual perversion'. Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symons, however, found 'no reason what-ever to connect the existence of masturbation' to 'female sexual inversion': Ellis and Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, pp. 122, 189.

[525] Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, p. 129. Simone de Beauvoir also engages with Merleau-Ponty and his notion of the body-as-experience when she argues that a woman's body 'is something other than her': Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Vintage, 2011 [1949]), p. 42.

kiss in a system designed for an embodied state of feminine being.[526] Irigaray writes, '[y]ou don't "give" me anything when you touch yourself, when you touch me: you touch yourself through me.'[527] She portrays a similar moment of intersubjectivity which departs from the 'polarity' of subject and object, and echoes both the tactile configurations and the use of the second person in this passage in *Nightwood*.[528] Barnes' writing of the kiss opens up a suggestive window into (now more familiar) 'narrative strategies' for portraying queer femininity.[529] This chapter argues that, through writing the kiss between women, modernist women writers experimented with portraying intersubjective experience beyond patriarchal, heterosexist models.

A more middlebrow, bestselling literary example of modernist women's writing on queer intimacy is *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) by Radclyffe Hall. Barnes and Hall were friends (though Hall was Barnes' 'nemesis'), and reading *Nightwood* and *The Well of Loneliness* together opens up a pool of examples of the narrative strategies for writing the kiss between women.[530] In the early section of the novel, Hall writes the childhood of the protagonist, Stephen Gordon. This section has received considerably less critical attention than those following Stephen's adolescence, but they contain significant narratives in which Stephen becomes aware of her attraction to women and experiences her first kiss from Collins, a

[526] Although Irigaray presents as heterosexual, 'she centers women's bodies and sexuality', as one critic points out, 'to arouse heterosexual women to awaken from compulsory heterosexuality': Emma Pérez, 'Irigaray's Female Symbolic in the Making of Chicana Lesbian *Sitios Y Lenguas* (Sites and Discourses)', in *The Lesbian Postmodern,* ed. Doan, pp. 104-17 (p. 113).
[527] Luce Irigaray, 'When Our Lips Speak Together', trans. Carolyn Burke, *Signs,* 6 (1980), pp. 69-79 (p. 70).
[528] Irigaray uses the word 'polarity' to describe Merleau-Ponty's constructions of perception in: Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, p. 129.
[529] I borrow this term from Emma Liggins. In her recent study of 'odd women' in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women's fiction, she argues that writing, as part of the 'feminist story', shows us the 'diverse narrative strategies employed by a range of female authors to challenge the heterosexual plot': Emma Liggins, *Odd Women?: Spinsters, Lesbians and Widows in British Women's Fiction, 1850s-1930s* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2014), p. 11.
[530] Scott Herring, *Queering the Underworld: Slumming, Literature, and the Undoing of Lesbian and Gay History* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 20.

housemaid. After a period of Stephen experiencing growing attraction to Collins, 'Collins suddenly stooped and kissed her', and '[a]t that moment [Stephen] knew nothing but beauty and Collins'.[531] Stephen's perceptive field is focused on a 'this-here' as she is met in immediate experience by the mouth of another woman.[532] In *Queer Phenomenology* (2006), Sara Ahmed examines Edmund Husserl's idea of *epoché* and argues that the phenomenological practice of bracketing what is familiar, or what is background, and turning towards immediate experience, is not a neutral process. Rather, in Husserl's writing, *epoché* follows heterosexual and patriarchal 'orientations' that repeatedly face forwards, on the 'straight and narrow'.[533] Stephen's subversive focus on 'nothing but' Collins is suggestive when read in conjunction with Ahmed's idea that '[a] queer phenomenology, perhaps, might start by redirecting our attention toward different objects, […] even those that deviate or are deviant.'[534] Hall, too, experiments with a way of 'being-in-the-world' in female encounters that bracket heterosexist expectations.[535] These aspects of the novel can be contextualised by its explicit links to sexological theories of 'inversion'. Havelock Ellis wrote an introductory commentary for the first edition, and Stephen herself finds a copy of Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886) – one of the first texts to study homosexuality and bisexuality – in her father's library and identifies with the people described in the case studies therein.[536] In this light, *The Well of Loneliness* is written against the grain of attempting to situate oneself in a phenomenological attitude that, as Husserl puts it, 'does not engage with theory'.[537] One could say that Stephen, when reading sexology, is in anti-pursuit of Husserl's *epoché*. But it is the underexplored early arc of Stephen's journey, as a child, before she has

[531] Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, p. 11.
[532] Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, p. 23.
[533] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 76. An example of Husserl's implicitly patriarchal, heterosexual bracketing that Ahmed gives is his ability to turn towards his desk in his private study and bracket 'the world of care, cleaning and reproduction': Ibid p. 31.
[534] Ibid. p. 3.
[535] Luce Irigaray, *Sharing the World* (Londo; New York: Continuum, 2008), p. XVII.
[536] Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, p. 222.
[537] Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, p. 43.

'engage[d] with theory', where Hall most conspicuously experiments with a tellingly childlike wonder at immediate experiences of queer female intimacy.[538] This experimentation is initiated when the housemaid Collins kisses Stephen at the beginning of the novel.

Rosamond Lehmann's *Dusty Answer* (1927), another bestselling novel and yet one rarely discussed, was published just a year before *The Well of Loneliness*. Hall herself read *Dusty Answer* rapidly and proceeded to write something that she saw as 'bolder'.[539] Its protagonist, Judith Earle, has an intense romance with Jennifer Baird in Cambridge's all-women Girton College, and their touches and kisses become particular pressure points through which Lehmann explores basic perception. As their relationship develops, Jennifer's body bends to kiss Judith's mouth, and later kiss the crook of her arm. Judith's male love interest, Roddy, fades away to the background as 'Jennifer blinded and enfolded her senses'.[540] The kiss in *Nightwood* already suggests a sense of folding perception back on oneself, and in Lehmann's writing, this idea of being 'enfolded' is explicit. The kiss in this text captures an 'enfolded' configuration of female intimacy that departs from patriarchal models of a privileged subject feeling while the other is felt. In *Dusty Answer*, *Nightwood*, and *The Well of Loneliness*, Lehmann, Hall and Barnes form part of a set of modernist women writers who offer up experimental configurations of female intersubjectivity. They explore a mode of perception that, to quote Irigaray, turns from the 'norms or habits' that heterosexual, patriarchal models attempt to dictate.[541] In Carissa Foo's exploration of modernist women's writing through the

[538] In this chapter I use the word 'queer' to refer to non-heteronormative sexual orientation. I acknowledge the problems with this term that have been raised by lesbian scholars, namely that it might mean female specificity is once again subsumed (see Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 12.), but I use the term 'queer' in order to acknowledge the multiple sexual identities of women who want to kiss women. I will at times make use of the word 'lesbian', however, when referring to theories by theorists who have identified themselves as such, and when quoting from scholarship that uses the term.
[539] Sally Cline, *Radclyffe Hall: A Woman Called John* (London: John Murray, 1997), p. 64.
[540] Lehmann, *Dusty Answer*, p. 130.
[541] Irigaray, 'When Our Lips Speak Together', p.70.

lens of queer phenomenology, she argues that 'perception is continually shaped by hegemonic rules of organisation'.[542] This chapter aims to contribute to the work of elucidating how modernist women deviated from heteronormative modes of perception in their writing. This is not to idealise women, or female homosexuality, or to erroneously suggest that female encounter is safe for all, but to suggest that these women writers found in their representations of female intimacy – the kiss in particular – an avenue for representing the intersubjective preoccupations that are increasingly viewed as a feature of modernism.[543]

Such relations are enacted in the striking, often brief, and occasionally 'ghostly' moments in which women kiss and touch each other in these texts.[544] Each are interwar novels that belong to a period in which, as Jodie Medd puts it, 'the war [had] finally cracked the bourgeois ideal of heterosexual marriage'.[545] While their writers wrestle with the tension between authorisation and prohibition of female same-sex desire (as discussed in the Introduction), the circumstances in which these kisses are presented are 'made possible only by the social, political and economic changes of modernity'.[546] Judith and Jennifer kiss in a Cambridge college as the doors to education and its relative freedoms open to more (privileged) women; Robin and Nora kiss in the queer spaces of the Left Bank in modernist-era Paris; Stephen explores similar spaces in Paris, but even before that, the plot (and the

[542] Carissa Foo, 'Bent on the Dark: Negative Perception in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*', *Australian Feminist Studies,* 34 (2019), pp. 325-42 (p. 327).
[543] For a discussion of 'objects' intersubjective mediations', see Douglas Mao, *Solid Objects: Modernism and the Test of Production* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 54. For critics who examine intersubjectivity and social encounter, see Shawn Alfrey, *The Sublime of Intense Sociability: Emily Dickinson, H.D., and Gertrude Stein* (Lewisburg, PA.: Bucknell University Press, 2000), p. 90 and Meghan Marie Hammond, *Empathy and the Psychology of Literary Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 7. For intersubjectivity and ethics, see AnnKatrin Jonsson, *Relations: Ethics and the Modernist Subject* (Oxford; Bern: Peter Lang, 2006) and Jessica Berman, *Modernist Commitments: Ethics, Politics, and Transnational Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 43. For a discussion of intersubjectivity and class, see Nick Hubble, *The Proletarian Answer to the Modernist Question* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), p. 7.
[544] Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian*, p. 28.
[545] Medd, *Lesbian Scandal and the Culture of Modernism*, p. 90.
[546] Randall, 'Intimate Things in Dorothy Richardson's *The Trap*', p. 76.

writing) of the novel itself is produced in the emerging contexts of sexology and psychoanalysis.[547] These novels hence not only launch a range of debates about female desire, but enrich our picture of the relationship between the kiss and the conditions of modernity.

The terms of gender and sexuality

The terms 'woman/women' that will be continually used throughout this chapter are of course terms that have historically been and still are defined under the intentions of trans-exclusionary gatekeeping by those who equate sex with gender, and who use the phrase 'women born women' with the effect of denying trans women their gender identity. I join Ahmed in her intention to refer to 'all those who travel under the sign *women*' [original emphasis] when I say women.[548] I am aware, however, that writing about Irigaray means to risk converging with the territory of biological essentialism. Irigaray's focus on the body has long made critics feel 'a certain uncomfortableness'.[549] one of her most intense criticisms arises from Toril Moi, who argues that Irigaray falls into the 'essentialist trap of defining woman that she set out to avoid.'[550] Indeed, Irigaray's essay 'This Sex Which Is Not One [*Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*]' (1974) partly depends upon the comparison of sexual organs. She argues that 'women's erogenous zones' have been compared unfavourably to the 'noble phallic organ', and as such, female sexuality must be reconfigured beyond the phallocentric terms of 'a hole-envelope' or a 'non-sex' and seen as 'double', even 'plural': '[w]oman

[547] A reviewer of The Well of Loneliness remarked that '[p]sychoanalysis, if it has done nothing else, has made us deal more gently with abnormality, since it has made us uncertain as to what the norm really is': I. A. R. Wylie, 'The Masculine Woman', *Sunday Times*, 5 August 1928, p. 5.
[548] Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), p. 14. It should be noted, too, that many non-binary people are feminised by others but do not 'travel under the sign *women*'.
[549] Lisa Jardine, 'The Politics of Impenetrability', in *Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis,* ed. by Teresa Brennan (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 63-72 (p. 67).
[550] Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002 [1985]), p. 142.

"touches herself" all the time […] for her genitals are formed of two lips in continuous contact'.[551] Notwithstanding the potential resonances of this idea with the initial quotation from Barnes and the concept of folding, these 'two lips' have been the contentious point to which critics have frequently returned, since they seem to ascribe a specific biology to the category of 'woman'.[552] Yet, as Margaret Whitford and others have argued, Irigaray is a 'self-proclaimed "poetic" writer', whose meaning should not be taken as literally biological.[553] Though this does not totally acquit the 'uncomfortableness' of associating genitals with gendered qualities in Irigaray's writing, I wish to receive the writing as poetic, as Whitford suggests, in the sense that its meaning can be inherited as symbolic without reproducing the problems of biological essentialism. Lehtinen's study of Irigaray offers a more recent comment on this idea. She argues that 'the feminine body as described by Irigaray is not and should not be confused with any material or biological object or a body', but rather read as 'the body-subject', which 'orients itself in the world and delineates the world to itself': 'the body is in the process of becoming, determined and defined by its intentional motivational relations of enjoyment, need, production, and perception.'[554] As she notes, too, it is necessary to use the term 'woman' or 'women' because 'the category of women is indispensable for the feminist project as a whole'.[555] I intend to use these terms in this spirit, in keeping with the notion of the Irigarayan body which need not denote a fixed definition of 'woman'.

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[551] Luce Irigaray, 'This Sex Which Is Not One', in *This Sex Which Is Not One,* trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 23-33 (pp. 23-24, 28).
[552] By 1989, Margaret Whitford pointed out that 'the "two lips" seem to prove a stumbling block for many readers' including Janet Sayers and Kate McLuskie: Margaret Whitford, 'Rereading Irigaray', in *Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis,* ed. by Teresa Brennan (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 106-26 (p. 121). She references Janet Sayers, *Biological Poetics: Feminist and Anti-Feminist Perspectives* (London: Tavistock, 1982), p. 131; Janet Sayers, *Sexual Contradictions: Psychology, Psychoanalysis, and Feminism* (London: Tavistock, 1986), pp. 42-8; Kate McLuskie, 'Women's language and literature: a problem in women's studies', *Feminist Review* 14 (1983), pp. 57-8.
[553] Whitford, 'Rereading Irigaray', p. 121.
[554] Virpi Lehtinen, *Luce Irigaray's Phenomenology of Feminine Being* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2014), p. 71.
[555] Ibid. p. 8. Here she refers to Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion*: *Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 55.

Furthermore, I follow the novelists under discussion in using their gendered terms of 'man' and 'woman' so as to analyse the literary evidence presented to us as readers. It is of course complicated to write on gender in relation to *Nightwood* and *The Well of Loneliness* in particular: the former in which the doctor cross-dresses and wishes for a womb;[556] the latter in which Stephen declares, 'I can't feel that I am a woman.'[557] This chapter does not retrace the steps of critics who have theorised gender in these novels;[558] rather to acknowledge that we cannot find there a fixed definition of 'woman', but that we also cannot impose definitive answers. Hannah Roche has put it succinctly in relation to *The Well of Loneliness* when she says that 'we cannot claim with confidence that Stephen would identify today as a heterosexual trans man'.[559] It should be said, too, that the novels under discussion were published in a period during which sexuality and gender were often conflated, particularly in sexological theory about same-sex desire. Karl Heinrich Ulrichs believed that 'in [male] sexual inverts a male body coexists with a female soul', and though they saw this as superficially epigrammatic, Ellis and John Addington Symonds theorised female sexual inversion in terms of tendencies towards gender expression.[560] They note in some of their case studies 'an unfeminine impression to the sense of touch', or 'a more or less distinct trace of masculinity' – though it has been suggested that when Ellis uses the term 'masculine' he 'refers to sexual autonomy'.[561] Ahmed reads such theories as 'straightening devices': a woman's desire for a woman is 'corrected' as 'straight' if she is in fact 'really a man'.[562] As

[556] Barnes, *Nightwood*, pp. 32, 71, 81.
[557] Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, p. 220.
[558] See, for example, Gretchen Busl, 'Drag's Double Inversion: Insufficient Language and Gender Performativity in *The Well of Loneliness* and *Nightwood*', *English Studies,* 98 (2017), pp. 310-23.
[559] Hannah Roche, *The Outside Thing: Modernist Lesbian Romance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), p. 8.
[560] Quoted in Ellis and Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, p. 202.
[561] Ibid. pp. 176, 67. This suggestion is made by Chiara Beccalossi, *Female Sexual Inversion: Same-Sex Desires in Italian and British Sexology, C. 1870-1920* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 194.
[562] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, pp. 71-72.

Roche demonstrates, nevertheless, modernist writers such as Hall herself, as well as Virginia Woolf in *Orlando* (1928), evidence the way sexuality was becoming 'distinct from gender difference'.[563] In light of these early twentieth-century configurations of gender and sexuality, I adopt the gendered terms used by these modernist writers in their explorations of same-sex desire.

Prediscursive kissing, or, the young Stephen Gordon before theory

The early parts of *The Well of Loneliness*, in which the young Stephen Gordon becomes aware of her attraction to women and experiences her first romantically-charged kiss from Collins, has received considerably less critical attention than the post-adolescent sections.[564] Yet long before her father's death and the discovery of her name written in the margins of *Psychopathia Sexualis,* the reader has an insight into Stephen's perceptions of the world at a point at which they are not framed by theories of inversion or other specific discourses. The kisses in this text can be illuminated when read as an exploration of feminine subjective experience akin to the process of *epoché*, that bracketing of 'discursive knowledge' or 'transcendent reference'.[565] The idea of feminine subjective experience suggests a specificity not accounted for in the male phenomenological ideas contemporary to Hall. Irigaray argues that 'any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the "masculine"'; when a woman 'submits to (such a) theory, [she] fails to realize that she is renouncing the specificity of her own relationship to the imaginary.'[566] In other words, while male theories about

[563] Roche, *The Outside Thing*, p. 7.
[564] Sarah E. Chinn has explicitly argued that the late section of the novel in 'Tenerife is the only possible site for the expression of an untroubled lesbian sexuality': Sarah E. Chinn, '"Something Primitive and Age-Old as Nature Herself": Lesbian Sexuality and the Permission of the Exotic', in *Palatable Poison: Critical Perspectives on the Well of Loneliness,* ed. by Laura Doan and Jay Prosser (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 300-15 (p. 301).
[565] Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, p. 47.
[566] Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman,* trans. Gillian Gill (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 133.

women dominate phenomenological discourse, a woman's subjectivity – that is, her capacity to perceive and represent this perception – becomes regarded as an impossibility. While Irigaray asks her reader to imagine the subjectivity of a woman before it is subsumed by theory, we can suppose that this step towards reinscribing one's own relationship to the imaginary had already begun in the processes of writing literature that explores a pre-theoretical way of being-in-the-world.[567] Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* illustrates 'moment[s] of prediscursive experience' that find expression in female kisses.[568]

When writing Stephen as a child, Hall literally, chronologically, and phenomenologically situates the narrative in a pre-theoretical attitude:

> At about this time Stephen first became conscious of an urgent necessity to love. She adored her father, but that was quite different; he was part of herself, he had always been there, she could not envision the world without him – it was other with Collins, the housemaid.[569]

In this early passage, Hall establishes romantic (even sexual) development as a passing from the love of a parent to the 'urgent necessity to love' a potential partner. Read at face value, this rehearses a familiar story at the intersection of modernism and psychoanalysis. In Sigmund Freud's case study of a homosexual woman, he attributes her attraction to women to 'her infantile Oedipus complex' in which the disappointment of not having her father's child causes her to turn 'away from her father and from men altogether.'[570] Ahmed has used this case study – objectionable as it is, since it supposes homosexual desire as a result of

[567] Elsa Högberg contends via Irigaray that there is a 'deep historical genealogy of thought, in which contemporary theories of intimacy are very much a legacy of modernist configurations of intimacy': Högberg, *Virginia Woolf and the Ethics of Intimacy*, p. 56. For more on the relationship between literature, phenomenology and imagination, see Jonsson, *Relations: Ethics and the Modernist Subject*, pp. 19-20.
[568] Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, p. 127.
[569] Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, p. 9.
[570] Sigmund Freud, 'The Pyschogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman' (1920), quoted in Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, pp. 75-76.

heterosexual trauma – to discuss the way family bonds are formed by their shared orientations towards the family line, that is, the heterosexual 'straight line'.[571] When read through the lens of phenomenology rather than Freudian psychoanalysis, however, a seemingly nondescript part of this passage stands out, in which the narrator acknowledges that Stephen's father 'had always been there'. The short clause is embedded in a quick succession of statements that dismiss the significance of her paternal adoration – 'that was quite different; he was part of herself, he had always been there' – tempting the reader to glance past these clauses towards the em-dash at the end of the sentence which at last shows us the direction (orientation, even) of Stephen's love: 'it was other with Collins'. Through these quick statements, Hall sketches a bland familial scheme in which the father emblematises what is familiar to Stephen, so much so that 'she could not envision the world without him'. And yet, by the end of the sentence, Hall puts aside this familiar scenario and turns the narrative to Collins. We might say that Hall has 'bracketed' (or, to be true to the punctuation, dashed) the familiar in order to turn to that which Stephens perceives. In 'When Our Lips Speak Together', Irigaray's narrator asks her addressee to do just that: not to be 'absorbed into the old scenarios, the redundant phrases, the familiar gestures'; to 'be attentive to yourself. To me.'[572] Hall, in this passage, piles 'redundant phrases' together with the effect of showing the reader these 'old scenarios', then suspends Stephen's absorption with the familiar to perceive Collins. It is telling, too, that Hall lands upon this word 'other', emphasising Stephen's developing sense of her own subjectivity in relation to an 'other' that she perceives. She becomes attentive to her perception of a woman, which disconnects her from the familiar background of heterosexual patriarchy.

[571] Ibid. p. 78.
[572] Irigaray, 'When Our Lips Speak Together', p. 70.

As Stephen's attachment to Collins grows, the reader is given the opportunity to bask in her joy in a brief moment of reciprocity:

> And as Stephen looked doubtfully up into her face, Collins suddenly stooped and kissed her.
> Stephen stood speechless from a sheer sense of joy, all her doubts swept completely away. At that moment she knew nothing but beauty and Collins, and the two were as one, and the one was Stephen – and yet not Stephen either, but something more vast, that the mind of seven years found no name for.[573]

Immediately, Hall alerts the reader to pay heed to the intersubjective import of this encounter, as the sentence passes from Stephen as perceiving subject ('Stephen looked') to Collins as perceiving subject (Collins 'kissed her'). What follows is an extension of the bracketing that has previously occurred when Stephen mentally sets aside her father to focus attention on Collins. The kiss sweeps away Stephen's doubts and places before her only 'beauty and Collins' and her own self, which become as tangled as Nora and Robin's lips in *Nightwood*. The kiss removes Stephen from 'old scenarios' and 'familiar gestures' and focuses her on 'nothing but' what is in her perceptive field. This experience is something that 'the mind of seven years found no name for'. Just like the young Stephen Dedalus asking what a kiss means in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) (see Introduction), Hall's emphasis on Stephen Gordon's age is significant, since the seven-year-old with no name for what they experience is a fascinating choice of subject when writing from a prediscursive stance. Childhood in this moment magnifies the sense of wonder that Stephen clearly feels for her experience: she is 'speechless', made small as she contemplates 'something more vast' than herself. Much like Molly in *Ulysses* (1922), 'it never entered [Stephen's] head what kissing meant' until Collins kisses her for the first time, and their kisses share a preoccupation with the 'this-here' of experience which fills them with wonder.[574] Stephen's wonder underpins

[573] Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, p. 11.
[574] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 625.

Hall's choice to turn to the kiss to explore the perception of the world, the kiss being something in literature that is rarely embedded within the mere background, though its ubiquity has led it to be taken for granted.

The kiss as foreground of experience is subverted later in *The Well of Loneliness* in a manner that sharpens the significance of Stephen's wonder at the kiss as a child. When she lives in Paris as a young adult and mixes with fellow queer women of the Left Bank, she frequents a stuffy bar, Le Narcisse (noting the subversive reference to the tropes of homosexuality and narcissism), filled with those who have strayed from compulsory heterosexuality and bear the social burdens of doing so. The background kisses between bar-goers at this point are tired and jarring: '[l]ips drooped, mouths sagged, heads lay upon shoulders – there was kissing, much kissing at a table in the corner.'[575] Hall in this passage examines the accumulated pressures on the body of the female 'invert' attempting to live in a society that dictates loneliness to such a person. As Ahmed says, 'it is the very social and existential experience of loneliness that compels the lesbian body to extend into other kinds of space', and Hall presents us with the strains of these spatial extensions.[576] The kissers in the bar are not shown to feel wonder, and their sagging facial skin caricatures the ageing process in a grotesque fashion. In contrast, the young Stephen reels at the experience of the kiss, and the beauty of the moment is emphasised.

To create this effect of Stephen reeling with joy, Hall's writing after Collins kisses her is suitably enigmatic: 'she knew nothing but beauty and Collins, and the two were as one, and the one was Stephen – and yet not Stephen either, but something more vast'. The rhythm

[575] Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, p. 426.
[576] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 105.

recalls the first three clauses of the Gospel of John: '[i]n the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, the Word Was God.'[577] Indeed, the New Testament is a formative text for Stephen in her childhood. Hall's rhythmic recollection of John (a name Hall in fact often went by) imbues this kiss with the Gospel's sense of wonder towards 'something more vast'.[578] Ariane Mildenberg identifies a similar sense of wonder in Woolf's *The Waves* (1931) when Percival dies and Bernard's baby is born, 'leaving Bernard feeling like a latter-day Adam in a new world, overwhelmed with *wonder* "as on the first day of creation"' [emphasis added].[579] This suggests that, for both Woolf and Hall, dwelling on Christian notions of creation is a generative entryway for considering prediscursive experience. Though without the religious foundation, Irigaray, too, explores the kiss between women as an interaction imbued with wonder at the vastness of the world: '[y]ou kiss me, and the world enlarges until the horizon vanishes.'[580] Irigaray and Hall both construct a particular topology of these osculatory interactions. For Irigaray, the 'horizon vanishes'; for Stephen, the world is made 'vast' (though Collins 'stoop[s]', another example of a 'swoon of motion' as discussed in Chapter One). In each case, there is a suggestion of a kind of horizontal geography of desire, without privileging one thing or another. The horizontal organisation of desire in *The Well of Loneliness* resonates with the wonder that phenomenology embraces, in which there is not mastery but 'something more vast'.

This kiss does contain elements of uncomfortable and yet fluid power dynamics. There is, most obviously, a significant class difference between Collins and Stephen. In the 1920s there was a surge of public concern among the upper and middle classes that 'female inversion' was spreading, disease-like, from working-class women. Several medical

[577] John 1. 1.
[578] Cline, *A Woman Called John*, p. 4.
[579] Mildenberg, *Modernism and Phenomenology*, p. 118.
[580] Irigaray, 'When Our Lips Speak Together', p. 73.

publications from the 1890s had concluded that 'inversion' was common among, or could be traced back to, servants in large households, and in the Spring of 1921, these concerns transitioned from the scientific to the political arena.[581] When the House of Commons debated whether to criminalise 'acts of gross indecency' between women, one of the topics of debate was the fear that 'inversion', unlike prostitution, could target their educated, middle-class daughters and wives.[582] Class difference hence would have had a particular anxious currency for contemporary middle-class readers aware of sexological writings or legal proceedings surrounding female same-sex acts. On the other hand, to borrow phrasing from Ellis, Stephen belongs to 'the upper tanks', with 'much greater liberty of action, and much greater freedom from prejudices' than Collins.[583] This greater liberty of sexual expression for middle-class women is indeed a point upon which many modernist critics have commented.[584] *The Well of Loneliness* itself, as Medd reminds us, 'was consciously marketed as a serious work for a respectable middle-class readership.'[585] Depending on the reader, class difference hence either signifies Stephen as a victim of a spread of homosexual behaviour or a liberated girl in a position of power over Collins' livelihood. The age difference between the women in this encounter also raises questions about power. This is a juvenile kiss: Stephen, who is initially doubtful, receives a kiss from an older woman. Hall's intersubjective representation, however, suggests that there is a reciprocated sentiment though Collins is the kisser and Stephen is the kissed. As I have said, the subject moves from Stephen as the seer, to Collins as the kisser, to Stephens again, flooded with a 'sheer sense of

[581] Lawson Tait, 'Diseases of Women and Surgery', quoted in Beccalossi, *Female Sexual Inversion*, p. 110; Ellis and Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, p. 164.
[582] In an impassioned speech, Frederick Macquinsten, M.P., implored the House to 'stamp out an evil which is capable of sapping the highest and the best in civilisation': quoted in Medd, *Lesbian Scandal and the Culture of Modernism*, pp. 103-04.
[583] Ellis and Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, p. 165.
[584] See: Madelyn Detloff, 'Modern Times, Modernist Writing, Modern Sexualities', in *The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature,* ed. by Jodie Medd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 139-53 (pp. 141-2); Liggins, *Odd Women?*, p. 11; Laura Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. xvii-xix.
[585] Medd, *Lesbian Scandal and the Culture of Modernism*, p. 162.

joy'. Reading Hall via Irigaray suggests that phenomenology might offer a framework when it comes to urgent questions surrounding consent. I return to this suggestion in the Conclusion.

Since the kiss between Collins and Stephen is not one to which critics have paid much attention, several have suggested that there is little sexual intimacy in *The Well of Loneliness*.[586] The novel itself contributes to the diminishment of these early kisses: when Stephen threatens to reveal her affair with Angela Crossby to Angela's husband, Ralph, Angela replies that 'there's nothing to tell him, beyond a few schoolgirlish kisses'.[587] Dismissals of the kiss between young women and girls, as alluded to in the Introduction, can also be found in sexological theory. In *Sexual Inversion*, Ellis acknowledges that attempts 'to develop the sexual feeling by close embraces and kissing' are 'more common among girls than boys' but deems such forms of intimacy as only a 'rudimentary kind of homosexual relationship'.[588] Ellis explicitly genders his view of the kiss: it is apparently something girlish, not to be taken seriously, if we were to follow patriarchal logic and conflate those two notions. However, in keeping with this pre-theoretical chronology of *The Well of Loneliness*, Hall takes notice of the 'rudimentary' in her writing. Taking notice of the 'rudimentary' could be said to restore wonder to perception. In contrast, taking notice of what they perceive is something that Ellis believes that girls 'develop[ing] their sexual feelings' do not do: he argues that though girls might experience the physical effects of 'the sexual impulse, […]

[586] Chinn argues that '[t]here is the fetishistic worship of the housemaid Collins by a six-year-old Stephen Gordon, some fevered kissing (but not more) between teenage Stephen and Angela Crossby, and some rather more restrained kisses bestowed by Stephen on Mary Llewellyn until the fateful night': Chinn, 'Lesbian Sexuality and the Permission of the Exotic', p. 300. Diana Collecott states that 'kissing is the most sexually explicit motif' in a dismissal of its significance: Diana Collecott, *H.D. And Sapphic Modernism: 1910-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 174. Catharine Stimpson also slightly dismisses the role of the kiss in the novel, commenting upon Angela and Stephen sharing 'a few of those conventional kisses': Catharine Stimpson, 'Zero Degree Deviancy: The Lesbian Novel in English', in *Where the Meanings Are: Feminism and Cultural Spaces* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1988), pp. 97-110 (p. 102).
[587] Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, p. 159.
[588] Ellis and Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, p. 165.

little or no attention may be paid to this phenomenon.'[589] To Ellis, young girls kiss each other immaturely, and pay no attention to phenomena. Hall, however, takes the girlish kiss seriously in her writing.

Intense attention to subjectivity is a conspicuous feature of modernism to a parodied extent. D. H. Lawrence famously quips, '[d]id I feel a twinge in my little toe, or didn't I?' when discussing the preoccupations of contemporary novels.[590] For all its vulnerability to parody, however, Hall's own stake in broader modernist concerns with subjectivity and the body (what we feel and how we feel it) draws attention to how women and girls – particularly queer women and girls – have been marginalised in writing on perception, and how fiction does the work of rectification. Ellis' writing provides a window into how, as Foo argues, 'perception is continually shaped by hegemonic rules of organisation'. When Collins kisses Stephen, Hall's writing does not 'submit to theory', or 'renounc[e] the specificity of her own relationship to the imaginary'. We recall that, after Irigaray urges her female reader not to be absorbed into 'old scenarios' and 'familiar gestures', she writes: '[t]ry to be attentive to yourself. To me.'[591] While Ellis' theoretical girl pays 'little or no attention' to a 'phenomenon', Irigaray's phenomenology (which, by definition, is about paying attention to a phenomenon) imagines a way for women or girls to take notice of themselves and the women they perceive. The kiss between Collins and Stephen provides an alternative to the negative coding of girlhood and 'ignorance'. Hall reframes the possibilities of the way a young 'female invert' might relate to her own subjectivity: that is, through wonder, and imagination. From Hall's writing we can reorientate the way phenomenology enriches our

[589] Ibid.
[590] D. H. Lawrence, 'The Future of the Novel [Surgery for the Novel – or a Bomb]', in *Study of Thomas Hardy*, pp. 149-55 (p. 151).
[591] Irigaray, 'When Our Lips Speak Together', 70.

approach to modernist writing and trace the narrative strategies of women writing and living outside the 'straight lines' of heterosexist patriarchy.

On repetition and reorientation

Stephen's growing attachment to Collins can be characterised by acts of repetition. Falling into lonely, pensive moods, Stephen spends her evenings reading the *Child's Book of Scripture Stories* and is struck by the picture of Jesus on the cross accompanying the doctrine that 'Jesus had chosen to bear pain for sinners'.[592] This gives her the idea to pray to take on the suffering of Collins' housemaid's knee (painful inflammation caused by too much kneeling):

> This petition she repeated until she fell asleep, to dream that in some queer way she was Jesus, and that Collins was kneeling and kissing her hand, because she, Stephen, had managed to cure her by cutting off her knee with a bone paper-knife and grafting it on to her own.[593]

Stephen's 'repeated' prayer leads to a rather grotesque vision of empathy: she desires an exchange of skin in order to feel what Collins feels, with the kiss as her reward. The improbability of this scenario in the world that Stephen occupies is reinforced by its being made possible in a dream. Ahmed argues that, for human interaction to occur, bodies must be orientated towards each other (by directing attention or speech or touch). Our orientations, Ahmed writes, 'are about the direction we take that puts some things and not others in our reach.'[594] Within historical systems of compulsory heterosexuality, such that govern the 'well of loneliness' in which Stephen lives, people acquire an orientation towards heterosexual love objects amid a background of emblems of heterosexual life. To express a different 'sexual

[592] Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, p. 14.
[593] Ibid. p. 15.
[594] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 56.

orientation', one must break away from 'norms or habits' and reorientate oneself.[595] For Ahmed, repetition is the basis of orientation. We 'acquire orientation through the repetitions of some actions over others'.[596] In this passage, Stephen enacts a new kind of repetition in order to break away from another repetition: old, redundant, familiar.

While Collins is an object of Stephen's perception, Stephen is so attentive to Collins' subjectivity that she desires not to project her own onto Collins, but to graft Collins' subjectivity onto herself. The intersubjective import of grafting another person's knee onto one's own is mediated by Stephen's 'queer' identification with Jesus. Her intense reaction to the miracles recorded in the New Testament reinforces the idea that her wonder at Collins' kiss recalls creation as told in John's Gospel. The repetitions enacted by Stephen compound themselves. She repeatedly prays for an affliction caused by the repetition of kneeling. Ahmed argues that 'bodies take the shape of norms that are repeated over time' (we might think of repetitive strain injury, or stooping, or the lump on a finger caused by a pen), and Collins' 'blotchy and swollen' knee is shaped by the class-dictated 'norm' of polishing the floors of Morton.[597] The fluid filling Collins' knee externalises the meagre choices of labour for working-class women. Furthermore, the bone paper-knife that Stephen uses in the dream points to a history of work that links her aristocratic object-world to imperialism and the violent plunder of natural resources. This dreamt rupture of the skin, however, attempts to stall the harsh effects of repetition not just by interrupting the norms of domestic service, but by acquiring new forms of repetition that direct attention towards a female object-choice. Stephen's petitions to Jesus are such that her act of directing attention towards Collins is 'repeated'. She then dreams of Collins 'kneeling' again, not to polish a floor, but in the act of

[595] Ibid. p. 90.
[596] Ibid. pp. 56-58.
[597] Ibid. p. 91; Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, p. 14.

'kissing her hand'. The form of repetition that Stephen practises is an attempt to put Collins within reach. This is not a prayer or a fantasy authorised by the interlinked institutions of Christianity, patriarchy and heterosexuality. In Stephen's dream, their norms and habits are forgone. While in their first kiss, Stephen brackets out the old and familiar, in her dream, their kiss allows her to orientate herself away from 'old scenarios'.

One of the 'really catastrophic' moments in Stephen's childhood is when she witnesses the footman Henry kissing Collins.[598] Her attachment to Collins is interrupted by aggressive heterosexuality, 'for Henry caught Collins roughly by the wrists, and dragged her towards him, still handling her roughly, and he kissed her full on the lips.'[599] Again, the consensual nature of this encounter is questionable. Stephen's reaction is also violent: 'the very next moment she had seized a broken flower pot and hurled it hard and straight at the footman. It struck him in the face, cutting open his cheek'.[600] The cut skin is a harsh reality that distorts Stephen's dream to cut her own knee in service to Collins. While Stephen's dream attempts to put Collins within reach, this time a weapon (per se) is within reach for Stephen to express her rage towards male interruption. She breaks apart this 'old scenario' of a man initiating a heterosexual coupling by kissing a woman. Irigaray has a clear sense of the (often violent) heterosexual scenarios that have been endured through time, and she notes that women 'have been destined to reproduce – that sameness in which, for centuries, we have been the other.'[601] That is, women have been rendered others, not subjects, within heterosexual structures that demand pre-marital courting followed by reproduction. Stephen throwing the pot presents us with a rebellion against these structures, and a phenomenological reading of this part of the novel allows us to see how Hall frames Stephen's orientations, leading to an

[598] Ibid p. 22.
[599] Ibid. pp. 21-22.
[600] Ibid. p. 22.
[601] Irigaray, 'When Our Lips Speak Together', p. 71.

object-as-weapon being on-hand in a moment of crisis. It is significant, too, that it is a flower pot that Stephen uses, given that what Diana Collecott calls the 'floral lexicon' is so associated with the poet Sappho of Lesbos for modernist writers.[602] Henry's kiss initiates a reaction to the traumatic interruption of a man within the queer female narrative, a narrative in which Hall orientates Stephen towards Collins and places her near objects that she can throw back at such a kiss.

Stephen's violent reaction to a heterosexual kiss presents the reader with some of that panic that Nora feels in *Nightwood*: '[a] man is another person – a women is yourself, caught as you turn in panic; on her mouth you kiss your own.'[603] In each case, there is a traumatic interruption of a man – 'another person' – in a romantic female narrative. For Stephen, a broken flower pot is grabbed as she turns from a kiss; for Nora, a kiss itself meets her as she tries to catch hold of something. The disturbance of male presence amid female eroticism is of frequent concern in Irigaray's writings. She explicitly worries whether 'women who are "among-themselves-under-his-watchful-eye" behave as they do among themselves'.[604] Stephen desperately attempts to break out of intruded-upon female scenarios in *The Well of Loneliness*. In *Nightwood* we similarly see how phenomenologically-aligned narrative strategies play out when women write the kiss between women to imagine perception outside of heterosexist patriarchy. When Nora recounts turning to kiss Robin, we are disorientated; on seeing a man, she 'turn[s] in panic' towards a woman. More accurately than saying this is

[602] Collecott, *H.D. And Sapphic Modernism*, p. 215. Hall constantly uses a 'floral lexicon' to give expression to Stephen's feelings for women. Angela is described as 'like some queer flower that had grown up in darkness, like some rare, pale flower without blemish or stain'; a rose falls apart on the desk before Stephen kisses Mary for the first time, 'its overblown petals disturbed'; the novel is full of rose gardens as background for romantic encounters: Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, pp. 139, 152, 168, 328, 344.
[603] Barnes, *Nightwood*, p. 129.
[604] Luce Irigaray, '"Frenchwomen," Stop Trying', in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, pp. 198-204 (p. 200).

*dis*orientating, Nora is *re*orientating herself, directing herself towards a woman and away from a man.

Nora's kiss with Robin only occurs once she decides to turn away from the man before her. One of Husserl's many contributions to phenomenological thought is his idea of 'twofold directedness' in object perception: firstly, we are directed towards an object when we perceive it; secondly, we take a direction towards this object, negatively or positively. For example, 'in acts of love [we turn] to the beloved'.[605] The volume in which Husserl wrote this idea was, by the time of *Nightwood*'s publication, recently published in English (1931).[606] For Ahmed, 'twofold directedness' has queer stakes. Sexuality is not just about who or what we perceive, but the directions that we take when we perceive them. The man in front of Nora is a heterosexual love object, but Nora turns away from this well-trodden path. She does not repeat the action that has been dictated through time: that is, directing herself towards a man. Those centuries worth of heterosexual structures weigh heavily on *Nightwood*, particularly when Barnes explores the strain of reproduction. When Robin is pregnant, near the beginning, 'the consequence to which her son was to be born and dedicated' creates a weight in her mind commensurate with the weight of her pregnant, 'heavy body'; as relief, '[s]he wandered to thoughts of women, women she had come to connect with women.'[607] When describing her kiss with Robin, Nora turns in the same direction. Furthermore, we see in the incidental nature of Robin being 'caught' as Nora turns how sexual orientation is not just about the object choice but 'how one "faces" the world or is directed toward it.'[608] Nora spins around, orientates herself, and incidentally catches the

[605] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013 [1913]), p. 122.
[606] It was originally published in German in 1913.
[607] Barnes, *Nightwood*, p. 42.
[608] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 68.

woman she perceives there. Ursula Brangwen also catches a hand to her mouth in *The Rainbow* (1915), suggesting that proprioception's role of orientating our body in space can be thought of in terms of sexual orientation, too (see Chapter One).[609] Ahmed contends that a 'queer phenomenology […] might be one that faces the back', and indeed, Nora turns in panic from the heterosexual course and perceives a woman, culminating in this kiss in which she kisses her own mouth.[610] Once again, a woman reorientates herself. As such, something or someone is put within reach that is outside the heterosexual structure: Stephen dreams of exchanging her knee with Collins and being kissed in return, and Nora recounts her strange perceptions of Robin's mouth as her own. Through the kisses in these novels we find traces of imbuing phenomenologically-aligned writing with queer female specificity.

Kissing and folding in *Dusty Answer*

When Nora kisses her own mouth on Robin's, Barnes does not just collapse the distinction between subject and object. The reader is left to question whether Nora is both subject and object, or neither. Irigaray's comparison of joined hands with 'the touching of the lips silently applied upon one another' resonates with the kiss in *Nightwood*.[611] By considering the cases of joined hands and lips, Irigaray rejects Merleau-Ponty's notion of the chiasm, which retains the polarity between subject/object and active/passive and privileges a return to the former.[612] In the case of neutrally applied hands and lips, in contrast, neither one is 'taking hold of the other'; instead they frame a 'phenomenology of the passage between interior and exterior'.[613] That is, they constitute an experience with an unfixed order of perceiver and perceived, in a

[609] Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, p. 284.
[610] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 29.
[611] Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, p. 135.
[612] Ibid. p. 129.
[613] Ibid. p. 135.

perpetual transit between the two. We can conceptualise this phenomenological passage that appears often in Irigaray's oeuvre as a form of 'folding': a way of thinking of something in a 'passage between interior and exterior'. In folding, something turns back on itself, making its exterior an interior, eventually touching itself. The order of what is internal and external in a fold is not fixed, but in 'the passage between interior and exterior' in processes of folding and unfolding. In intimate moments between the women in Irigaray's writing – kissing, clasping hands – there is a folded collapse between inside and outside that does not privilege one subject or the other. The fold, rather than the reversal, best captures the forms of intimacy written by the women under discussion in this chapter, in that it offers a departure from forms of 'mastery' and 'polarity' compatible with patriarchal conceptualisations of sexuality.

Lehmann uses the language of folding in the Cambridge portion of *Dusty Answer*, culminating in several kisses between Judith and Jennifer. Throughout their narrative arc, Lehmann constantly directs the narrative towards their experiences of perceiving one another. We see this early in their romance just after Judith has discovered that Roddy, her childhood friend and romantic tormenter, has visited Cambridge without seeing her. On sensing Judith's hurt, Jennifer, with her hands 'clasped […] round Judith's face, gazing at her', promises to kill any man with whom Judith falls in love.[614] She professes to Judith: '"I love you." And at those words, that look, Roddy faded again harmlessly: Jennifer blinded and *enfolded* her senses once more' [emphasis added].[615] An image of folding is enacted through the senses and by a refusal of the heterosexual object-choice. To be more accurate, Judith's senses are '*en*folded' rather than simply 'folded'. The meaning of the word 'enfold' as to 'surround' or 'envelope' conveys that Jennifer occupies all of Judith's remaining senses, but the import of

[614] Lehmann, *Dusty Answer*, p. 129.
[615] Ibid. p. 130.

this word is a more phenomenologically-aligned way of conceptualising these women's way of being-in-the-world.[616] The prefix 'en-' (identical in use to the Latin 'in-', formed with verbs to add the notion of 'within' or 'into') denotes an inward trajectory of the senses.[617] As such, in this scene, Jennifer and Judith are directed outwards towards each other, but Judith's perceptions also become directed inward. We are reminded of Husserl's concept of 'twofold directedness'. In using the word 'enfolded', Lehmann offers us the bare bones of an idea: that in Judith and Jennifer's intense, intimate encounter, their sensory mode of perception brackets the world beyond them and, in directing itself outwards, folds itself inwards.

This runs counter to zero-sum sexuality that evolves from patriarchal logic.[618] With her face clasped by Jennifer, Judith's senses are directed inwards, not giving Jennifer anything but experiencing something in herself. In contrast, Roddy comments that Judith's 'thin and narrow' hands 'seem to go to nothing' when he takes hold of them.[619] This epitomises Irigaray's concerns in her poetic insistence that 'you don't "give" me anything when you touch yourself, when you touch me: you touch yourself through me.'[620] When a woman is intimate with another woman in these texts, that perception is folded inwards. This model of intimacy also shapes the kiss in *Nightwood*, in which Nora kisses her own lips on Robin's. In this encounter between Judith and Jennifer, the narrative passes through blindness to reach this fold. In Chapter Two I discussed the significance of blindness to philosophies of touch, but the blinding in *Dusty Answer* does something other than recall these philosophies. In a visual sense, it is a form of bracketing, in that it suspends the outside world from the visual

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[616] 'Enfold', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/62151 > [accessed 28 October 2021].
[617] 'En-', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/61499> [accessed 28 October 2021].
[618] Laura Frost has recently argued along similar lines, suggesting that '[t]he men in *Lady Chatterly['s Lover]* are openly hostile about the women's attempts to achieve orgasm, as if pleasure is a zero sum game': Laura Frost, 'Stories of O: Modernism and Female Pleasure', in *Modernist Intimacies,* ed. Högberg, pp. 31-51 (p. 45).
[619] Lehmann, *Dusty Answer*, p. 148.
[620] Irigaray, 'This Sex Which Is Not One', p. 70.

field, and leaves Judith to perceive with her other senses. Tellingly, a less-used definition of the word 'fold' is 'to clasp (one's hands) together' or 'to clasp (in one's arms); to embrace', meaning that Jennifer's 'clasped' hands around Judith's face are in fact in a fold that doubles Judith's 'enfolded' senses.[621] Lehmann portrays 'folded' hands again later, another time that Jennifer declares her love for Judith. This time, Jennifer sits 'back in her chair, her arms laid along her lap, her hands folded together'.[622] Her folded hands might relate to passivity or politeness, but such qualities are incompatible with Lehmann's general characterisation of Jennifer. These hands, instead, sit without one taking hold of the other, like the image of lips applied silently together.

Later, Lehmann unpacks this idea with beautiful simplicity when Judith and Jennifer go up the river together to enjoy a May afternoon:

> Judith crept closer, warming every sense at her; silent and entirely peaceful. She was the part of you which you never had been able to untie and set free […] and turned you inwards to grope among the roots of thought and feeling for the threads.[623]

Lehmann puts Judith's 'enfolded' senses through a kind of narrative distillation, in that she extracts and lays out its essential meaning. Judith warms her senses by directing outward, moving 'closer' to Jennifer, and then explicitly turns 'inwards'. This might be read as a form of cerebral retreat – in line with old configurations of modernism as engaged with 'contemplative withdrawal' – but what Lehmann constructs is not simply a turn of the mind ('thought') but a fold of the body's perceptions ('feeling').[624] Intriguingly, turning inwards was part of the formulation of same-sex desire that was disseminated prior to the publication of *Dusty Answer*: Ellis writes of 'the *turning in* of the sexual instinct *towards* persons of the

[621] 'Fold', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], < https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/72479> [accessed 28 October 2021].
[622] Lehmann, *Dusty Answer*, p. 154.
[623] Ibid. p. 137.
[624] Henderson, *The Novel Today*, p. 103.

same sex' [emphasis added] – though it should be acknowledged that, as Ahmed has shown, '[t]his association between homosexuality and sameness is crucial to the pathologizing of homosexuality as a perversion that leads the body astray'.[625] Lehmann would have been aware of the trope of theorising sexual '*in*version' with the prefix 'in' – recalling her use of the prefix 'en-' – and she develops her own conceptualisation of an inward turn 'towards' something. Judith's perceptions in the above scene are in a passage both towards Jennifer and inwards. These folds in *Dusty Answer* present a phenomenologically-aligned representation of two female subjects encountering one another romantically. There is not that construction in which one gives and the other gets: Judith's senses are heightened and warmed next to Jennifer, another rich and complex subject.

This is thrown into sharper relief shortly after the May trips along the river when, for the first time, Lehmann shows us a brief kiss between Judith and Jennifer. Judith returns from her drive with Roddy (see Chapter One) and when he leaves her in her room, there is a moment of transition. She begins to find the 'trivial femininities of the room […] graceful' again, and Jennifer enters to carry her 'in her arms' to bed. Struck by the easiness of the moment, Judith observes 'Jennifer laughing, talking, letting the eggs get burnt while she did her hair; bending down finally to kiss you a tender good night.'[626] With Roddy gone, these women 'behave as they do among themselves'.[627] While Lehmann has explored a folded structure of intimacy in Judith and Jennifer's interactions in their rooms in Girton, and by the river in May, the folded structure culminates in this kiss. Jennifer bends downwards, folding her body, and in her touch there is another turn inwards, as the narrative passes to Judith feeling its tenderness. That transition from third to second person, again, creates a fold in a narrative directed both

[625] Ellis and Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, p. 94; Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 96.
[626] Lehmann, *Dusty Answer*, p. 152.
[627] Irigaray, '"Frenchwomen," Stop Trying', p. 200.

inwards and outwards. This kiss is quite different to Stephen's sense of wonder when Collins bends down to kiss her in *The Well of Loneliness*. For Judith, the wonder stems from the familiarity of the moment after Roddy's presence has disturbed her sense of the quotidian. Notwithstanding its resonances with that 'delicious swoon of motion' discussed in Chapter One, in Lehmann's writing, kissing becomes a bodily interaction involving two subjects where this fold plays out in narrative form.

The kiss between Judith and Jennifer has an almost protective quality. Judith submits to be looked after in this feminine space after Roddy has left, and they share a kiss in a room no longer disturbed by a male presence, and hence without the kind of violence or panic presented in *Nightwood* and *The Well of Loneliness*. The kiss, with its reciprocal structure, has a particular currency in interactions such as this. In 'When Our Lips Speak Together', Irigaray writes: '[t]wo lips kiss two lips, and openness is ours again. Our "world." Between us, the movement from inside to outside, from outside to inside, knows no limits.'[628] Between two kissing women, Irigaray theorises a seamless, perpetual transit between the position of subject and object. The theoretical women in this kiss occupy a 'world' that becomes theirs, presumably without male intrusion (though there are limitations to a suggestion that women would enjoy freedom, authenticity and safety in a shared world, since this overlooks forms of oppression such as racism, classism and transphobia). Intersubjectivity in Irigaray's writing has a similarly protective quality to that found in *Dusty Answer*. Between Judith and Jennifer, that fold, that 'movement from inside to outside, from outside to inside', exists as a literary example of the female encounters that Irigaray theorises without patriarchal intrusion. Lehmann's and other modernist women's writing demonstrates the possibilities of orientating phenomenology away from 'straight' behaviours dictated by patriarchy, and hence the

[628] Irigaray, 'When Our Lips Speak Together', p. 73.

narrative strategies of formulating a way of 'being-in-the-world' for women become apparent – in particular, women who want to kiss other women.

Lehmann, whose (seeming) 'heterosexuality has ensured [*Dusty Answer*'s] omission from accounts of the lesbian novel', is not necessarily a champion for queer femininity.[629] On one hand, as Emma Liggins has argued, the novel exhibits a satisfying 'disruption of the heterosexual plot'.[630] On the other hand, Lehmann was rather mocking when it came to the possibility of such disruption in her own life. In her later-life memoir, she writes that, in response to *Dusty Answer*, '[m]ore than one Lesbian lady urged me to abandon my so obviously frustrated heterosexual life and share her hearth and home.'[631] Her apathy alerts us to the privilege of a white cisgender woman with money to tell one queer story but mock another. That said, what Judith and Jennifer's intimacy does offer is a way to put phenomenology in touch with the modernist kiss in order to trace women's narrative strategies for imagining themselves and each other as subjects in the world. When Judith and Jennifer say an intense goodbye before Jennifer drops out of Girton, in a manner that echoes the scene in which she clasps Judith's face, Judith's arm becomes the part of her body to which Jennifer pays particular attention:

> She put her face against Judith's arm, and the desperate pressure of her eyes, nose, lips upon the bare flesh was strange and breath-taking. Her lips searched blindly over wrist and forearm into the hollow of the elbow where they paused and parted; and Judith felt the faint and quivering touch of her teeth…[632]

This passage presents us with an image of a fold. A fold is not simply a useful concept for philosophical problems but also a natural phenomenon occurring on the skin. Irigaray

[629] Liggins, *Odd Women?*, p. 175.
[630] Ibid.
[631] Rosamond Lehmann, *The Swan in the Evening: Fragments of an Inner Life* (London: Collins, 1967), p. 66.
[632] Lehmann, *Dusty Answer*, p. 177.

provides a potent example in her configuration of the vulva 'formed of two lips in continuous contact'.[633] This 'hollow of the elbow' in *Dusty Answer* is another example of skin which exists in a fold, in that 'passage between interior and exterior'. When the arm, extended outwards, is folded back at the hollow so that the wrist can eventually touch the bicep, external skin is also internal skin. Jennifer then parts her lips on the 'hollow' such that Judith feels her teeth. Lehmann illustrates a pair of lips folded back and applied over that part of the arm which folds and makes the exterior interior. Just like in their kiss when Jennifer helps Judith to get ready for bed, the narrative passes from what Jennifer perceives to what Judith perceives, and hence the reader is presented with both perceiving subjects (Jennifer's lips search; Judith feels a touch on the hollow of her elbow) and perceived objects (Jennifer's 'eyes, nose, lips' and eventually teeth are felt; the 'bare flesh' of Judith's arm is felt). In these folds of the arm and lips, there is no distinct polarity between subject and object. Indeed, the dissolving ellipsis at the end of the passage averts a privileged return to a particular perceiver. This kiss models perception that is not about privileging one thing or another (reminding us of the horizontal organisation of desire in *The Well of Loneliness*), or the mastery involved in reducing another subject to a perceived other, but about coexisting subjects: not in a chiasm but perpetually experiencing in passage between subject and object.

While this passage fits the definition of the kiss set out in the Introduction – an intentional touch of the lips directed towards a person or object – it is not a kiss that readers might recognise as such. This underscores the ambiguity of female intimacy in literature during and preceding the modernist period. Terry Castle offers helpful vocabulary in her concept of the 'ghostly' or 'apparitional lesbian' who is 'an impalpability, a misting over, an

[633] Irigaray, 'This Sex Which Is Not One', p. 24.

evaporation'.[634] She predicts that spectral metaphors might be found in Lehmann's work, and indeed, Lehmann's choice of wispy adjectives, 'faint and quivering', as well as the 'evaporation' of the kiss into the ellipsis, turn Jennifer's touch to the realm of the apparitional.[635] Furthermore, literary kisses between women were often necessarily ambiguous to avoid censorship or to be 'palatable' to a mainstream audience.[636] Yet, particularly in literature published before the trial of *The Well of Loneliness*, female kisses would not have been readily recognised as erotic. Women's kisses were hence also ambiguous because of 'the slippery distinction between platonic and erotic love between women', such as some contemporary readers would have conceptualised it.[637] In her reading of *Dusty Answer*, Liggins comments on the 'normativity of female intimacy, even though it hovers on the border of lesbianism'.[638] Indeed, a fragile comfort for lawmakers in 1921 hoping to stem the supposed threat of female homosexuality was that most women, apparently, were ignorant of any such practices and could share living spaces 'in all innocence'.[639] Even the site of the women's college in *Dusty Answer* attaches Judith and Jennifer's encounter to anxious public thought surrounding the way women interacted in shared living spaces. Thus the ambiguity of Judith and Jennifer's encounter resonates with contemporary culture's ambivalence surrounding female homosexuality: its increasing

[634] Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian*, p. 28.
[635] Ibid. p. 45.
[636] Sashi Nair, *Secrecy and Sapphic Modernism: Reading 'Romans À Clef' between the Wars* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 70.
[637] Ibid. p. 79. Doan argues that 'in the months and years following the publication of Radclyffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), and the extensive press coverage of the subsequent obscenity trial , the possibility of reading the affection of a woman […] for her companion as "innocent" – or nonsexual – would become more difficult to sustain': Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism*, p. xii.
[638] Liggins, *Odd Women?*, p. 178.
[639] Lord Birkinhead, the Lord Chancellor who opposed the inclusion of women in the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act, argued: 'I would be bold enough to say that of every thousand women, taken as a whole, 999 have never even heard a whisper of these practices. Amongst all these, in the homes of this country, where in all innocence…they have to share the same bedroom, and even sleep together in the same beds, the taint of this noxious and horrible suspicion is to be imparted, and to be imparted by the Legislature itself'. Quoted in Medd, *Lesbian Scandal and the Culture of Modernism*, p. 108.

recognition in contrast to the conservative insistence that female affection was merely platonic.

Kissing in the second person

Judith and Jennifer's easy domesticity is, therefore, shrouded in plausible ambiguity. Yet Lehmann's subtle literary experiments with feminine subjectivity emphasise the tenderness of their kisses, and her use of the second person, in particular, offers a model for writing perception that resonates with a 'phenomenology of feminine being'.[640] 'There was Jennifer laughing, […] bending down finally to kiss you a tender good night'.[641] What second person does here, as it does in other literary avenues and in colloquial patterns of speech, is make Judith inhabit the narration such that she appears to be addressing herself. The word 'you' is often used to refer to oneself, where the words 'me' or 'I' might be more accurate. 'You' also, by definition, refers to the person being addressed, or to people in general, which would suggest that the narration now refers to the reader. This word is a curiosity; the *OED* states that it can refer to subject, or object, or subject and object interchangeably.[642] Its varying definitions are at play in *Dusty Answer*. Lehmann imbricates both Judith and reader in feeling this tender kiss: she directs the narrative outwards at the same time as turning it inwards. More simply, she folds the narrative. This kiss suggests that writing in second person has phenomenological resonances, since it offers a literary model for writing in that passage between interior and exterior, suspending the polarity of subject and object. While phenomenology asks us to see that we make impressions on the world while it makes impressions on us, second-person perspective conveys impressions on the protagonist (if

[640] Lehtinen, *Luce Irigaray's Phenomenology of Feminine Being*.
[641] Lehmann, *Dusty Answer*, p. 152.
[642] 'You', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/232147 > [accessed 1 November 2021].

'you' refers to oneself) and on the reader (if 'you' makes a reader aware of themselves as a 'you' that a writer would address).

Free indirect discourse, with its transitions between third-person narration and first-person experience, also offers a narrative compatible with being-in-the-world such that phenomenology espouses. Mildenberg argues that free indirect discourse is 'situated on the slippery threshold between outside and inside, merging the omniscient and subjective voice, […] at once turning readers into non-participants as well as immanently close participators.'[643] If free indirect discourse situates a narrative on this 'slippery threshold', then second person slips further into this greasy boundary. Readers are not only directly addressed as close participators but also read the protagonist's direct form of address to the protagonist themselves, simultaneously. This perspective can be traced to the epistolary form and Enlightenment self-help writing practices – practices which '"invite some company" into the authorial realm' – but it is telling that the rare second-person perspective is prominent now in genres that are meant to be particularly immersive, such as fan fiction or 'choose-your-own-adventure' novels.[644] For both reader and writer of fan fiction, the genre authorises 'self-insertion' and frequently elicits an 'all-consuming' response.[645] In 'choose-your-own-adventure' narratives, instructions such as '[g]o to 2' communicate explicitly to a 'flesh-and-blood reader' who must actively participate in the experience.[646] Second-person perspective emphasises the sensorial experience of literature when the desired effect is immersion. This enlightens Lehmann's choice to switch from third to second person when writing the kiss.

[643] Mildenberg, *Modernism and Phenomenology*, p. 113.
[644] James Peacock, 'Self-Dispersal and Self-Help: Paul Auster's Second Person', *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction,* 62 (2020), pp. 496-512 (p. 497).
[645] Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2014), pp. 133, 136.
[646] Matt DelConte, 'Why "You" Can't Speak: Second-Person Narration, Voice, and a New Model for Understanding Narrative', *Style,* 37 (2003), pp. 204-19 (p. 206).

James Joyce similarly uses second person in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* when Stephen recounts how '[y]ou put up your face like that' to kiss (see Introduction).[647] In the novels under discussion in this chapter, the second person offers a sense of immersion by putting subject and object in flux. During the May trip along the river in *Dusty Answer*, Judith creeps towards Jennifer, 'warming every sense at her', until she 'turned you inwards to grope'. The narrative turns 'inwards' in two ways: in both word and in perspective. Yet the narrative also turns outwards with the word 'you' – again, it folds. The reader experiences as a subject while reading Judith's experience as a subject. Indeed, in James Peacock's recent discussion of second-person perspective, he identifies that 'what connects different scholarly accounts is recognition of the literary second person's fluidity and potential for exploring intersubjectivity'.[648] Scholarship on the second person in modernist literature is rare, but current discussion seems to suggest that it will become a fruitful avenue for investigations of intersubjective encounters in modernist narratives. At a symposium in 2021, Doug Battersby identified Elizabeth Bowen's incongruous use of 'you' and suggested that second person does the conventional work of omniscience mixed with transgressive moments when narrative breaks down and our limited abilities to understand each other are brought to the fore.[649] I concur with this flux of omniscience and suggest that the import of this breakdown is innovative configurations of subject-object relations.

Though with less explicit emphasis on the sensory, Hall, too, makes use of the second person in *The Well of Loneliness* to similar effect. Crucially, this happens in the early portion during Stephen's childhood when, as I have argued, Hall explores Stephen's perceptions at a pre-theoretical point. By this stage of the novel, Collins and Henry have been sent away, and

[647] Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, p. 33.
[648] Peacock, 'Self-Dispersal and Self-Help', 236.
[649] Doug Battersby, 'Elizabeth Bowen's Equivocal Modernism', *Modernism From the Heart: Emotion, Sincerity, and the Novel*, University of Bristol, 14 September 2021.

Stephen turns her affections to her horse: '[s]o Collins was comfortably transmigrated.'[650] Yet Stephen is shamed by her local community for riding astride. Hall passes from third to second person for several paragraphs: 'all of a sudden you felt less impressive in your fine riding breeches.'[651] In this moment of self-recognition, the embarrassment arises, tellingly, from Stephen understanding herself to be observed as well as an observer. As her feelings evolve from shame to defiance, the second-person interlude ends when 'you dug your heels sharply into the pony'.[652] Hall's use of second person at this point – it does not occur anywhere else in the novel – highlights that notion of conveying impressions on the protagonist while making an impression on the reader. The affective experience of shame is folded: it is turned outwards, as the reader is immersed in the experience of feeling foolishly overdressed atop a horse, but turns inwards to Stephen's growing sense of alienation from her community. In some ways, while the use of 'you' directs the narrative away from Stephen's community to the reader, it can be read as a response to the novel's thematic loneliness. Hall does not write an isolated subject in a world of objects, but a subject among subjects. Stephen's loneliness does not only follow her kisses with Collins in terms of narrative development (from connection to alienation), but also in terms of the development of her sense of subjectivity as a woman who wants to kiss women. Both Lehmann and Hall use second person to sit within this threshold of subject and object, where both reader and character are written as impressible and impressive. The kisses that they write make these narrative strategies legible.

This theorisation of the intersubjective and immersive potential of second person enhances our understanding of Nora's puzzling kiss in *Nightwood*: 'on her mouth you kiss your own.'

[650] Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, p. 36.
[651] Ibid. p. 37.
[652] Ibid.

Nora does not give herself but feels herself. This kiss in second person directs the touch both inwards to Nora's own mouth, and outwards to the reader; there is no privileged subject, or one thing taking hold of another. This is an idea found in the kisses of modernism but developed in later feminist phenomenology. Irigaray's gentle meditation on self-touching is a key example: 'when you touch yourself […] [y]ou don't give yourself.'[653] We have seen that the use of second person constitutes a form of folding, and this is reinforced in this sense of nothing being given in touch. If the narrative is directed both inwards and outwards to the 'you' of addresser and addressee, nothing is given, in contrast to zero-sum sexuality in which pleasurable touch is only directed one way. Irigaray frequently writes in a mode of second-person address, particularly when she portrays tactile encounters. 'This Sex Which Is Not One' is an address to a woman – in contact with the epistolary form – and the 'you' that features so often in Irigaray's writing tangles subject and object while making the reader a participant. A translator of Irigaray, Carolyn Burke, writes that, in this essay 'Irigaray tries out a language of immediacy, which hovers between the written and the spoken and stresses the sense of touch in the here and now.'[654] This sense of immediacy is a key component of second-person perspective that constitutes the aforementioned immersion in the narrative: the reader experiencing, and the character/narrator experiencing.[655] The way Barnes writes the kiss immerses us in a form of touching that does not simply give or receive. The kiss in *Nightwood* epitomises am experiment with second-person address that expresses perception beyond patriarchal, heterosexist models.

[653] Irigaray, 'This Sex Which Is Not One', p. 70.
[654] Carolyn Burke, 'Introduction to Luce Irigaray's "When Our Lips Speak Together"', *Signs,* 6 (1980), pp. 66-68 (p. 68).
[655] Högberg argues that Irigaray's work tends towards dislocating 'the autonomous "I"' that often renders everyone but the narrator an object, and suggests that this is a legacy of modernist writing: Högberg, *Virginia Woolf and the Ethics of Intimacy*, p. 53.

The kiss between women shows us how phenomenologically-aligned orientations move beyond forms of perception dictated by patriarchy. Reading the kiss in Hall, Lehmann and Barnes suggests that modernist women's writing leaves a legacy for those approaching phenomenology through a feminist lens. In *The Well of Loneliness*, Hall's osculatory writing represents the female subject and the particular configurations of her perception of other women, imbued with wonder. Both *The Well of Loneliness* and *Nightwood* use narrative strategies to present women who are reorientating their perception, and, as such, put objects and people within reach that do not conform to heterosexual modes of orientation. In Judith and Jennifer's romance in *Dusty Answer*, this form of perception can be conceptualised by folding: their kisses model an encounter that exists in a passage between subject and object. Such an idea corresponds to that initial kiss in *Nightwood*: 'on her mouth you kiss your own.' The second-person address that appears in each of these texts and in Irigaray's own writing has phenomenological resonances. We find a literary model for suspending the polarities of subject and object. Second person departs from intimate models of giving, or getting, or one perceiving thing taking hold of the perceived. The kiss – an intimacy enacted while it is received without a necessary initiator and dwelling in the possibilities of ambiguity – is what these writers use to explore feminine modes of perception. In the next chapter, I bring the queer kiss into contact with questions of racism and classism by looking at writing that draws together intersecting concerns of Black, queer, and working-class people in the queer culture of Harlem in New York where, as Geraldyn Dismond writes in 1929, there were 'never no Wells of Loneliness'.[656] The currents of queerness in this present chapter flow into the texts of a writer who loved *The Well of Loneliness*, and, like Stephen, learned about theories of

[656] Geraldyn Dismond, 'Social Snapshots', *The Inter-State Tattler*, 29 February 1929, p. 5.

homosexuality by discovering a copy of *Psychopathia Sexualis:* those of Richard Bruce Nugent.[657]

[657] A. B. Christa Schwarz, *Gay Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), pp. 13, 122.

Richard Bruce Nugent: Dancing the Kiss

In Richard Bruce Nugent's partly-published novella, 'Geisha Man' (written 1929, extract published 2002), the reader is swept up into the queer scene of parties and drag balls in Harlem, New York. While the holograph drafts do not form a fully coherent novella, they tell the story of Kondo Gale Matzuika, the child of an affair between their Japanese mother and a white American man named Gale Barrows (nicknamed Don), whose gender is presented as unfixed.[658] As a young teenager, Kondo runs away to Osaka to become an actor. They begin to act as a geisha and have sex with male customers, including their unwitting father who pays them enough money to move to Paris, and then to Harlem in New York.[659] The published extract begins at this point. Kondo finds Don and moves in with him, and the pair attend parties and balls together. The following passage takes place at a Harlem ball which Kondo attends in drag, and they flirt with other guests:

> I was dancing with a handsome Turk. He was whispering little exciting breaths in my ear and kissing me. The feel of his muscles! His thighs darted into the folds of silver poppies, connecting with electric simplicity ever so often through the metallic flowers. The body feel of him![660]

Here, the artistic forms of dancing and writing are intertwined with kisses. The intersubjective nature of both kissing and dancing are inseparable in this passage, and the 'body feel' is suspended between two participants as Kondo feels their partner's body, and

[658] Fiona I. B. Ngô points out that this plot is reminiscent of Puccini's opera *Madama Butterfly* (1904): Fiona I. B. Ngô, *Imperial Blues: Geographies of Race and Sex in Jazz Age New York* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 112. Kristin Mahoney describes Kondo as 'gender-fluid': Kristin Mahoney, *Queer Kinship after Wilde: Transnational Decadence and the Family* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), p. 160. Tyler T. Schmidt also comments on Kondo's unfixed gender identity in: Tyler T. Schmidt, '"In the Glad Flesh of My Fear": Corporeal Inscriptions in Richard Bruce Nugent's "Geisha Man"', *African American Review,* 40 (2006), pp. 161-73 (p. 168).

[659] This first half of the novella can be pieced together in: 'Geisha Man Manuscript' [twelve page holograph draft] and 'Geisha Man Notebooks' [two stenographic notebooks], RBNP.

[660] Nugent, 'Geisha Man', p. 101. This published extract is essentially the second half of the novella.

their partner feels Kondo. Though one can dance alone, Nugent draws us towards the shared qualities of dancing and kissing as the dancers/kissers react to each other's movements by feeling: mouth finds ear and mouth, and skirt gives way to darting thigh with 'electric simplicity' that reminds us of the audience's 'almost intolerable galvanic pleasure' in *Brave New World* (1932) when the feelies' actors kiss.[661] This social dance captures the evolution in western popular dance culture in the early twentieth century towards loosening hips, informal gestures, and standing closer together – close enough to feel the muscles of the partner and, of course, kiss.[662] Kondo and the 'handsome Turk' both feel and are felt in an intersubjective encounter of sensory pleasure on which the processes of kissing and dancing here depend. Nugent, as a member of the Black dance community in Harlem, saw dance as something (inter)subjective, intimate, and pleasurable – these are all terms, too, that we could apply to the kiss in his writings. In fact, Nugent, a hitherto overlooked pioneer of the literary queer kiss, shows an abiding interest in the kiss in his published and unpublished works, an interest that intertwines with his critically neglected role in the dance scene of modernist-era New York.

In January 1929, Nugent wrote a letter about 'Geisha Man' to '"the mother hen" of the Negro Movement': Alain Locke, who belonged to an older generation of thinkers.[663] In the letter, Nugent identifies the work as 'The Geisha house Man', and declares himself finished.[664] Alongside this, he asks Locke for help with a work-in-progress that remains unidentified: 'a chanted dance, or chanted Ballet'.[665] Nugent himself was an accomplished dancer, as he

[661] Huxley, *Brave New World*, p. 146.
[662] Shane Vogel, *The Scene of Harlem Cabaret: Race, Sexuality, Performance* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 54. See also Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, pp. 100-04.
[663] Richard Bruce Nugent, 'Langston Hughes: A Memory', in *Gay Rebel of the Harlem Renaissance,* ed. Wirth, p. 5.
[664] Richard Bruce Nugent to Alain Locke, 24 January 1929, Folder 18, Box 164-75, Alain Locke Papers, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, p. 4.
[665] Ibid., p. 5. There is nothing published of Nugent's, written in this period, that fits this description. There is a manuscript dated c. 1932 in his archive called 'Ballet Paradox' which details a *pas de deux* between a dancer

reminded an interviewer in 1982 who described Nugent as 'an actor, graphic designer, a painter, a poet, a storywriter, a bon vivant'.[666] In his letter to Locke, as in 'Geisha Man', it is evident that Nugent weaves between the forms of dance and literature in his creative processes of writing. He had, by 1929, already collaborated with Locke on 'Sahdji, an African Ballet' (1927) which was then under development to be produced on stage.[667] Despite their collaborations, Nugent had an ambivalent relationship with Locke. In this letter, he appeals to Locke for his approval and advice, but otherwise saw him as 'pompous [and] dictatorial'.[668] While Locke supported and guided Nugent and his contemporaries who made up a younger generation of artists, the two clashed over the type of art that constituted 'sound artistic progress'.[669] Amid the rise of so-called 'Negrophilia' in the north of the United States and western Europe, historic white perceptions of Black animality, physicality, promiscuity and hypersexuality remained persistent and dominant in white society (as discussed in Chapter Two). Locke wanted these associations between Blackness, physicality and the senses 'to provide a healthy antidote to Puritanism' and the pitfalls of modernity, but this was to 'be expressed in the clean, original, primitive but fundamental terms of the senses'.[670] Elsewhere he elaborates on his vision of 'clean' and 'fundamental' senses as 'primitively erotic' rather than 'decadently neurotic': 'healthy and earthy expression in the original peasant paganism' in contrast to 'its hectic, artificial and sometimes morally vicious counterpart which was the outcome of the vogue of artificial and commercialized jazz

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wearing black and a dancer wearing white, meant to represent opposing ideologies, but there is nothing here to suggest chanting: Folder 1, Box 26, JWJ MSS 92, Series 2, RBNP.

[666] James V. Hatch, 'Interview of Bruce Nugent – Actor, Artist, Writer, Dancer', *Artists and Influences,* ed. by Camille Billops and James V. Hatch (New York: Hatch-Billops Collection, 1982), pp. 64-87 (p. 64).

[667] Victoria Phillips Geduld suggests that *Sahdji* could be the 'chanted dance, or chanted ballet', but admits that '[it] remains unclear if these were imagined as the same ballet': Victoria Phillips Geduld, 'Sahdiji, an African Ballet (1931): Queer Connections and the "Myth of the Solitary Genius"', *Congress on Research in Dance Conference Proceedings,* 40 (2008), pp. 95-105 (p. 103n19). In the letter, Nugent asks Locke for help with the ballet, which suggests to me that he is not referring to *Sahdji*, since he and Locke were already collaborators on this project by 1929.

[668] Nugent, 'Langston Hughes: A Memory', p. 5.

[669] Alain Locke, 'Fire: A Negro Magazine', *Survey,* August 15 - September 15 1927, p. 563.

[670] Ibid.

entertainment.'[671] He views such feeling as more available to Black interpretation because of a folk tradition rooted in the 'creative force' of 'deep suffering and its spiritual compensation in intense religious emotion and ecstasy.'[672] In 'Geisha Man' above, the electric 'body feel' of a queer kiss in drag on a crowded dancefloor does not seem to reflect the 'clean' and 'fundamental' sensory expression for which Locke calls in Black art. While both Nugent and Locke saw embodiment as an arena for artistic attention, Nugent valorises a kind of physicality that absorbs and reflects those conditions of modernity to which Locke saw Blackness as antithetical, and this is made apparent in Nugent's writings on the kiss.

Locke's theories present just one example of the variegated approaches to Black racial uplift. They existed on a continuum with more conservative ideas that proliferated in Black (northern, urban) communities during the Great Migration in the early twentieth century. As one critic puts it, for many Black elites struggling for dignity in a racist society, 'uplift came to mean an emphasis on self-help, racial solidarity, temperance, thrift, chastity, social purity, patriarchal authority, and the accumulation of wealth.'[673] In Harlem, to the latter claim, buying property countered the racist efforts of white realty companies to evict Black tenants who moved into more desirable areas, and one well-known pastor 'repeatedly made "Buy property" the text of his sermons.'[674] Sociologist and activist W. E. B. Du Bois criticised what he perceived to be 'shrewd laziness [and] shameless lewdness' among working-class Black people in particular.[675] However, he saw 'material prosperity' as an unsound goal and urged for 'knowledge and culture' as a higher aim.[676] One of his many contributions to civil

[671] Locke, *The Negro and His Music and Negro Art*, p. 87.
[672] Ibid. p. 8.
[673] Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 2.
[674] James Weldon Johnson, 'The Making of Harlem', *Survey Graphic,* March 1925, pp 635-39 (pp. 636-37).
[675] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007 [1899]), p. 222.
[676] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 39. 41.

rights activism that predates Nugent's generation was his idea of a highly educated 'Talented Tenth of the Negro race [who] must be made leaders of thought and missionaries of culture among their people.'[677] Du Bois, as an activist and an editor, knew and discussed art with Nugent, as well as Nugent's contemporaries (many of whom were queer) with whom Du Bois had similarly ambivalent and at times antagonistic relationships. In 1926 Nugent's friend, writer and activist Langston Hughes, published his own manifesto for their generation of Black artists, 'The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain', in which he resists middle-class and 'respectable' ideas about Blackness and urges 'the smug Negro middle class to turn from their white, respectable, ordinary books and papers to catch a glimpse of their own beauty.'[678] In Nugent's literature, beauty is captured in the intimacies of the feeling body.

Many of the imperatives of some conservative senses of racial uplift were disembodied. But due to aforementioned white perceptions of Blackness, as well as white people's racist scrutiny of rising Black populations in northern, urban areas, a logical response for some Black thinkers was to promote bourgeois ideas about what has been called 'the uplift body – the body of proper sexual expenditure, middle-class comportment, and unviolated surfaces'.[679] Locke, on the other hand, saw a return to the body and its senses as something that Black folk culture could offer a modernising world 'recoil[ing] from the machine'.[680] While in Chapter Two we saw the way white supremacy valorises sensory discipline, some Black thinkers attempted to express the value of sensuality amid white perceptions of Blackness as particularly physical. However, Locke drew an invisible line as to how the

[677] W. E. B. Du Bois, 'The Talented Tenth', in *The Negro Problem,* ed. by Booker T. Washington (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003 [1903]), pp. 33-75 (p. 75).
[678] Langston Hughes, 'The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountan', in *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present,* ed. by Angelyn Mitchell (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994 [1926]), pp. 55-59 (p. 59).
[679] Vogel, *The Scene of Harlem Cabaret*, p. 18.
[680] Alain Locke, 'Beauty Instead of Ashes', *Nation,* 18 April 1928, pp. 432-34 (p. 433).

senses should be expressed: with wholesome representation and without modernised flourish. Nugent's work, among that of his generation of artists, tells a different story. Sensory experience in his writing is without a veneer of comportment. It connects to the modern rather than a paganistic retreat from modernity. 'Geisha Man' is typical of his oeuvre in offering a point of departure from the aesthetic parameters set out by Locke and other Black cultural leaders: sex, incest, buffet flats (semi-permanent house parties with sex on offer), drag balls and explicitly queer activity abound.[681] Indeed, Seth Clark Silberman has suggested that '[t]o embody the black gay Harlemite within the context of the disembodied New Negro was Nugent's design'.[682] Building upon this idea, this chapter argues that Nugent lifts from the kiss ideas about intersubjective, intimate, and pleasurable action, and moves the kiss' reciprocity into wider fields of feeling including that between dancer and dancer, or dancer and audience. It shows that this was against the grain of modernist theories about a dancing body that expresses but does not emote. Nugent's kisses are ultimately not confined to the dancefloor but operate with high stakes relating to ideas about what should be represented in Black art, and how people (particularly queer people and people of colour) should spend their time and comport themselves amid modern constructions of the middle class and capitalist imperatives regarding the accumulation of wealth.

Nugent's osculatory allusions

Nugent's interests in kissing are pervasive throughout his oeuvre and reveal him to be entrenched in an eclectic mixture of the literature of kissing. Indeed, from the age of five,

[681] Eric Garber 'Buffet Flats', in Folder 6, Box 81, RBNP. Garber, a gay historian, became friends with Nugent in 1981, and Nugent became a source of information for his research.
[682] Seth Clark Silberman, 'Lighting the Harlem Renaissance a Fire!!: Embodying Richard Bruce Nugent's Bohemian Politic', in *The Greatest Taboo: Homosexuality in Black Communities,* ed. by Delroy Constantine Simms (Los Angeles, CA: Alyson Books, 2001), pp. 254-73 (p. 256).

Nugent made the most of his father's 'very esoteric library' in which he 'read everything'.[683] A five page list of writers in an unpublished section of his 'Geisha Man' notebooks, detailing hundreds of authors on Kondo's bookshelf from Hasdai Crescas to Max Beerbohm, might indicate just how esoteric.[684] In the Introduction I discussed Nugent's allusions to the Ovidian cup-kiss tradition. His understanding of kissing cultures evidently runs from classical origins, but also Biblical. One of several of his Bible stories, 'Tree With Kerioth-Fruit' (written late 1920s or early 1930s, published 2002), portrays the infamous kiss that Judas bestows on Jesus, though in Nugent's version, the subtext is explicitly queer.[685] In 'Geisha Man', he traces the developments of the literary kiss from these earlier origins to early modern writing when he invokes Shakespearean kisses, Shakespeare's body of writing being one that also exhibits 'close kinship' with poetic aspects of the literary kiss tradition.[686] Don sings a verse that include the lines, '[i]f I have kissed thee, what has thou gained?/ My soul is consumed with fire[.]/ Dance lightly, more gently and more gently still'.[687] This original song also appears in the early manuscript which had a working title of '…and More Gently Still', suggesting that this kiss-poem is more significant to the structure of 'Geisha Man' than the published extract alone suggests.[688] Once again imbuing kissing images with dancing, the lines arguably allude to the Friar's speech in *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), in which he warns that passionate romance will 'die, like fire and powder/ Which, as they kiss, consume' (II. 6. 10-11).[689] This seems to be an image that particularly struck Nugent, possibly due to the fact that fire had a mystical meaning for he and his contemporaries who saw it as 'the thing that consumed and gave birth to at the same time' and started a fleeting magazine by the name of

[683] Thomas H. Wirth, 'Introduction', in *Gay Rebel of the Harlem Renaissance,* ed. Wirth, pp. 1-61 (p. 7).
[684] Nugent, 'Geisha Man Notebooks'.
[685]Richard Bruce Nugent, 'Tree with Kerioth-Fruit', in *Gay Rebel of the Harlem Renaissance,* ed. Wirth, pp. 139-46 (p. 145). Nugent's friend, writer Countee Cullen, also wrote a poem that explicitly queers Judas' kiss: 'Judas Iscariot', in *Color* (New York; London: Harper & Brothers, 1925), pp. 90-94.
[686] Wong, *The Poetry of Kissing in Early Modern Europe*, p. 255.
[687] Nugent, 'Geisha Man', p. 95.
[688] Nugent, 'Geisha Man Manuscript', p. 8. The folder has '…and More Gently Still' written as one of its titles.
[689] William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2012 [1597]), p. 230.

FIRE!!.[690] In his *roman à clef* about the Harlem Renaissance, *Gentleman Jigger* (written 1928-33, published 2008), one character is surprised to hear Stuartt, Nugent's alias, talk 'rather seriously about English erotic verse and pornographic verse'.[691] This remark helps us to conceptualise how 'seriously' Nugent took the osculatory elements of his poetic forbearers. While Shakespeare and the classical poets were considered by his conservative contemporaries as examples of high culture to which Black people claimed a right, these sources may have been useful to Nugent who, playfully or subversively, takes from high sources those 'erotic' aspects that were rarely taken 'seriously'.[692]

One particular literary kiss threads its way through Nugent's art from a source that, conversely, would immediately be recognised as transgressive. In 'Geisha Man' he details Don's literary preferences, and the reader learns that 'when he desired poetry, he read Wilde's *Salomé*. And he would look at [Kondo] and say, "[…] I would have you kiss me…only I prefer to kiss you."'[693] These lines present an example of the asymmetric power dynamics at play in an interracial kiss (see Chapter Two), and this expands to questions regarding literary influence, too. Oscar Wilde's play *Salomé* (written 1891 in French, translated into English in 1894) is based on the Bible story, included in the Gospels of Matthew (14: 1-12) and Mark (6: 14-29), of Salome dancing at the birthday feast of her stepfather, Tetrarch Herod Antipas, and requesting the head of John the Baptist as her reward.[694] Wilde's play adds to the story the 'dance of the seven veils' in which Salome strips her veils off one by one. The public interest in Wilde and his play, and the creative

[690] 'Interview with L.', 2 June 1978, Folder 9, Box 22, RBNP, p. 10.
[691] Richard Bruce Nugent, *Gentleman Jigger* (Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press, 2008 [1928-1933]), p. 42.
[692] See Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, p. 52.
[693] Nugent, 'Geisha Man', p. 95. In the 'Geisha Man Notebooks' this ellipsis is five dashes rather than three dots.
[694] Megan Girdwood, *Modernism and the Choreographic Imagination: Salome's Dance after 1890* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), p. 3.

possibilities of the performance of this dance, initiated a cultural phenomenon that one commentator termed 'Salomania' in 1908.[695] The play and its dance was, by the time Nugent moved to Harlem from Washington D. C. in the early 1920s, enjoying just as much popularity there amid mixed and occasionally scandalised reception.[696] Crucially, as well as the 'dance of the seven veils', what Wilde also adds to the story is Salome's desire for Iokanaan (as John the Baptist is named in the play). She bates him – 'suffer me to kiss thy mouth' – and when she is scorned, repeats: 'I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan. I will kiss thy mouth' ('*Je baiserai ta bouche*').[697] At the play's shocking end, Salome kisses Iokanaan's severed head, before Herod orders her execution. When Don desires to kiss Kondo after reading *Salomé*, Nugent transgresses a boundary of 'clean' representation and invokes a Bible-bending, queer, decadent literary history.

When Locke commented on an earlier piece of Nugent's writing, he specifically condemned Nugent's allusions to Wilde. Nugent's short story, 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade' (1926) was published in the first and only issue of *Fire!!* (Nugent was in charge of the distribution and walked around New York selling copies to bookshops, but often spent the money on food and drink before he had arrived home from his rounds).[698] Nugent wrote 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade' 'in the Oscar Wilde tradition' – he and *Fire!!*'s editor, Wallace Thurman, hoped it would be 'banned in Boston' to give them publicity.[699] The story flows through short phrases bound by

[695] Ibid. p. 5. For more on Wilde and the figure of Salome, see Ibid. pp. 73-110.
[696] See: Margaux Poueymirou, 'The Race to Perform: Salome and the Wilde Harlem Renaissance', in *Refiguring Oscar Wilde's salome,* ed. by Michael Y. Bennett (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 201-19; David Krasner, 'Black Salome: Exoticism, Dance, and Racial Myths', in *African American Performance and Theater History: A Critical Reader,* ed. by Harry J. Elam and David Krasner (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 192-211.
[697] Oscar Wilde, *Salome: A Tragedy in One Act*, trans. Lord Alfred Bruce Douglas (Auckland, NZ: Floating Press, 2016), p. 37.
[698] Hughes, *The Big Sea*, p. 237.
[699] Ibid.; Hatch, 'Interview of Bruce Nugent', 8.

ellipses in a third person, stream-of-consciousness style.[700] The narrator follows the protagonist, Alex (who is usually read as Black, though his race is never specified), as he lies in bed, thinking, smoking, and then cruising the streets of Harlem.[701] He meets a Latino man whom he names 'Beauty' and sleeps with, only then to dream of his girlfriend, Melva, and conclude that 'one *can* love two at the same time'.[702] While staring at Beauty in bed one day, 'Alex wondered why he always thought of that passage from Wilde's *Salomé*…when he looked at Beauty's lips…I would kiss your lips…he *would* like to kiss Beauty's lips'.[703] '[T]hat passage from Wilde's *Salomé'* could have been any of the passages in which Salome fixates upon kissing Iokanaan. Locke (who was himself gay) reacted to *Fire!!* in a manner that was bitterly on the nose when he declared: '[b]ack to Whitman would have been a better point of support than a left-wing pivoting on Wilde and Beardsley.'[704] In making known his literary influences, Nugent overtly exits the realms of what Locke might term 'primitively erotic' towards sources that he would condemn as 'decadently neurotic'. The kiss surfaces during such instances in Nugent's writing. This plethora of literary allusions suggest that Nugent is using the kiss to explore the feeling body – an exploration which he moves out into pressing contemporary questions about the role of the feeling body in dance, and, by extension, Black northern American culture.

Nugent's dance forms

[700] Daniel Kim has pointed out the uniqueness, and potential incompatibility, of a stream-of-consciousness style written in third person: Daniel Kim, *Writing Manhood in Black and Yellow: Ralph Ellison, Frank Chin, and the Literary Politics of Identity* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 155.
[701] He is read as Black in, e.g., Michael L. Cobb, 'Insolent Racing, Rough Narrative: The Harlem Renaissance's Impolite Queers', *Callaloo,* 23 (2000), pp. 328-51.
[702] Richard Bruce Nugent, 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade', in *Gay Rebel of the Harlem Renaissance,* ed. Wirth, pp. 75-87 (p. 87).
[703] Ibid. p. 83.
[704] Locke, 'Fire: A Negro Magazine', p. 563.

Nugent was steeped in the culture that was born on the dance floors and stages of New York in the 1920s. The little criticism that there is about Nugent pays him his due as a prolific writer and artist, but, as noted above, he was adamant that he was also a dancer, and his literary and dance interests intertwine in productive ways that have rarely been discussed. He threads dance through 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade', for example, by paying close attention to the delicate movement of the body (or bodies) as they interact with each other. As Miriam Thaggert puts it, '[b]odies in the story are present for loving, rather than objects upon which to prove a propagandistic idea of race pride, racial purity, or "uplift."'[705] 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade' is, in that way, a story concerning intersubjectivity, in that it is about how Alex and another man encounter one another in a queer urban setting. After Alex has his dream about Melva, he slowly wakes up, but pretends to be asleep as he becomes aware of Beauty moving towards him in bed to kiss him:

> his pulse was hammering…from wrist to finger tip…wrist to finger tip…Beauty's lips touched his…his temples throbbed…throbbed…his pulse hammered from wrist to finger tip…Beauty's breath came short now…softly staccato…breathe normally Alex…you are asleep…Beauty's lips touched his…breathe normally…and pressed…pressed hard…cool…his body trembled…breathe normally Alex…Beauty's lips pressed cool…cool and hard…how much pressure does it take to waken one… Alex sighed…moved softly…how does one act… Beauty's hair barely touched him now…his breath was faint on…Alex's nostrils and lips…Alex stretched and opened his eyes…[706]

Alex is acutely attuned to the feeling of Beauty's body as it progresses towards him. The embodied nature of the passage is imbued with rhythm: Alex's temple throbs, his pulse hammers, and Beauty's breath is 'staccato'. This danced return of embodiment to writing

[705] Miriam Thaggert, 'Black Writing's Visuals: African American Modernism in Nugent, Ligon, and Rankine', in *The New Modernist Studies,* ed. by Douglas Mao (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 167-80 (p. 170).
[706] Nugent, 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade', p. 84.

forms a confluence with D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* (1920).[707] Nugent was a reader of Lawrence's work, though perhaps an ambivalent one, given that he writes flippantly of 'Mabel Dodge bringing in tow some famous D. H. Laurence [*sic*]' in a draft of his reminiscences of 1920s Harlem.[708] In Chapter One I discussed Lawrence's use of kisses in motion to explore the body's experience of space, and in *Women in Love* he also explores this interest through dancing. Like Nugent, Lawrence writes dancing as a sensory activity and an embodiment of feeling: in the Naomi, Ruth and Orpah ballet scene, Ursula, Gudrun and the Contessa 'danced their emotion in gesture and motion', and when Gerald gets up to dance afterwards, he 'feel[s] his force stir along his limbs and his body'.[709] In 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade', above, the bodies provide a metronome for their own movement, and the kiss is enacted to this rhythm. Alex's embodiment is stylised: he repeatedly reminds himself to 'breathe normally' and makes decisions about how to 'act' based on the 'pressure' of Beauty's lips before he stretches and responds. In this kiss, stylised movement collaborates with feeling to a background beat. I join David A. Gerstner in finding 'choreographed' components to 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade'; indeed, Gerstner writes, that '[f]or Nugent, to make love is to dance'.[710] I want to show not that kissing is dancing, but that Nugent's allusions to dance emblematise how he uses the kiss to lift ideas about feeling into wider cultural contexts of embodiment.

Nugent's kiss-writing in this small part of 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade' packs into it a plethora of such allusions to dance. If, in 1929, he was writing a 'chanted dance, or chanted Ballet', and

[707] On 'confluences' between D. H. Lawrence and Harlem Renaissance figures, see: Laura Ryan, '"You are white – yet a part of me": D. H. Lawrence and the Harlem Renaissance (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Manchester, 2020), pp. 29-33.
[708] Folder 1, Box 20, RBNP, page marked 16. The published version is altered, and reads, 'bringing in tow some famous writer': Richard Bruce Nugent, 'On Harlem', in *Gay Rebel of the Harlem Renaissance,* ed. Wirth, pp. 147-56 (p. 151).
[709] Lawrence, *Women in Love*, pp. 91-92.
[710] David A. Gerstner, *Queer Pollen: White Seduction, Black Male Homosexuality, and the Cinematic* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2011), p. 52.

in 1927 published 'Sahdji: An Africa Ballet', then in this 1926 story Nugent is writing fiction on the brink of his ventures into dance-creation. Reading the above passage through this lens, we could say that the bodies are improvising some kind of *pas de deux*, in which the literary context of this dance (as opposed to a visual context) means that the reader has particular access to the feelings of one of the participants who feels their partner move and breathe. The anatomical attention to hands 'from wrist to finger tip' relays the delicate precision of well-trained *port de bras*. Nugent, indeed, was closely involved with ballet throughout his adult life, and joined the Negro Ballet Company in the early 1940s.[711] It should be remarked, however, that though Nugent was a practitioner and writer of this highly demanding dance form, details about any formal dance training that he may have had do not survive.[712] In some of his autobiographical notes, he records his formal education and art school attendance, but nowhere lists specific dance training.[713] He also makes remark upon the lack of training of the two dancers most closely related to him. His brother, Pete Nugent, who became a tap dancer, 'learned to dance on the street'.[714] Similarly, Nugent reveres his dancer friend and collaborator Hemsley Winfield for being 'perhaps the first of Black dancers to just dance. No formal education or training needed' (though this was probably a misinterpretation of his dance background).[715] Nugent frequently danced with Winfield when he needed dancers in

[711] 'Autobiographical Notes' (undated), Folder 2, Box 48, RBNP. A folder titled 'Dance' contains clippings and flyers related to ballet in his (by then) local area of New Jersey. An envelope dated September 1982 suggests that Nugent subscribed to the mailing list of the New Jersey Ballet Company: Folder 12, Box 80, RBNP. Nugent was also a supporter of the Dance Theatre of Harlem (founded 1969) and saved several of their souvenirs and publicity materials: Folder 6, Box 98, RBNP.
[712] On the ephemerality of Nugent's queer life, see: Dorothea Löbbermann, 'Richard Bruce Nugent and the Queer Memory of Harlem', in *Race Capital?: Harlem as Setting and Symbol,* ed. by Andrew M. Fearnley and Daniel Matlin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), pp. 221-40.
[713] 'Autobiographical Notes', RBNP. Under Art Schools, he lists: 'New York Evening School of Industrial Art (1921-24); Traphagen School of Fashion (1922-25); Nationa[l] Academy [of Design?] (1929---); Winold Riess [*sic*] (1927-28)'.
[714] Wirth, 'Introduction', p. 9.
[715] Hatch, 'Interview of Bruce Nugent', p. 10. Susan Manning writes that '[i]n 1924 Winfield had studied acting, interpretive and jazz dance, and voice at the National Ethiopian Art Theatre School', and '[a]t some point he studied ballet with Mikhail Mordkin': Susan Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. 3. For further discussion of Winfield's possible training, see John O. Perpener III, *African-American Concert Dance: The Harlem Renaissance and Beyond* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005), pp. 29-30, 41.

his New Negro Art Theater dance group.[716] On a page of his autobiographical notes where he records his life's artistic activities, he writes, '[d]ance: Hemsley Winfield, any and most groups making attempts [as Black dancers] (in those early days)'.[717] Winfield, for Nugent, was evidently synonymous with the beginnings of his own dancing career. If the backgrounds of Pete Nugent and Winfield are to be taken as suggestive, we can infer that Nugent too learned to dance in an embodied and collaborative way, where training did not take the forms found in official records and dance studios.

Nugent writes quite an explicit moment of intersection between the kiss and the ballet in 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade'. The trope of the waking kiss suggests a link to Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Sleeping Beauty* (first performed in 1890 with choreography by Marius Petipa).[718] In New York in 1916, Anna Pavlova performed excerpts of the ballet in 'The Big Show' at the Hippodrome, and subsequently premiered a fifty-minute abridged version.[719] In 1917, writer, photographer, Harlem Renaissance patron and friend of Nugent, Carl Van Vechten, also recalls seeing Vaslav Nijinsky dance 'the principal male role of *La Princesse Enchantée'* in extract form during his 'two short seasons' in New York.[720] Van Vechten may also have seen excerpts performed in London in 1911, since, writing for the *New York Times* that year, he declared '*La Belle au Bois Dormant* […] much better' than *Swan Lake*.[721] Nugent had not yet moved to New York when *Sleeping Beauty* was on the stage, but it is highly likely that the ballet was discussed in dancing circles and became a

[716] For more on the New Negro Art Theater, see: Perpener, *African-American Concert Dance*, pp. 34-56.
[717] 'Autobiographical Notes', RBNP. Perpener writes that one of Winfield's goals was 'increasing black participation in theatre communities', and it is probable that this is what Nugent meant when he writes about 'making attempts': Ibid. p. 25.
[718] Susan Au, *Ballet and Modern Dance* (London; New York: Thames and Hudson, 1988), p. 64.
[719] Ibid. p. 116.
[720] Carl Van Vechten, 'Waslav Nijinsky', in *The Dance Writings of Carl Van Vechten,* ed. by Paul Padgette (New York: Princeton Book Company, 1980 [1917]), pp. 79-95 (p. 88).
[721] Carl Van Vechten, 'Swan Lake Ballet', in *The Dance Writings Of Carl van Vechten,* ed. Padgette, pp. 104-07 (p. 105).

topic of the many conversations between Nugent and Van Vechten. This possible intertextual approach to a popular ballet from 1890 enriches the picture we already have of Nugent as someone who invoked – or exercised a 'queer cross-pollination' with – *fin-de-siècle* art to create his own queer aesthetic.[722]

If Beauty's name in 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade' alludes to *Sleeping Beauty*, it is a heavy-handed allusion, but Nugent's interest in the waking kiss more delicately latches onto the moment of diegetic touch in the ballet. Nugent queers this kiss, offering just one example of modernist-era dancers who anticipate current anti-homophobic initiatives in the dance world such as #QueerTheBallet.[723] He does this not just by writing a kiss between two men but, in the sense of queer as 'nonnormative', by making Alex awake, pretending to be asleep.[724] As such, the 'cool and hard' touch of this transgressive kiss is not discreet and is actually enjoyed by the recipient. This moment also recalls the humorous episode of Coventry Patmore's *The Angel in the House* (1862) (see Introduction), when a man kisses a young woman when '[h]e thought I thought he thought I slept'.[725] Nugent is apparently energised by this waking kiss trope, as is Lawrence (see Chapter One), since it appears multiple times in his prose oeuvre. In *Gentleman Jigger*, Stuartt bends down to wake up the Italian gangster Orini with a kiss.[726] In 'Geisha Man', Nugent writes the other perspective of the kiss in 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade' when Kondo reaches over to Don in bed and wonders, '*[w]as* he asleep?' [original emphasis], and kisses him.[727] Alex in 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade' is unique in trying to measure 'how much pressure […] it take[s] to waken one'. By trying to feel out at what point he

[722] Gerstner, *Queer Pollen*, p. 10.
[723] See <www.queertheballet.com> [accessed 28 April 2023].
[724] On the relationship between queerness and normativity, see: Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, pp. 161, 73, 98n18; David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 62; Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), p. 1.
[725] Patmore, *The Angel in the House*, p. 255.
[726] Nugent, *Gentleman Jigger*, p. 237.
[727] Nugent, 'Geisha Man', p. 106.

should perform a reaction to Beauty's kiss, the partner in this osculatory *pas de deux* must use 'the body feel of him' (to reuse those opening lines from 'Geisha Man') in order to emote and embody a response. Dance-making for Nugent is about an embodied response to an other, and the act of kissing lends him the parameters through which to explore this idea.

In 'Geisha Man', Kondo identifies themselves as 'the first Negro ever to have written a ballet', and Nugent, indeed, did write several ballets, though the only published and performed that we know of is *Sahdji*.[728] Nugent collaborated with Locke to publish the scenario in the anthology *Plays of Negro Life* (1927). This was based on his short story, 'Sahdji', which inaugurated Nugent's writing career when Locke published it in *The New Negro* in 1925. It tells the story of Sahdji, 'a little African girl' and 'wife of Konombju…chieftain', whose son Mrabo is also in love with Sahdji and wishes that his father would die.[729] Numbo, Mrabo's male friend, is in love with Mrabo, and kills Konombju to make Mrabo happy. Sahdji, however, kills herself in a ritual and is buried with her husband. The ballet version, in contrast, notably strips away the queer content and becomes a heterosexual love triangle by removing the Mrabo character.[730] In early 1927, Locke, who 'wanted to make sure the ballet would be set to music by a Negro musician', asked composer William Grant Still to write a score, and the ballet was eventually performed ('pretty badly', according to Nugent) in 1931 at Eastman School in Rochester by an all-white cast due to racial prejudices in the area.[731]

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[728] Ibid. p. 109. Schmidt analyses the fact that Kondo refers to themselves as a 'Negro' and argues that 'Kondo's race identity, like his gender, is not assuredly fixed, but fluid and destabilized': Schmidt, 'Corporeal Inscriptions in Richard Bruce Nugent's "Geisha Man"', p. 168.
[729] Richard Bruce Nugent, 'Sahdji', in *Gay Rebel of the Harlem Renaissance,* ed. Wirth, pp. 63-64 (p. 63).
[730] Richard Bruce, 'Sahdji, an African Ballet', in *Plays of Negro Life: A Source-Book of Native American Drama,* ed. by Alain Locke and Montgomery Gregory (New York; London: Harper & Brothers, 1927), pp. 387-400 (p. 387).
[731] Alain Locke to Carl Van Vechten, 16 March 1942, Box 5, JWJ MSS 355, James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection manuscript music, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University (hereafter JWJMM); Hatch, 'Interview of Bruce Nugent', p. 5.

In her analysis of the collaborative creation of this ballet, Victoria Phillips Geduld writes that 'the libretto of *Sahdji* reveals Locke's language at work to create *Sahdji* as an African *Rite of Spring* (1913).'[732] Igor Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring* ['*Le sacre du printemps*'] was choreographed by Nijinsky and was praised for its departure from the kind of dance in which emotions – as 'mere pretext[s] for erupting into movement' – 'find a too easy outlet and spend themselves in vain'.[733] According to Jacques Rivière, 'Nijinsky caused expression to return to dance' by 'preventing the escape of emotion.'[734] That is, the modernist ballet-dancing body was praised for defamiliarizing itself with bodily emotion, and returning to 'expression' as a 'depersonalised' and 'desubjectivised' emotion.[735] Nugent was well aware of Nijinsky's achievements. He joked to Van Vechten in 1936 that he would not become the next Nijinsky on account of such a dancing career seeming too 'strenuous'.[736] Locke, on the other hand, who watched the *Ballets Russes* in London and wrote about *The Rite of Spring*, was inspired by ballet as a high art form.[737] He connected modernist ideas about ballet to his ambitions for elite Black art, though in the same publication he does also defend the 'so-called "low brow"'.[738] In some ways akin to ballet, Du Bois writes about the Black right to enjoy European high art forms and writes a narrative of a Black man enjoying a classical music concert (before being removed from the premises) and feeling 'with the music the movement of power within him.'[739] For Locke, the 'elitist vision of culture' that he and Du

[732] Geduld, 'Sahdji, an African Ballet', p. 99.
[733] Jacques Rivière, 'Le Sacre Du Printemps', in *What Is Dance?,* ed. by Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983 [1913]), pp. 115-22 (p. 119).
[734] Ibid. p. 120.
[735] Mark Franko, *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. x-xii.
[736] Richard Bruce Nugent to Carl Van Vechten, 16 December 1936, Folder 622, Box 32, JWJ MSS 1050, Carl Van Vechten Papers Relating to African American Arts and Letters, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library (hereafter CVVP).
[737] Locke, *The Negro and His Music and Negro Art*, p. 136.
[738] Ibid. p. 93.
[739] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, p. 114.

Bois sometimes expressed could be pursued through the form of ballet.[740] Geduld argues that 'all the participants in the [*Sahdji*] project believed in the power of ballet as an elite medium that could reshape American high art.'[741] Geduld's valuable work, however, skims over Nugent's own intentions and feelings about dance in relation to an elite version of uplift ideology. Nugent, in fact, 'walked out' on *Sahdji* when he went to see it performed.[742] (Incidentally, Locke himself found the performance 'too studied', and objected to its being performed by white dancers in blackface, but still found it to be an early step toward Black ballet.)[743] Since the archived evidence of *Sahdji* shows us that it followed desubjectified dance theory and elitist ideas about racial uplift, it is unsurprising that Nugent walked out. Paying attention to the conjunctions of kissing and dancing in Nugent's writing, on the other hand, shows a different story about Nugent's conceptualisations of feeling and Black dance culture.

Nowhere is Nugent's writing more lively than when on a part of dance culture in which ideas about intimacy and feeling grew: the cabaret. As Nugent puts it, '[h]undreds of honky-tonks and cabarets sprang up' in Harlem following the Great Migration, and were met with resistance from conservative members of the Black community such as those associated with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).[744] In a hybrid space of bar, restaurant, stage and dancefloor, food and drinks would be served and patrons would alternately dance and sit at tables set to the edge (this perimeter generally being larger and more ordered at the more expensive cabarets for white patrons) to enjoy interactive music and dance performances. The dancing on display in a cabaret did not exhibit 'the uplift

[740] Arnold Rampersad, 'Introduction', in *The New Negro,* ed. by Alain Locke (New York: Atheneum, 1992), pp. ix-xxvii (p. xix).
[741] Geduld, 'Sahdji, an African Ballet', p. 98.
[742] Hatch, 'Interview of Bruce Nugent', p. 5.
[743] Locke to Van Vechten (1942), JWJMM.
[744] Nugent, 'On Harlem', p. 149.

body'. In 'On Harlem', a piece Nugent wrote for the Federal Writers' Project in the late 1930s, he describes dancers 'pressed tightly one couple against the other […]. Shoulders, hips, entire bodies gyrated through all the ecstatic movements of more intimate congress'.[745] Nugent's writing captures dance that is produced under the pressures of certain economic conditions – in this case, of the dances developed in cramped spaces. Indeed, he alludes earlier in 'On Harlem' to 'shimmy-dancers' who enact a move in which the shoulders of the couple shake back and forth (this move was banned in many American cities, including New York, by 1921).[746] This verb 'pressed' that Nugent uses to describe the couples recalls the kiss in 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade': 'pressed…pressed hard…cool…his body trembled…breathe normally Alex…Beauty's lips pressed cool'. Evidently, Nugent finds in both these moments of embodiment an impulse towards closeness under particular pressure, reaching, in both cases, towards a type of intersubjective encounter that caused fear among some of the middle-class elite about proper forms of comportment. '[M]ovements of more intimate congress' are antithetical to chastity and 'bourgeois sexual morality'.[747] For Nugent, it seems, anti-racism (as we would now describe it) does not require a hyper-respectable subject. This danced imitation of 'more intimate congress' promises, perhaps more subtly than sex, kissing, insofar as we do not regard it as a mere synecdoche for sex (see Introduction). Indeed, in one of Nugent's illustrations for a 1928 article by Thurman in *The Dance* magazine, Nugent draws a dancing couple facing each other, with the foreground dancer's back to the viewer, meaning we cannot see whether the couple is kissing but can infer that they might well be.[748] This imagery can be seen in Isaac Julien's homage to Hughes as a Black, queer icon, the film *Looking for Langston* (1989), when two dancing men kiss in a

[745] Ibid. p. 150.
[746] Ibid. p. 148. See: '"Shimmy" Ban Law Passed', *Variety*, 1 April 1921, p. 3.
[747] Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, p. 166.
[748] Wallace Thurman, 'Harlem's Place in the Sun', *Dance,* May 1928, pp. 23, 54.

cabaret scene, one with their back to the viewer.[749] The film incorporates much of Nugent's writing, including swathes of 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade', but its dance scenes that evoke Nugent's art enrich Nugent's contributions to Black queer iconography. The figure of the dancing, kissing couple suggests that dance, for Nugent, was not meant to be an elite form for high art purposes, but to be enjoyed in intimate encounters in which feelings are legitimate pretexts for movement.

'Feeling for the dance'

As was a familiar scene for many Black people living in Harlem, white people from different New York neighbourhoods and beyond went 'slumming' to Harlem's cultural spaces, cabarets in particular.[750] In some writing sketched out at the beginning of one of Nugent's 'Geisha Man' notebooks, he writes that '[e]veryone [felt they] must "do" Harlem.'[751] Visitors often included white creatives who learned moves from Black dancers and then popularised them for white audiences. Nugent recalls that dancer Ann Pennington, for example, 'introduced the Charleston, the Black Bottom and the Mess Around – all dances which she had seen performed spontaneously while touring and fraternizing in Harlem.'[752] The tap dancer Paul Draper, too, 'was even then absorbing Negro *feeling* for the dance' [emphasis added].[753] Nugent's language plays into the contemporary assumption in the white dance world (though some Black commentators wrote the same) that 'black bodies in motion were naturally rhythmic', and reclaims, for productive purposes, ideas about Black embodiment

[749] This kiss makes visible the challenges of representing kissing in film. Linda Williams writes that 'actors are compelled simultaneously to face each other and to face front. Something of this divided attention persists in all representations of sex acts, torn as they are between the necessary close contact between bodies and the compulsion to make that contact visible': Williams, 'Of Kisses and Ellipses', p. 293.
[750] For more on 'slumming', see: Herring, *Queering the Underworld*.
[751] Nugent, 'Geisha Man Notebooks'.
[752] Nugent, 'On Harlem', p. 149.
[753] Ibid. p. 151.

that impeded patronage for dance training and production for Black dancers (recalling the limited training of both Nugent brothers and Winfield).[754] It is notable that Nugent uses this verb 'absorbing', conjuring images of porous skin, in his description of learning to dance. In Chapter Two I explored the import of the interracial screen kiss and its perceived haptic pleasures and prohibitions among white modernist writers. In the context of performance in New York, 'feeling' in dance seems to find its origins in Harlem's Black community, something that appears most pronounced in interracial encounters with white people.

These interracial encounters are also described by writer, anthropologist, and close friend of Nugent, Zora Neale Hurston, in her essay 'How it Feels to Be Colored Me' (1928). She remarks on feeling most Black when dancing 'wildly' to a jazz orchestra in front of a white person in a cabaret club: 'I yell within; I whoop; I shake my assegai above my head', but the white man who stays motionless through the music 'has only heard what I *felt*' [emphasis added].[755] In contrast to Mina Loy's description of a jazz club (see Chapter Two), 'white flesh' does not 'quake to the negro soul' in Hurston's experience. This man exhibits those layers of 'inhibition' ascribed to whiteness in the modernist period, as discussed in the Introduction. This image of Hurston dancing resonates with the dance performed by Josephine Baker (whose career Nugent watched with interest) at the end of the Edmond T. Gréville-directed film, *Princesse Tam Tam* (1935).[756] In the *Pygmalion*-like plot, a Frenchman, Max de Mirecourt, attempts to pass off a Tunisian woman, Alwina (Baker), as African royalty. However, in a Parisian nightclub, Max's wife persuades Alwina to abandon

[754] Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*, p. 4. Locke suggests that Black people have a gift for rhythm because 'the Negro's long and intimate contact with the original source of rhythm,- the dance. With him dancing has always been a spontaneous and normal mode of expression rather than an artificial and formalized one': Locke, *The Negro and His Music and Negro Art*, pp. 14-15.
[755] Zora Neale Hurston, 'How It Feels to Be Colored Me', in *World Tomorrow,* May 1928, pp. 215-16.
[756] In an interview in 1978, Nugent says that he watched the 1921 Broadway musical *Shuffle Along*, and remembers 'one chorus girl whoalways [*sic*] was out of step and very funny and wonderful. […] [S]he couldn't do any better I discovered later. That was Josephine Baker. (laugh) […] Well, later on, you see, everybody else would be out of step.': 'Interview with L.', RBNP, p. 2.

her act and dance to 'jungle' music. As Anne Anlin Cheng puts it, 'while the diegetic audience may know the princess to be black, it has not known how black until now.'[757] These moments of dancing prioritise enjoyment in their representations of Blackness. This is something discussed repeatedly in a special issue of *Survey Graphic* (March 1925) dedicated to Harlem, in which contributors write about the significance of Black joy and its cultural contributions to dance and music. J. A. Rogers, for example, writes that '[j]oy, after all, has a physical basis' in an article about jazz.[758] Hurston and Nugent (who had by 1928 been living in and out of Hurston's apartment) seem to agree that feeling takes centre stage in dancing that finds its origins in Black culture.[759] However, this was culture of the form that some commentators would prefer to separate from legacies of Blackness. In an article in *Crisis* – the official magazine of the NAACP – anthropologist Allison Davis wrote that 'the cabaret has been an unhealthy obsession with these youths, who in their relative naïveté imagine that there is something profoundly stirring about the degradation of its habitués.'[760] For Davis, this generation of young Black people were wrong to find something 'stirring' (meaning both 'inducing emotion' and 'capable of motion') in the kind of dance in which they engaged. Indeed, Hughes writes in 'The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain' of being asked by 'respectable' people, '[h]ow do you find anything interesting in a place like a cabaret?'.[761] The interracial intimacy that often took place on dancefloors also incited concern from some Black people who felt that their dignity was encroached upon by the 'slumming' activities of

[757] Cheng, *Second Skin*, p. 62.
[758] J. A. Rogers, 'Jazz at Home', *Survey Graphic,* March 1925, pp. 665--67, 712 (p. 712). On poetry, another contributor adds that, '[n]aturally, sadness is the note most often struck; but the frequently-expressed joy, blithesome, carefree, overflowing joy, reveals what an enviable creature the Negro is in his happy moods': Albert C. Barnes, 'Negro Art and America', *Survey Graphic,* March 1925, pp. 668-69 (p. 669).
[759] Valerie Boyd, *Wrapped in Rainbows: The Life of Zora Neale Hurston* (New York: Scribner, 2003), p. 121.
[760] Allison Davis, 'Our Negro "Intellectuals"', *Crisis,* August 1928, pp. 268-69, 284 (p. 268).
[761] Hughes, 'The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountan', p. 58.

white people.[762] While Nugent acknowledges the extractive behaviours of white visitors to Harlem, writing the kiss allows him to resist anti-cabaret rhetoric.

In 'Geisha Man', as Don and Kondo move as a white man and a Japanese person through Black cultural spaces in New York, Nugent pointedly writes their kisses as intersubjective exchanges, and dwells on intimate feeling. This ultimately bleeds into the kiss on the dancefloor that Kondo shares with a Turkish man. When Don kisses Kondo, he feels a 'warm gooseflesh prickle' on his neck, and, soon after, they change into silk pyjamas and feel the 'hot feel of [each other] through the silk'.[763] This silk almost stands in as a prosthetic skin as the heat from their bodies passes through it. Filippo Marinetti categorises the feel of silk as 'touch without heat', suggesting an absence that asks to be warmed by a body.[764] This is an image that Nugent repeats in *Gentleman Jigger* when, the night before the waking kiss, Stuartt and Orini put on silk pyjamas which felt 'like a caress to his skin'.[765] In these interpersonal exchanges of kisses and matching pyjamas, Nugent collapses any racial or national constructions of sensory difference and creates shared moments of sensory pleasure. Indeed, Nugent's attention to, and prioritisation of, feelings of pleasure in his writings is particularly radical when contextualised by ideas about Black hyper-respectability, since the image of men kissing in bed, luxuriating in the feeling of silk, clashes with a (heterosexual, bourgeois) image of productivity and display of exceptional ability.[766] Indeed, when Du Bois chastised him for writing about homosexuality in *Fire!!*, Nugent retorted, '[y]ou'd be

[762] See Herring, *Queering the Underworld*, p. 105. Some writers of the Black Arts Movement in the 1960s and '70s also felt that Black people during the Harlem Renaissance were 'frolicking with the oppressors' and setting themselves up as a 'spectacle of assimilation, in which the self-determination of the Negro was constantly jeopardised': Margo Natalie Crawford, 'The Interracial Party of Modernist Primitivism and the Black "After-Party"', in *The Modernist Party,* ed. by Kate McLoughlin (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 164-77 (p. 164).
[763] Nugent, 'Geisha Man', p. 93.
[764] F. T. Marinetti, 'Tactilism: A Futurist Manifesto', in *F. T. Marinetti: Critical Writings,* ed. by Günter Berghaus (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006 [1924]), pp. 370-82 (p. 372).
[765] Nugent, *Gentleman Jigger*, pp. 235-6.
[766] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, p. 82.

surprised how good homosexuality is. I love it.'[767] While J. Edgar Bauer rightly considers this comment as evidence that Nugent had not 'internalised the prevalent societal condemnation of same-sex relationships', Nugent's response is also significant for its subversive prioritisation of what feels 'good' in response to elite ideology surrounding Black art and culture.[768] Nugent harnesses his representations of 'how good homosexuality' feels in the kiss. In 'Geisha Man', after Don and Kondo have spent a night in silk pyjamas together, they kiss in Don's study, and Kondo 'tasted the warm breath from his parted lips. Press softly. Press. The tangible feel of his teeth under his lips! The pulsing of his chest touching mine!'[769] This kiss echoes the choreographic kiss in 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade', particularly in the reuse of that verb to 'press'. Much like that delicate *port de bras* 'from wrist to finger tip', the attention is placed on the movement of teeth, lips, and chest in 'Geisha Man'. As Don and Kondo touch each other in moments of dance-making, Nugent extrapolates ideas about feeling from kissing to dancing.

In *Gentleman Jigger*, he further explores interracial encounters of sensory pleasure on the dancefloor. Not only does he write counter to ideas of hyper-respectability, but he also, like Hurston, Baker and Hughes, explores Black 'feeling for the dance' in a manner both joyful and celebratory. In an early party scene, a 'big, black thug teaching a pink and gold actress to bump and mess-around' shows us how Nugent represents Blackness while antagonising the concerns of proponents of hyper-respectability.[770] This scene reinforces the idea that an interracial party, like an interracial kiss on screen, can be read as a 'heterotopia' inverting the

[767] Jeff Kisseloff, 'Richard Bruce Nugent', in *You Must Remember This: An Oral History of Manhattan from the 1890s to World War II,* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), pp. 288-89 (p. 288).
[768] J. Edgar Bauer, 'On the Transgressiveness of Ambiguity: Richard Bruce Nugent and the Flow of Sexuality and Race', *Journal of Homosexuality,* 62 (2015), pp. 1021-57 (p. 1048).
[769] Nugent, 'Geisha Man', p. 106.
[770] Nugent, *Gentleman Jigger*, p. 83.

reality outside it (see Chapter Two).[771] He appears to invoke Du Bois' older, influential idea of 'double-consciousness, [a] sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others', in that Nugent plays with the idea that a Black man might be seen as a 'thug' by a white woman out slumming.[772] Black modernist writers, as Margo Natalie Crawford puts it, were creating strategies to counter 'an external gaze that imagined a jungle while watching black bodies dancing'.[773] However, for Nugent, this is not accompanied by the troubled tone that Hurston adopts in 'How it Feels to Be Colored Me'. Nugent goes further later in *Gentleman Jigger* when Orini introduces Stuartt to Miss Bebe Day, a wealthy white woman, at an expensive Chicago cabaret. They dance a tango and soon find themselves alone on the dance floor as their fellow patrons clear space to watch. 'Soon Stuartt had the exciting sensation of being on a stage […]. Together they were being sensational. Stuartt was injecting all sorts of Harlem dance hall movements into the soft Latin steps.'[774] Stuartt not only feels the 'sensation' of excitement and dances accordingly but is 'sensational' for those watching (applause 'burst[s] forth' at the end).[775] Even the pleasurable tactile metaphor of the 'soft Latin steps' heightens the sense that enjoyment has affective qualities that affect audience and dancer alike. Stuartt's injection of Harlem Dance Hall movements (a danced example of 'the real thing' sought out by white commentators discussed in Chapter Two) epitomises that site of interracial exchange in which Black 'feeling for the dance' is absorbed, and Nugent, like Hurston, uses dance to represent a moment of Black joy. It is 'feeling for the dance' that creates this quasi-performance in a cabaret.

[771] White people were sometimes startled to meet Black people back in 'reality' whom they had met during such parties. 'As one apocryphal story goes: a black Grand Central Station attendant told a surprised white matron that he helped the next day, "You don't remember me, but we met at Carl Van Vechten's"': Herring, *Queering the Underworld*, p. 127.
[772] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, p. 3.
[773] Crawford, 'The Interracial Party of Modernist Primitivism', p. 167.
[774] Nugent, *Gentleman Jigger*, p. 222.
[775] Ibid.

Gentleman Jigger was written and completed contemporaneously with the beginnings of a movement that was putting the feeling dancer on a large cultural stage. So-called 'revolutionary dance' was growing through the Workers' Dance League, an anti-capitalist organisation founded in 1932 that viewed 'the fight against capitalism [as] the workers' task and the dance [as] one of the means'.[776] Almost exclusively working-class dancers – often performing for free at 'strike halls, union meetings, affairs, benefits, [or] concerts' – would use dance to portray revolutionary ideas to their audiences.[777] Its significance was such that a critic for the *New York Times* declared the Workers' Dance League 'a distinctly important nucleus around which the American dance will develop.'[778] The evidently high profile work of the League provides us with some context for the possible aims of Nugent's engagement with kissing and dancing, which was attached, as I have shown above, to ideas about feeling in Harlem's community. The crux of the League's method for stirring audiences to revolutionary ideas lay in emotion, or, as dancer and League organiser Edna Ocko puts it, 'kinesthetically-realised emotional states', a phrase that recalls Lawrence's treatment of the kiss (see Chapter One).[779] Revolutionary dance practitioners and commentators were largely in agreement that real feeling was the essential quality for a dancer to 'commandeer revolutionary mass feelings of the profoundest and most *stirring* sort' [emphasis added] (noting the word choice that Davis uses scornfully in *Crisis*).[780] To feel, and therefore dance inspired by 'emotions arising from the struggle of the working class', was theorised in contrast to empty 'technical achievement' and the body defamiliarised from emotion.[781] The revolutionary dance is antithetical to the 'depersonalised' and 'desubjectivised' choreography

[776] Oakley Johnson, 'The Dance', *New Theatre,* February 1934, pp. 17-18 (p. 17).
[777] Edna Ocko, 'The Revolutionary Dance Movement', *New Masses,* 12 June 1934, pp. 27-28 (p. 27).
[778] John Martin, 'The Dance: Radical Art', *New York Times,* 21 January 1934, p. 137.
[779] Ocko, 'The Revolutionary Dance Movement', p. 27.
[780] Ibid.
[781] Nell Anyon, 'The Tasks of the Revolutionary Dance', *New Theatre*, September/October 1933, reproduced in: Franko, *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics*, pp. 113-14.

of, for example, *The Rite of Spring*. At the same time, the emotion felt and portrayed in revolutionary dance was consciously separated from 'bourgeois emotionalism' (emotion without political focus), enacted if a thoroughly trained performer pretends 'to be somebody else through mood assumption'.[782] In his detailed analysis of this movement, Mark Franko summarises the mood: 'without emotion, no revolution'.[783]

It is not only probable that Nugent was aware of this dance movement, but also plausible that he was actively involved. At the 'first of a series of Workers' Dance League Forum recitals' in October 1933, seven dances were performed by Winfield and his New Negro Art Theater group, followed by a forum titled, 'What Shall the Negro Dance About?'.[784] Given his involvement with Winfield's group, it is possible that Nugent may have been one of these dancers. Indeed, in an autobiographical fragment, he describes his activity from 1930 as 'N. Y. dance and continued New Negro', this latter comment probably referring to the New Negro Art Theater.[785] Whether or not his involvement with the group brought him to this Workers' Dance League forum in October 1933, he would have at least been among those having discussions (and dancing) about currents of feeling and the relationship between dance and anti-capitalism in the late 1920s and early 1930s, particularly in the context of Black dance culture. Several Black dancers present at the forum felt that 'leftist dance offered an enabling space for Negro dance.'[786] Winfield was less certain about this conclusion and, at first, more apathetic about the question of what 'the Negro [should] dance about'. He 'expressed the opinion that all races, no matter what color, had fundamental human *feelings*

[782] For more on 'bourgeois emotionalism', see Ibid. p. 32; Emanuel Eisenberg, 'Ladies of the Revolutionary Dance', New Theatre, February 1935, reproduced in: Franko, *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics*, p. 130.
[783] Ibid p. 33. A counter-idea can be found in 'the ongoing racial and sexual politics of unfeeling [coldness, insensitivity, frigidity, apathy] […] as a tactic from below': Xine Yao, *Disaffected: The Cultural Politics of Unfeeling in Nineteenth-Century America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), p. 3.
[784] 'Colored Artists Play Big Part in Workers' Dance in New York', *Washington Tribune,* 12 October 1933, p. 1. Winfield's group is referred to as his 'Negro Ballet' in this article.
[785] Rectangular card titled 'Episode Two' in 'Autobiograpical Notes', RBNP.
[786] Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*, p. 58.

and ideas to express in movement' [emphasis added].[787] Despite his hesitations, it is evident that contemporary theories of feeling in dance intersected with and perhaps in part arose from Black dance culture. Indeed, Rogers writes in *Survey Graphic* that jazz 'is the revolt of emotions against repression', aligning the origins of elements of Black popular culture with the aims of the Workers' Dance League.[788] Winfield's dance group maintained its relationship with the League after he died in January 1934. The Modern Negro Dance Group – 'a product of the now deceased Hemsley Winfield' – took part in two more of the Workers' Dance League's performances in April and June 1934.[789] Given Nugent's relationship with Winfield, it seems possible that Nugent would have been involved with, or at least remained interested in, the activity of this group and of the Workers' Dance League more broadly.

The ideologies of the dance activity surrounding the Workers' Dance League sound in many ways aligned with Nugent, and in others, divergent from Nugent. He was largely resistant to capitalism – or, more specifically, its normative associations with 'bourgeois standards of artistic industry and professionalism'.[790] Yet his resistance did not take labour, or the figure of the worker, as its nexus.[791] Nugent's stance, as he put it in an interview, was that 'we were put on this earth to enjoy ourselves' (recall his view that Nijinsky's career seemed too 'strenuous').[792] Nugent's life, art and writings present a kind of joyful attempt to opt out of

[787] 'Colored Artists Play Big Part in Workers' Dance in New York', p. 1.
[788] Rogers, 'Jazz at Home', p. 665.
[789] Ocko, 'The Revolutionary Dance Movement', p. 28.
[790] Cody C. St. Clair, 'A Dilettante Unto Death: Richard Bruce Nugent's Dilettante Aesthetic and Unambitious Failure', *African American Review,* 50 (2017), pp. 273-89 (p. 274).
[791] In 1935, the Workers' Dance League changed their name to the New Dance League, a change that 'reflected the American Communist Party's new initiative of the Popular Front, intended to develop common ground among liberals and socialists of varying beliefs by shifting the focus from the workers to the people': Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*, p. 75.
[792] Carol A. L. Penn, 'An Interview with Mr. Bruce Nugent', *Harlem Cultural Review,* September 1983, p. 2. The interview in the magazine sits alongside several articles and an advertisement for a 'Black dancers in America Series' of lectures and demonstrations at the New York Public Library's Countee Cullen Regional Branch Library.

the American capitalist system.[793] In 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade', Alex's mother criticises Alex for doing nothing and making no money.[794] The same Nugent who spent the money meant for reinvestment in *Fire!!* in 1926 wrote to Van Vechten a decade later declaring himself 'lazy and incapable of arousing interest in [his] own monetary future'.[795] It should be said that Nugent did experience pain in his struggle for money throughout his life, being a freelance artist in and out of what he called 'incidental jobs'.[796] Yet he made deliberate choices to be less productive than his contemporaries, and try to enjoy his life rather than strive for the capitalist (and racial uplift-related) narrative of the accumulation of wealth or perceived success when the accrual of money through participation in capitalism might be seen as one route to security (as in the case of Harlem housing) or wider social power.[797] There were, conversely, deep links between anti-capitalism and the New Negro Movement: Locke comments that the red and black front cover of *Fire!!* 'is left-wing literary modernism with deliberate intent'; the Black socialist magazine *The Messenger* contributed to the growth of the movement; Du Bois, who visited the Soviet Union in 1926, believed that capitalism was inextricably tied to racism and wrote in support of socialism throughout his life.[798] But Nugent's 'aesthetic of confident mediocrity and unambition', as Cody C. St. Clair usefully

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[793] In several letters written to Nugent in 1945, his brother Pete chastised him for not wanting to turn his writing into a commercial endeavour. On 9 March he wrote, 'I want you to be a commercial author with an opinion – once your people listen to what you have to say – you're in! – you can't laugh off material success!'. On 2 April he wrote, 'I think it wise to make it pay – after all you are poor – you must earn your living' (page marked II). Folder 9, Box 12, RBNP.

[794] Nugent, 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade', pp. 77-78.

[795] Nugent to Van Vechten (1936), CVVP.

[796] See 'Activities' page in 'Autobiographical Notes', RBNP, for a list of his occupations such as 'desk clerk'. On January 14th or 15th 1937, he wrote to Van Vechten with an astute commentary upon the American capitalist system and its failures during the Great Depression: 'I am out of a job and hate it. I never thought that the day would come when I would feel at loose ends without a job but, well I am almost completely unhappy. I am of course trying to get back on but it is a rather uphill struggle. I have to get on relief before I can get my job and I have to keep my room in order to get on relief and I have to get a job in order to pay for my room. So there you are. If you have ever searched for the vicious circle I'm living in the middle of it': Folder 622, Box 32, CVVP, page marked 21. He was priced out of Harlem in the mid century, and ended up in New Jersey, where he eventually lived on food stamps and received public assistance (Folder 12, Box 48, RBNP) and social security (Folder 2, Box 49, RBNP).

[797] Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, p. 2.

[798] Locke, 'Fire: A Negro Magazine', p. 563. See W. E. B. Du Bois, 'The Dream of Socialism', *New World Review,* 27 (1959), pp. 14-17.

summarises and valorises it, demarcates itself from left-wing ideas about industry and labour.[799]

This aesthetic is related to his representations of pleasure that we find in kissing and dancing in his writings. Nugent, both like and unlike the Workers' Dance League, emphasises feeling in dance, but indolently and frivolously so (following St. Clair's approach to indolence and frivolity in a 'revalorized sense that endeavours to emphasize their deconstructive agency').[800] His representations of dance prioritise feelings of pleasure (particularly sensory pleasure) – something that he lifts from representations of kissing. Nugent's anti-capitalist emphasis on the prioritisation of pleasure is aligned with his contemporaries' celebrations of physical life as opposed to the drudgery of labour.[801] Hughes, for example, writes in musical terms about the Black artist's 'tom-tom of revolt against weariness in a white world, a world of subway trains and work, work, work; the tom-tom of joy and laughter'.[802] Indeed, the dancing body in Hughes' poem 'Dream Variation' (1925) wants '[t]o whirl and to dance/ Till the bright day is done./ Then rest at cool evening'.[803] Looking at Nugent's writing on dancing and kissing helps to see this in greater focus and in the more explicitly politicised context of the Workers' Dance League. If a proponent of revolutionary dance criticised 'dance of today' for making 'no contact with life', then Nugent anticipated this criticism by representing dance as something absolutely about 'contact with life' – life not being about work, but about feeling pleasure. Nugent anticipates this tactile metaphor of the need for 'contact with life' in

[799] St. Clair, 'A Dilettante Unto Death', p. 280.
[800] Ibid. p. 274.
[801] For more on the relationship between intimacy and capitalism in the modernist period, see: Elsa Högberg, 'Cold Intimacy: Compassion, Precarity and Violence in Nathaniel West's *Miss Lonelyhearts*', in *Modernist Intimacies,* ed. Högberg, pp. 108-28.
[802] Hughes, 'The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountan', p. 58.
[803] Langston Hughes, 'Dream Variation', *Survey Graphic,* March 1925, p. 663.

dance with his representation of the enjoyment of kissing, both on the dancefloor and in dance-related writings.

'Je baiserai ta bouche'

These pleasurable links that Nugent forms between kissing and dancing provide a vital context for his aforementioned interest in the figure of Salome. As well as the allusions to Wilde's play in 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade' and 'Geisha Man', Nugent, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, wrote several Biblical stories with queer themes, including an adaptation of Salome's story. Ellen McBreen argues that Nugent shares Wilde's project of revealing queerness in the Bible.[804] The story, 'Slender Length of Beauty', is based heavily on Wilde's play and incorporates the Black, queer culture in which Salome's dance had developed by this time.[805] When Nugent moved to New York, the 'Salomania' that had been proclaimed by the *New York Times* in 1908 was still in full swing.[806] As well as the many white dancers who performed the infamous 'Dance of the Seven Veils' in theatres across the city – and across America – the Black dancers whom Nugent would have encountered or heard about were numerous. Ada Overton Walker's dance in the touring 'Bandana Land' show (1908-1911) was so popular that she achieved a residency at Hammerstein's Victoria Theatre on Seventh Avenue and 42nd Street in 1912.[807] Nugent later described her as 'the most versatile actor in

[804] Ellen McBreen, 'Biblical Gender Bending in Harlem: The Queer Performance of Nugent's Salome', *Art Journal,* 57 (1998), pp. 22-28 (p. 25).
[805] Nugent wrote another story, 'Tunic With a Thousand Pleats', that provides a tangential sequel to 'Slender Length of Beauty'. At the beginning of the story, four women gossip about the news of the dance and the beheading of Iokanaan, and discuss the fact that Salome asked Iokanaan for a kiss. See Folder 8, Box 24, RBNP. The story was almost published in a quarterly by Alexander Gumby in the early '30s, but Gumby became ill. See Eric Garber, 'Richard Bruce Nugent', in *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Afro-American Writers from the Harlem Renaissance to 1940,* ed. by Trudier Harris (Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1987), pp. 213-21 (p. 221).
[806] 'The Call of Salome', *New York Times,* 16 August 1908, p. 36.
[807] For more on Walker, see: Krasner, 'Black Salome'.

the race'.[808] Her legacy was built upon when Evelyn Preer interpreted the role with the Ethiopian Art Players in 1923.[809] In 1929, Winfield stepped in to play the role in drag at the Cherry Lane Theatre in Greenwich Village when a female co-performer fell ill.[810] Winfield did not need Nugent to dance in his group in *Salomé*, so Nugent admired, from the audience, the 'avant-garde' brashness of being 'a female impersonator and still avoid[ing] the stigma that might easily be attached to that'.[811] Unlike Walker's dance, Preer's and Winfield's dances were not standalone pieces in a variety show, but were diegetic parts of Wilde's play. Christopher Vitale conjectures that Nugent linked the figure of Salome to Wilde's play 'after his burgeoning attraction to men first bloomed after he permanently moved to New York'.[812] However, it is possible that the American edition of the play illustrated by Aubrey Beardsley and translated from the original French by Lord Alfred Douglas was in Nugent's father's 'very esoteric library' in his childhood home. We can at least be sure that Nugent physically encountered this edition by the early 1930s due to the obvious influences of Beardsley's illustrations on his own art.[813] Evidently, though, the link between Wilde and Salome was one that stuck for Nugent.

Due in part to his affinity with Wilde, Nugent has frequently been read through the lens of decadence, side-lining other aspects of his oeuvre and other significant literary and cultural allegiances. Decadence, that aesthetic that Locke warned against, came to 'stand in for a whole range of deviant behaviours, including interracial relationships and homosexuality' that Nugent celebrates throughout his oeuvre.[814] There hence seems to be a consensus that

[808] 'On Marshall's', Folder 7, Box 20, RBNP.
[809] Esther Fulks Scott, 'Negroes as Actors in Serious Plays', *Opportunity,* April 1923, pp. 20-23.
[810] 'Art Theatre Group Shocks Critics With "Salome"', *Baltimore Afro-American,* 3 August 1929, p. 9.
[811] Hatch, 'Interview of Bruce Nugent', p. 10.
[812] Christopher Vitale, 'The Untimely Richard Bruce Nugent' (unpublished doctoral thesis, New York University, 2007), p. 282.
[813] Wirth, 'Introduction', p. 58.
[814] Glick, 'Harlem's Queer Dandy', p. 420.

looking back at *fin-de-siècle* forms of decadence was generative rather than regressive for Nugent. Michèle Mendelssohn argues that, 'by living in the past, Nugent found a way of living in a bigoted present. In doing so, he created a black queer modernity.'[815] Kristin Mahoney puzzles over why a writer who experiences racial trauma or engages in anti-racism in this bigoted present would look to a cultural movement so entrenched in Orientalism, exoticisation, and fetishization. She concludes that Nugent's ability to 'camp, critique, and at times succumb to the exoticising, Orientalist tendencies of decadence' (recall the 'handsome Turk' who dances with Kondo in 'Geisha Man') does not cancel out his ability to practise 'decadent methods and styles that seem to hold with them the capacity to combat, or at least hold at bay, the violence and trauma of racism and colonialism'.[816] In other words, decadence offered Nugent a way to foreground beauty amid trauma. It also offered a framework in which to complicate rigid racial distinctions that he – 'an American and a perfect product of the melting pot' who had a lot of interracial sex and occasionally passed for white or Latino – was constantly transgressing.[817] Mahoney offers the idea that Nugent may have felt a 'potential sense of alliance with or likeness to Salome' as a fellow recipient of an exoticising gaze.[818] The image of Salome's veils, indeed, returns us to the dancing figure of Baker who, as Cheng puts it, used the 'interplay between flesh and materialness' – using fur, gold cloth, and bananas – to stylise Black skin in a glamorous deflection of such a gaze.[819] Nugent's representations of Salome's dance, in different mediums, show the gradual stripping of the veils to be similarly about a negotiation of skin and surface, and 'renegotiation of

[815] Michèle Mendelssohn, 'A Decadent Dream Deferred: Bruce Nugent and the Harlem Renaissance's Queer Modernity', in *Decadence in the Age of Modernism,* ed. by Kate Hext and Alex Murray (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019), pp. 251-75 (p. 253).
[816] Kristin Mahoney, 'Taking Wilde to Sri Lanka and Beardsley to Harlem: Decadent Practice, Race, and Orientalism', *Victorian Literature and Culture,* 49 (2021), pp. 583-606 (p. 586).
[817] The Nugent alias called Paul Arbian in Wallace Thurman's *roman à clef*, *Infants of the Spring* (1932), speaks these words: Thurman, *Infants of the Spring*, p. 111. On Nugent 'passing' see: Wirth, 'Introduction', pp. 11-12.
[818] Mahoney, 'Taking Wilde to Sri Lanka and Beardsley to Harlem', p. 593.
[819] Cheng, *Second Skin*, p. 102.

subjecthood and objecthood'.[820] Nugent's artistic oeuvre contains several drawings of Salome figures – some influenced by Beardsley – which show the veil to be something that conceals and reveals.[821] Salome's dance allows Nugent to explore the heavily loaded concept of sensory reciprocity, and nowhere is this more evident than in his treatment of Salome's kiss.

In 'Slender Length of Beauty', as in Wilde's play, the central protagonist is Salome. She taunts Iokanaan about receiving a kiss from her with dialogue almost lifted from Wilde – 'Wouldst thou suffer a woman to kiss thee, Iokanaan?' – and then dances the dance of the seven veils for Herod.[822] One marked adaptation, however, is the introduction of another love interest for Salome: a shepherd, Narcissus, who is actually Iokanaan's twin separated at birth.[823] Their kisses bookend the dance. In the opening scene of the story, Salome 'allowed the shepherd to kiss her rounded breast; she marvelled at the cool softness of his mouth' and wonders whether her own lips are 'as comely against' his skin.[824] Nugent ensures that Salome pays attention to the impressions she receives as well as those she makes on the world. Nugent's kiss-writing in 'Slender Length of Beauty' seems to propose a phenomenological framework of two subjects experiencing touch, a literary version, akin to those in Chapter Three, of the scenario Luce Irigaray describes as 'I/you touch you/me'.[825] Pressure is put upon this framework when Salome wonders similarly whether Iokanaan's lips would 'be cool on me also', and waits in vain for a response as he stands silently.[826] Questions of consent are navigated and transgressed in Salome's assertions and rejections, and I further discuss the

[820] Ibid. p. 48.
[821] See drawing of 'Salome Dancing Before Herod' (date unknown), in Richard Bruce Nugent, 'Slender Length of Beauty', in *Gay Rebel of the Harlem Renaissance,* ed. Wirth, pp. 130-39 (p. 137). Nugent also drew a series of illustrations that he referred to as 'The Salome Series' (1930) which Wirth believed to be connected to a possible theatrical production: see Wirth, 'Introduction', pp. 59 and Colour Plates 1-7.
[822] Nugent, 'Slender Length of Beauty', p. 134.
[823] On the themes of incest in this story and Nugent's other writings, see: Mahoney, *Queer Kinship after Wilde*, pp. 159-85.
[824] Nugent, 'Slender Length of Beauty', p. 131.
[825] Irigaray, 'When Our Lips Speak Together', p. 72.
[826] Nugent, 'Slender Length of Beauty', p. 134.

kiss in relation to consent in the Conclusion to this thesis. The braiding of impressions given and received is finally disrupted at the end of the story, when Salome finishes her dance and leaves the banquet hall to find Narcissus in the garden. She finds him lying on a hill and anticipates 'feel[ing] thy lips soft on mine', and him feeling 'my breath upon thy cheeks' – '[b]ut Narcissus was dead.'[827] The story ends here, and the reader is not given a resolution beyond this tragedy. What we are given is a story structure that uses the kiss at the beginning and end to establish the position of the feeling subject encountering other feeling subjects, and an abrupt death that shocks in its placement of a subject who can no longer feel. Indeed, each chapter in this thesis has examined writing that uses the kiss to comprehend (from Latin *comprehenděre:* to grasp, seize) the experience of the subject(s) at crucial pressure points in the rapidly evolving conditions of modernity.[828] Recall that Locke posited that the 'modern recoil from the machine' and 'the reaction against over-sophistication' was the foundation of the appreciation of Black art with 'its spontaneity', 'emotions', and 'untarnished instincts'.[829] Such forms of appreciation are vital to questions surrounding the dancing subject. In 'Slender Length of Beauty', Nugent uses the kiss to establish a framework of feeling that anticipates the performative aspect of his story, which opens up a significant intertextual discourse on the evolution of modern dance: Salome, performing the dance, seeing while being seen and feeling while being felt. Or, to use the language from *Gentleman Jigger*, Salome feels sensation and is sensational.

Wilde does not actually describe the dance in *Salomé* and only includes a brief stage direction – '*Salome dances the dance of the seven veils*' – but Nugent narrates the dance in detail.[830]

[827] Ibid. p. 139.
[828] 'Comprehend', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/37847> [accessed 1 May 2022].
[829] Locke, 'Beauty Instead of Ashes', p. 433.
[830] Wilde, *Salome*, p. 79.

After being called upon by Herod, Salome 'sensuously glide[s] around the crescent of tables' to the dancefloor before dancing with movements both 'acrobatic' and 'sexual'.[831] Indeed, one of the elements of the Salome myth that made her so associated with dangerous immorality and excess was her apparently 'unbridled sexual longings, and the violent urge to impair the man she desired'.[832] Immediately, Nugent's Salome is boldly misaligned with more modest versions supported by racial uplift ideology. Walker, for example, was 'under considerable pressure to conform to middle-class society caught up in social propriety and racial uplift'.[833] Though she did not want to 'succumb entirely to prudery', as David Krasner puts it, her dance was more modest than those of her white counterparts.[834] Reviewers of her performance were not entirely sold by her walking (or dancing) the line between eroticism and propriety. Her emphasis on grace took away the potentially exciting 'hoocha-ma-cooch effect which adds a suggestion of sensuality to the exhibitions of other Salomes.'[835] Nugent, evidently, must have felt an affinity with any complaints he heard of unsensual Salomes, or at least felt passionately about the place of the feeling body in Salome performances that he had seen.

Moving through her explicitly 'sexual' dance, Nugent's Salome affects specific members of the audience and is affected by them. This is akin to an interactive version of Michelle Ann Stephen's 'skin acts', played out on a stage where interaction is both more ephemeral and more immediate than in at the cinema, and without its 'textural effects' (see Chapter Two).[836] Salome throws her veil to each observer in turn, wanting, for example, for the Pharisee 'to smell the heady-scent of tube-roses' dousing the pale yellow one, and choosing the 'rapt'

[831] Nugent, 'Slender Length of Beauty', p. 137.
[832] Girdwood, *Modernism and the Choreographic Imagination*, p. 4.
[833] Krasner, 'Black Salome', p. 199.
[834] Ibid.
[835] Unidentified clipping, noted 'Chicago', January 1909, quoted in: Ibid. p. 201.
[836] Stephens, *Skin Acts*, p. 30.

Herod to receive 'the vermillion stuff that covered her breasts.'[837] While Mahoney argues that Salome is helpful to Nugent 'as he thinks about the experience of being looked at, placed, and categorized', Salome's dance in this story does also display, through its theme of reciprocity, a sense of looking back.[838] Such a structure of feeling is allied with those of the kiss, which was seen as 'not only an expression of feeling' but also 'a means of provoking it' according to Havelock Ellis, whom Nugent read as a teenager.[839] Salome's progress through the dance seems to draw upon the informal and interactive nature of the cabaret, in which, as Vogel puts it, 'public intimacies were invented and elaborated as a collaboration between spectators and performers.'[840] Nugent himself writes about how performers would move 'from table to table', '[a]loof, yet completely intimate', interacting with spectators while collecting money to divide with fellow employees.[841] This entertainment culture physically and subjectively broke down the separation between spectator and performer. In the cabaret, eating and drinking space, performing space and dancing space were intertwined and constantly evolving throughout the night as patrons would get up to dance and sit down to watch a performer sing or dance where they had just been dancing.[842] Performance was not on a stage separate from the audience, but about crowding in, with aesthetic, subjective, and economic purpose. Salome's dancefloor, bordered by a 'crescent' of tables, is slightly more ordered with a less flexible use of space, and is perhaps reflective of the wealthier and more spacious Harlem cabarets that 'drew a rigid color line' and welcomed only white patrons (or Black patrons with skin light enough to 'pass'), such as the Cotton Club on 142nd Street and Lenox Avenue.[843] Yet Salome's interaction with her audience –even the 'crescent' formation

[837] Nugent, 'Slender Length of Beauty', pp. 137-38.
[838] Mahoney, *Queer Kinship after Wilde*, p. 167.
[839] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, p. 3. This claim about Nugent is made in: Brian Glavey, *The Wallflower Avant-Garde: Modernism, Sexuality, and Queer Ekphrasis* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 99.
[840] Vogel, *The Scene of Harlem Cabaret*, p. 22.
[841] Nugent, 'On Harlem', p. 151.
[842] Ibid. p. 150.
[843] Ibid. p. 152.

itself, meaning that the audience can see each other, participating in the cabaret-like 'self-reflexivity of the audience for itself' – shows us that Nugent was making multiple connections between Salome's dance and Black performance culture in Harlem.[844]

Salome's affective response to her audience is most apparent when she sees Narcissus in the audience. On noticing him, '[h]er breasts hardened. Her lips grew soft, and her hips more seductively sexual as she twirled into a final passion-spasm'.[845] Notwithstanding Nugent's uncomfortable male account of what apparently happens to a woman's body on seeing her lover, Salome's arousal at the sight of Narcissus alter the contours and haptic quality of her body, and actually alters the dance itself. Her hips become 'more seductively sexual', implying a change of movement, and her final twirl becomes a 'passion-spasm' (perhaps to be read akin to orgasm given Salome's associations with sexual desire) that is driven by feeling and is apparently, at least in part, an involuntary affect-response. In *Sahdji*, one dance ends in 'orgiastic climax', and (recalling that Nugent walked out) it is possible that the performed result did not have the desire effect.[846] Were 'Slender Length of Beauty' to have been published at the time of writing, Nugent's dance-literate readers would have been interested to find exactly what some modernist dance commentators had been censuring. If only 'personal affect could be eliminated from dance' – as Franko puts it, narrating the impetus of dominant modernist dance culture – it could become 'aesthetically absolute'.[847] In 1917, Marinetti praised the 'pure geometry' of Nijinsky's choreography, 'freed from the mimetic and devoid of any sexual stimulation'.[848] Geometry, on the other hand, can be understood in terms more bodily than abstracted (see Chapter One), something that reading

[844] Vogel, *The Scene of Harlem Cabaret*, p. 63.
[845] Nugent, 'Slender Length of Beauty', p. 138.
[846] Bruce, 'Sahdji, an African Ballet', p. 397.
[847] Franko, *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics*, p. xi.
[848] F. T. Marinetti, 'Futurist Dance', in *F. T. Marinetti: Critical Writings,* ed, pp. 208-17 (p. 209).

geometry through the lens of the kiss makes evident. Salome's dance revels in feeling: her emotion does escape her, and she is explicitly sexually stimulated. This is achieved by Nugent's choice to frame her dance with kisses at the beginning and end of the story, since it is Narcissus who inspires Salome's feeling. This story encapsulates the intersubjective and intimate elements of kissing that find expression in dancing, and particularly the reciprocal modes of feeling between dancer and audience.

Performing the public kiss

Not only does Salome feel desire – and this desire affects her performance choices – but also shame. Towards the end of her dance, she notices Iokanaan in the audience and 'stood shamed and still […] turning to hide her nakedness', and flees the banquet hall.[849] Notably, Nugent also fixates on this affect in 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade' after Alex thinks of 'that passage from Wilde's Salome': he 'flushed warm…with shame…or was it shame'.[850] Nugent's intertextual dialogues tie the kiss-that-never-happens between Salome and Iokanaan to shame, although shame is the last emotion that Nugent associated with intimate activity, as we have seen in his responses to those opposing open discussion of homosexuality in the Black community.[851] Yet Salome does feel shame when Iokanaan sees her naked body, which not only alludes to his rejection of her kisses, but also makes Iokanaan a metonym for the principles of the 'uplift body' since his presence stands in for explicit criticisms of 'lewdness'. Nugent's Salome feels desire, and shame, and dances sexually, with passion. Such themes open pressing questions for Nugent's contemporary moment regarding the

[849] Nugent, 'Slender Length of Beauty', p. 138.
[850] Nugent, 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade', p. 83.
[851] Nugent said in an interview that, in 1920s Harlem, '[p]eople did what they wanted to do with whom they wanted to do it. [..] Nobody was in the closet. There wasn't any closet.': Kisseloff, 'Richard Bruce Nugent', pp. 288-89.

circumstances in which kissing could be permitted or restricted: questions regarding who might openly kiss whom, in terms of both race and sexuality; and exactly how openly, when it came to both public space and performance.

Such themes are anticipated in 'Geisha Man'. After Kondo and Don have known each other for a short while, Don takes Kondo to an all-male party, where he kisses multiple men in front of Kondo. It should be noted that New York (and particularly Harlem) nightlife during Prohibition negotiated the boundaries of public and private, as commercial venues became hidden speakeasies, and private parties let the paying public in (often to raise money for rent).[852] This party in 'Geisha Man' is evidently a buffet flat – a prime example of the intersections between private and public space – and throughout the night

> [t]he men became amorous, and public caresses became more and more frequent. Hemsley was dancing nude in the front room. I looked for Don…and saw him sitting on a lounge in the other room, kissing a boy. The dance ended.[853]

Nugent writes kissing as a conspicuous pleasure at this party where dancing structures the flow of the evening. He places the dancing figure of Hemsley (Winfield) squarely in the picture. Winfield was dancing Salome at the same time that Nugent was writing 'Geisha Man', and his nudity in this passage suggests that he is finishing Salome's dance. Indeed, once naked, the dance ends, like Salome's. Winfield's presence in the story also anticipates his stake in the question of 'what shall the Negro dance about', in the context of anti-capitalist dance movements. Indeed, one of the primary issues taken with bourgeois forms of dance by those who aligned themselves with radical dance (including Winfield) was that

[852] In the 'Geisha Man Notebooks', Nugent writes of giving 'a donation party. […] Admittance was so[me] article of food.' For more on rent or donation parties, see Eric Garber, 'A Spectacle in Color: The Lesbian and Gay Subculture of Jazz Age Harlem', in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past,* ed. by Martin B. Duberman, George Chauncey, and Martha Vicinus (London: Penguin, 1989), pp. 318-31 (p. 321).
[853] Nugent, 'Geisha Man', p. 96.

dance had been 'swept into the *private* studios of individual dancers to express their intense personal moods' [emphasis added].[854] Hence, though one can dance alone, doing so was actually politicised at this time so as to be misaligned with the ethos of Nugent and other dancers contemporary to him. High rents and housing shortages meant that Harlem residents understood privacy to be a luxury.[855] Of course, on one hand, this party in 'Geisha Man' is in a private home, and buffet flats were far more private than drag balls or cabarets.[856] The dancing – and kissing – are, on the other hand, both 'public' and communal. Indeed, as Vogel argues, 'public enactments of intimacy [were] an alternative to the emergence of a privatized sexual identity informed by white-racialized middle-class norms.'[857] Nugent's momentary placement of a dancing Winfield in a scene about kissing emphasises the way that he pulls the intersubjective (that is, not individual) and intimate (not as a bourgeois 'mood', but as feeling with meaning) elements of the kissing into the public sphere of dance and embodiment. Notably, the philosophies drafted in Nugent's ephemera reflect this premise: on a typed fragment, he writes a story about a woman who 'was growing to hate the word privacy. It seemed to encroach monster-fashion on all the things that meant most to her. What she wanted was a greater degree of intimacy.'[858] Nugent's representation of dance are radical in making queer and pleasurable modes of embodiment public, where they have been expected to remain private, in spaces where people (and particularly Black, queer people) have been expected to 'carry themselves properly'.[859] It is not for nothing that 'Hemsley was dancing nude in the *front* room' [emphasis added] used for entertaining in a buffet flat and presumably where a passer-by might see in, as opposed to one of the back rooms where

[854] Anyon, 'The Tasks of the Revolutionary Dance', reproduced in Franko, *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics,* p. 113.
[855] A point made by Garber, 'A Spectacle in Color', p. 320.
[856] Garber sees privacy as the 'primary allure' of buffet flats: Ibid. p. 325.
[857] Vogel, *The Scene of Harlem Cabaret*, p. 23.
[858] 'Typed Fragments', Folder 10, Box 27, RBNP.
[859] George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), p. 256.

sexual activity would take place.[860] Winfield is exposed both because of the space he dances in and because he is nude, while others kiss around his dancing body.

Not all partygoers approve of the scene. Kondo meets Adam (whom, Kondo shortly declares, is 'named for the first man', a name that invokes ideas of shame around nudity), and Adam asks whether 'this sort of thing (he waved his hand) […] amuse[s]' Kondo.[861] Elaborating on his question, Adam says, 'I mean, just the mere pressing of lips. The mere rubbing of bodies. The tasting of bad breaths. All before the eyes of others.'[862] This description of kissing ascribes something banal and quotidian to what is meant to be particularly transgressive, epitomising that ambiguity of the kiss as both significant and yet overlooked. Adam's words also return something deeply embodied to the processes of description in a sharp subversion of the 'uplift body'. Nugent details the pressure of skin and the taste and smell of halitosis – that affliction meant to repel kisses unless combatted with the right mouthwash brand (see Introduction). It also, once again, echoes the choreographic kiss in 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade' by using the verb 'press'. Adam's description similarly appeals to dance-like vocabulary by distilling the movement of a body in kinaesthetic language (press, rub) such as that used in Nugent's ballet scenarios (for example, 'thud', 'leap', 'whirl').[863] This occurs 'before the eyes of others', further invoking that link between audience and dancer, or kisser and spectator. Adam's movement is described in parentheses '(he waved his hand)' like a stage direction, reflecting the impact of Nugent's genre traversal at this time. 'Geisha Man' could therefore not unreasonably be described as a 'chanted dance or chanted ballet'. This quasi-choreographed action 'before the eyes of others' raises questions about the eyes that might be

[860] 'Buffet Flats', RBNP, 2. Högberg has recently argued that intimacy can be 'seen as the very nexus where private and public converge': Högberg, 'Introduction', p. 2.
[861] Nugent, 'Geisha Man', p. 97.
[862] Ibid.
[863] 'Ballet Paradox', RBNP; Bruce, 'Sahdji, an African Ballet', pp. 390, 394, 399.

watching. They could, on one hand, belong to the partygoers watching the 'public caresses' take place. These partygoers are not just observers but, also, participants. Indeed, a 'sex circus' was a particular type of buffet flat in which 'erotic shows' would be put on and joined in with.[864] At drag balls, at which most of the attendees were 'there to observe rather than participate', the weaving between observer and participant partly breaks down which caused tension since, as Eric Garber puts it, '[m]any gays didn't like being gawked at'.[865] This point lends itself to the suggestion of a phenomenological framework through which to read Nugent's writing, since this party in 'Geisha Man' presents a space in which people both look and are looked at. Writing on the cabaret, Vogel argues that it was a place where 'public intimacies were invented and elaborated as a collaboration between spectators and performers'.[866] This buffet flat is not a cabaret, but the blurred boundaries between observer and participant (a step away from performer and audience) share its qualities. As I have argued, for Nugent, these intersubjective ideas are what links kissing to dancing. However, the eyes that Adam worries about could also belong to those outside, figuratively looking in. In the *Crisis* article written just a year before Nugent finished 'Geisha Man', Davis attacks Nugent and his contemporaries by name for 'making an *exhibition* of their own unhealthy imagination, in the name of frankness and sincerity' [emphasis added].[867] Evidently, Nugent harnesses the question of what was on show with his characteristic – and productive – 'insolence'.[868] The public nature of the kissing is not, however, the thing with which Kondo takes issue. They object '[o]nly to promiscuity. It's very possible for one person to care for more than one. But just to kiss because one can…I don't know…'.[869] Nugent again alludes to

[864] 'Buffet Flats', RBNP, 3-4.
[865] Eric Garber, 'T'ain't Nobody's Bizness: Homosexuality in 1920s Harlem', in *Black Men/White Men: A Gay Anthology,* ed. by Michael J. Smith (San Francisco, CA: Gay Sunshine, 1983), pp. 7-16 (p. 13).
[866] Vogel, *The Scene of Harlem Cabaret*, p. 22.
[867] Davis, 'Our Negro "Intellectuals"', p. 268.
[868] Nugent's insolence 'slap[ped] conventions, and usher[ed] in the possibilities of new forms of artistic and narrative expression': Cobb, 'The Harlem Renaissance's Impolite Queers', p. 343.
[869] Nugent, 'Geisha Man', p. 97.

'Smoke, Lilies and Jade', with its conclusion that 'one *can* love two at the same time'. The tone of Kondo's prudery reflects the particular pressures on Nugent's generation of artists, both as producers of art and members of their community, carrying the burden of representation.

Nugent was interested in social restrictions, effected through shame and leveraged by conservative Black and white people, regarding what should and should not be done in public. Black embodiment was already being scrutinised in urban areas due to white racism and corresponding tensions between middle-class Black people and migrants from the south who might affect the public image of the Black community. In Harlem, Black newspapers 'lectured migrants on how to carry themselves properly on buses, what to wear, and how to behave in public'.[870] In Chicago, too, Black organisations 'instruct[ed] new migrants in acceptable urban deportment', in particular, 'cleanliness, sobriety, and respectability, emphasizing issues of public appearance'.[871] The very public arenas of dance, and the increasingly public act of kissing, of course generated anxiety in terms of public appearance.[872] As discussed in the Introduction, kissing in dance halls had become a worry in terms of culturally-approved behaviour. If this was a concern among white cultural commentators, then the concern among Black commentators was compounded, given, as Du Bois describes, the experience of 'measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity'.[873] When Alex in 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade' wants to kiss Beauty and flushes with 'shame…or was it shame', this has been read by critics in terms of

[870] Chauncey, *Gay New York*, p. 256.
[871] Stewart, *Migrating to the Movies*, p. 102.
[872] The kiss has in the past, in the West, been a decidedly public gesture until such developments as, for example: Puritanism; the burgeoning literature of politeness and social commentary; and the cultivation of genteel public space, resulting in a 'shift of the kiss from the social to the erotic, and from the communal to the private': Harvey, 'Introduction', p. 29. See also Turner, 'Adulterous Kisses'.
[873] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, p. 3.

Nugent's very 'out' queer persona. But this question of shame is enriched when we consider the tensions surrounding kissing culture in the public (and even performative) arena. The shame that Alex is expected to feel when kissing is teased out in Nugent's dance-related writing when he explores ideas about the acceptability of public intimacy.

At the beginning of the published section of 'Geisha Man', Nugent composes the initial kissing scenes between Kondo and Don in a manner akin to staging. Initially, as Kondo cruises the West Village at night, they notice that '[l]ittle circles of light pried into the secrets of the couples on benches', as though the lamps are intruding on or prying open private lives in public spaces.[874] In the 'Geisha Man' notebooks, Kondo writes a poem (almost four pages long) 'such as [E. E.] Cummings would write' about a dancer under a spotlight with the phrase 'circle of light' repeated three times.[875] The poem begins with 'the spotlight focused/ A/ M/ B/ E/ R/ amber on the pale dancer/ cast of shadows faint/ faint blue shadows on her neck dark'.[876] (Recall that Kondo, in these unpublished versions, moves to Osaka with the intention of becoming a performer.) Reading this notebook as the section preceding the published extract clarifies that Nugent intended for the circles of light in the streets to be read as spotlights like those that light a dancer on a stage. In this published section, Kondo and their fellow street-dwellers pass in and out of darkness and light, and Nugent details which movements are lit and which in shadow: 'the play of light on his cheek and forehead'; 'I passed beneath a light'; '[h]is face was in shadow'.[877] Prior to, and alongside, writing 'Geisha Man', Nugent developed his understanding of stage lighting and his technique of describing such lighting when writing ballet scenarios. In 'Sahdji', for example, he and Locke detail the colour, quality, and intensity of the stage lighting. Near the beginning, '[a] warmer gold

[874] Nugent, 'Geisha Man', p. 91.
[875] Nugent, 'Geisha Man Notebooks', labelled pp. 53-56 in plain-covered notebook.
[876] Ibid, p. 53.
[877] Nugent, 'Geisha Man', p. 91.

begins to appliqué the clearing, throwing into sharper relief the crescent of young bucks'.[878] Later, the lights shift and the 'shadows run in the opposite direction from the previous scene and a glow is seen through the background of the forest.'[879] Nugent cements the link between stage lighting and intimacy in 'Geisha Man' when, pausing for a moment under one lamp to meet Don and shyly averting a kiss, Kondo says, 'I once saw you on Broadway, under a light'.[880] The speech in the story is even formatted like a play, beginning each new spoken line alternately with 'He: […]/ Me: […]/ He: […]/ Me: […]'. By using the imagery of staged dance to write the negotiation of kissing in public space, Nugent represents the complexity of the use of urban areas for queer people who met friends or 'cruised' in spaces that were 'less easily regulated than a residential or commercial venue'.[881] His dancers perform under spotlights, and these lights in turn unsettle ideas about how openly kisses, particularly the taboo kind (queer, interracial), are supposed to take place.

When writing kisses in the streets, Nugent takes part in challenging 'bourgeois conceptions of public order, the proper boundaries between public and private space'.[882] Indeed, even the dark spaces beyond the lamplight are still public and not hidden. To kiss under lamplight, in contrast to kissing in shadow, reflects what Nugent describes in an interview for the documentary *Before Stonewall* (1984) as the 'difference between flaunting it and just not trying to keep it hidden'.[883] These queer negotiations of public and private intersect with anxieties in the Black community in which, as A. B. Christa Schwarz puts it, this dichotomy also 'has the extended meaning of "within the black community (of Harlem)"/"before a white

[878] Bruce, 'Sahdji, an African Ballet', p. 392.
[879] Ibid. p. 394.
[880] Nugent, 'Geisha Man', p. 92.
[881] Chauncey, *Gay New York*, p. 179.
[882] Ibid. p. 180.
[883] 'Before Stonewall Interview', Folder 1, Box 18, RBNP. This statement from Nugent does not air in the documentary.

audience.”’[884] This history is brought into relief by the performances of kissing in this scene in the park. Don and Kondo walk ‘through sharp circles of light’ and, once ‘out of a hard light’, Don stops to repeatedly kiss Kondo ‘[h]ungrily’, to which Kondo protests, ‘[d]on’t. Someone might come.’[885] That ‘someone’ could possibly be an acquaintance or a plainclothes police officer who patrolled cruising areas.[886] Though they walk in and out of visibility, Kondo’s paranoia speaks to the fact that, even when not under a spotlight, the darkness is still onstage, or in public. Nugent’s metaphors of performance when Don and Kondo kiss interrogate the boundaries of public and private, and present intimate feeling as something that a queer Black man might dance about or write about. The former, dancing, is a more obviously public-facing artistic pursuit, and the latter, writing, plays with these boundaries in its intention for private consumption by a reading public. Nugent’s attention to public kissing in ‘Geisha Man’ reflects Harlem’s dance culture and, more broadly, the scrutiny of the embodied behaviour of queer people and people of colour in New York. On the other hand, the joy in Nugent’s representations of kissing and dancing reflects the impetus to take intimacy beyond the private spaces dictated by bourgeois society.

Contemporary echoes

Nugent’s legacy has not been proportional to his significant contemporary impact. This, Löbberman conjectures, is partly to do with the ephemerality of his pursuit of dance.[887] A recent novel, however, weaves Nugent’s legacy through its pages with meditations on the relationship between Blackness, modernism, anti-capitalism and pleasure. *LOTE* (2020) by

[884] Schwarz, *Gay Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*, p. 25. For more on the idea of public/private in queer Harlem, see: Herring, *Queering the Underworld*, pp. 130-35.
[885] Nugent, ‘Geisha Man’, p. 93.
[886] For more on policing in queer spaces, see: Chauncey, *Gay New York*, pp. 184-88.
[887] Löbbermann, ‘Richard Bruce Nugent and the Queer Memory of Harlem’, p. 228.

Shola von Reinhold takes Nugent as a central historical figure. Throughout the novel the protagonist, Mathilda, attempts to track down the activity of a 1920s society, the Lote-Os. It is 'a society dedicated to the precepts of aestheticism – Beauty worship and idleness'.[888] The pursuit of beauty and pleasure in the novel, underpinned by the central characters' consumption of luxury while dodging its expense, is posited as an anti-capitalist and anti-racist act.[889] As one character says, 'Black people consuming and creating beauty of a certain kind is still one of the most transgressive things that can happen in the West, where virtually all consumption is orchestrated through universal atrocity.'[890] In the novel, Nugent is one of the leading members of the Lote-Os. Mathilda becomes transfixed by Nugent.[891] In *LOTE*, he becomes a figurehead of radical, Black, queer prioritisation of beauty and pleasure while positing passivity and idleness as a legitimate and anti-capitalist way of existence.

When Mathilda and her friend Erskine-Lily search for documentation to tell them more about the Lote-Os, Erskine-Lily finds the score of an opera that the Lote-Os put on in the late 1920s. The score includes 'dance notations' which the pair struggle to read, having quit ballet earlier in life. Erskine-Lily concludes that these dance notations are '[i]nstructions' for those wanting to 'reconstruct, or shall we say revive, the Lote-Os in some capacity'.[892] It is telling that von Reinhold chooses dance – this ephemeral artform, fictionally materialised in *LOTE* as notation – to be the 'instructions' that Nugent and other members pass to those in similarly radical pursuit of beauty and pleasure. Von Reinhold's epigraph for *LOTE* expresses '[s]olidarity, love and adoration for all those resisting universal tedium; to all those struggling with fascism, racism, and capitalism in any of their forms'.[893] As recognition for Nugent

[888] Shola von Reinhold, *LOTE* (London: Jacaranda Books, 2020), p. 205.
[889] Ibid. p. 358.
[890] Ibid. pp. 209-10.
[891] Ibid. p. 75.
[892] Ibid. p. 258.
[893] Ibid. front matter.

grows in our own contemporary moment, *LOTE* inscribes Nugent's work as part of the resistance to 'universal tedium', racism, and capitalism. For Nugent, as I have shown in this chapter, the body that feels, and therefore kisses and dances, resists tedium and is radical for doing so when living within a racist, capitalist, and homophobic system.

We return to the ball in 'Geisha Man' where Kondo dances with another attendee. 'He was whispering little exciting breaths in my ear and kissing me. The feel of his muscles! His thighs darted into the folds of silver poppies, connecting with electric simplicity ever so often through the metallic flowers. The body feel of him!' This queer setting presents us with the way that Nugent extrapolates the intimate, intersubjective, and pleasurable elements of kissing to dancing. In this very public display of affection, Kondo responds to what they feel. Their excitement in the moment is embodied through movement. All the while, they are draped in a costume dress covered in metallic flowers, offering a silvery predecessor of the queer luxuries that von Reinhold will explore in *LOTE*. By producing art that is concerned with the way kissing feels, Nugent lifts ideas about the way dancing feels. He thus intervenes within a dance culture that was preoccupied with the import of feeling in dance. His preoccupations are subversive in a Black cultural context that sometimes expected – in response to white racist systems – the body to carry itself in a heterosexual, bourgeois, middle-class manner. Nugent's kissers dance for joy.

Conclusion: Kissing, Consent and Meeting the World

There is a little-discussed kiss in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) that is not between Sally and Clarissa; it does not involve Clarissa at all. That kiss is between Sally and Hugh Walpole, whom Sally detests for his priggishness:

> "He's read nothing, thought nothing, felt nothing," he could hear her saying […]. He was a perfect specimen of the public school type, she said. No country but England could have produced him. She was really spiteful, for some reason; had some grudge against him. Something had happened – he forgot what – in the smoking-room. He had insulted her – kissed her? Incredible! Nobody believed a word against Hugh of course. Who could? Kissing Sally in the smoking-room![894]

This kiss somewhat evades the reader. It is presented to us as a question, not a fact, and is then further diluted by rumour. Yet what does come to the surface is unsettling. This is evidently not a consensual kiss. We have seen throughout this thesis how power imbalances are made manifest in the syntax of literary kisses, and Hugh (however questionably, in his mind), 'kissed [Sally]'. Woolf in fact modulates to the word 'kissed' from 'insulted'. This verb is more telling about the nature of this kiss than the verb 'kiss' itself, given that it derives from the Latin *insultāre*, meaning to leap at or on.[895] Hugh's kissed insult is in fact an assault.

While reciprocity has been a common feature of the kisses discussed in this thesis, it breaks down in *Mrs Dalloway*. Sally expresses her grudge against Hugh in sentient terms: he has 'felt nothing', which, in this context, emphasises the forced nature of the kiss. While Chapter Four, we saw Nugent present us with Narcissus who cannot feel kisses because he is dead,

[894] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, p. 66.
[895] 'Insult', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/97244> [accessed 21 November 2022].

Hugh has 'felt nothing' because he is not kissed back. His unfeeling embodiment makes him a 'specimen of the public school type', and hence Woolf purposefully radiates out from a single incident to implicate cultural emblems of maleness and wealth. The relation drawn between a forced kiss and public schools suggests that the legibility of different types of kisses is bound up in the power structures of gender, class, and nationhood. Indeed, there are many legal examples from Europe between the classical and modern periods in which forced kisses have not been taken seriously if the perpetrator is of a higher social class than the person they have kissed.[896] Such cultures of power and influence are evident in *Mrs Dalloway* in terms of who is believed and who is not. Woolf makes this point with humour when she quips that '[n]obody believed a word against Hugh of course.' In Chapter Three I discussed free indirect discourse in relation to a reader's participation in a narrative, and this 'of course' imbricates the reader in both sides of an argument. It suggests either that 'of course' people would believe Hugh over Sally, or 'of course' Hugh's behaviour is above reproach. In this way, Woolf succeeds in drawing us to approach nuanced questions of consent in relation to an act that is still rarely discussed, in literary criticism or wider culture, in terms of assault or force.

Throughout the research process for this thesis, questions of consent have surfaced repeatedly.[897] All of the chapters discuss texts that negotiate the boundaries of consent and

[896] The Romans passed a law that punished someone forcing a kiss on someone of equal or higher social standing: Danesi, *The History of the Kiss*, p. 6. By the eighteenth century, a jurist in Germany wrote that there is only valid complaint for a forced kiss if the perpetrator kisses someone of 'superior standing': Nyrop, *The Kiss and Its History*, p. 75.

[897] Consent has become an emerging topic in modernist studies in the era of #Me Too. In the introduction to their edited volume on the topic, Robin E. Field and Jerrica Jordan write that, '[g]iven the formal and ethical complexities of modernist literature and art, as well as the omnipresence of sexual violence through these texts, modernist literary critics are well positioned to address the tenets of #MeToo': Robin E. Field and Jerrica Jordan, 'Introduction', in *#Metoo and Modernism,* ed. by Robin E. Field and Jerrica Jordan (Clemson, SC: Clemson University Press, 2022), pp. 1-15 (p. 3). See also '#MeToo and Modernism' cluster, *Modernism/modernity Print Plus* <https://modernismmodernity.org/forums/metoo-modernism> [accessed 26 April 2023].

reciprocity in relation to the kiss in different ways: as the bodies in Lawrence's novels swing around corners in cars, they develop an awareness of another body in relation to their own, learning its boundaries and intentions (Chapter One); Black women are kissed in the dark by white men in literature and film of the modernist period while, contemporaneously, the railway tunnel emerges as a space in which unwanted kisses were thrust upon passengers (Chapter Two); women negotiate passivity and mastery in patriarchal structures of kissing, finding ways to represent kisses that are not about one taking while the other gives (Chapter Three); dancers kiss and react to each other's bodies in shared moments of intersubjectivity while, in contrast, Salome kisses the severed head of a man who rejected her advances (Chapter Four). We have seen in these chapters that racism, sexism, classism and homophobia often govern representations and experiences of the kiss in the modernist period. The forced kiss shows us how forms of oppression intersect with and influence the parameters of the types of embodiment that are free for some, even without consent or reciprocity, and restricted for others. The question of consent in the literature of kissing is particularly troubling because representations of forced kisses often hang in tension between a serious assault and a trifling matter. We can look to kiss-interested modernist writers to dwell in these complications and understand the forced kiss as something that has been cloaked in ambiguity, like many other kinds of kiss, but as something that clearly crosses the boundaries of embodied experience. The way modernist writers represent the forced kiss shows us this tension between a troubling romantic trope and a blatant transgression of consent. This is a critical junction that requires addressing if further work is to be done on the kiss in modernism and beyond.

It is telling that Woolf's oeuvre actually features not one but two forced kisses. The other is in her earliest novel, *The Voyage Out* (1915), in which we first hear of Mr and Mrs Dalloway.

On the deck of the ship Euphrosyne that takes Rachel Vinrace to South America, Richard Dalloway engages Rachel in a one-sided conversation. He declares, '[w]hat solitary icebergs we are, Miss Vinrace! How little we can communicate! […] This reticence – this isolation – that's what's the matter with modern life!'[898] In Richard's pompous words, Woolf has actually written a parody of how modernism would come to be understood, with associations of coldness and isolation. Significantly, there is still kissing in Richard's wasteland. His apparent solution to overcoming isolation is to kiss Rachel without invitation. The movement of the ship lurches her forwards, and 'Richard took her in his arm and kissed her. Holding her tight, he kissed her passionately'.[899] Rachel's reaction is complex. She trembles, feels painful emotion, then ceases to feel as 'a chill of body and mind crept over her'.[900] She is then impressed by a sense of peace and 'strange exultation', and concludes that '[s]omething wonderful had happened'.[901] Yet she feels 'uncomfortable', not exalted, with Richard at dinner afterwards.[902] Woolf, as we have seen in this thesis, is invested in the way a kiss can hold within it the multiple complexities of life itself. It is obvious, when reading this passage in *The Voyage Out*, that Woolf would have felt disappointment with a kiss simply expressing love on a cinema screen. The kernel of this forced kiss is that it results from a breakdown in communication. The satire stems from the fact that Richard, who is apparently so disturbed by isolation and reticence – the withholding of feeling – is in fact uninterested in Rachel's felt experience and forces a kiss on her when his own feelings are not reciprocated. Richard and Hugh, who belong to the same social circle, embody the asymmetry regarding who is allowed to kiss whom, and in what context. Taking the forced kiss seriously shows us that concerns about isolation and existential subjectivity are also bound up with the privileges that

[898] Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1965 [1915]), pp. 83-84.
[899] Ibid. p. 84.
[900] Ibid. p. 85.
[901] Ibid.
[902] Ibid.

some bodies are granted regarding how they can move through the world. To feel isolation, to withhold feeling, or to be preoccupied with one's own subjective experience, is a privilege in the context of non-consensual intimacy.[903] The kiss allows us to see modernism's aesthetic project in a new light. And as we have seen via the texts in this thesis, modernist prose presents a very different picture of 'modern life' to this one of which Richard Dalloway complains. We find people kissing aboard transport, at the cinema, on the dancefloor; the kiss is taken seriously and offers modes of narrative for exploring interracial or queer or feminine intimacy. We do not find 'solitary icebergs'. The widely-manifested modernist interest in the kiss shows an impulse towards representing connection, and in portraying what connection means for bodily experience, and how that lends itself to describing and relating the experience of 'modern life'.

Forced kisses have been woven through millennia of kiss-writing.[904] These kisses have often been written and read not as a transgression but as a romantic gesture. The kiss that Pygmalion bestows on Galatea (see Introduction) indeed begins when 'at last' he feels that she has become sentient, but before the reader is aware of her capacity to kiss back. The harm inherent in such kisses has been repackaged into the fold of literary merit and dispersed as a literary trope. In Ovid's 'Art of Love' (Book I), he tells the reader that 'such violence is pleasing to the fair; they often wish, through compulsion, to grant what they are delighted to grant.'[905] This passage enshrines the belief that resistance to the kiss is an implicit invitation. This idea is echoed in Kristoffer Nyrop's modernist-era study of the kiss, in which he says that 'women are not always in earnest when they resist the man approaching with a kiss.'[906]

[903] For more on the privilege of withholding, see: Lauren Berlant, 'Structures of Unfeeling: "Mysterious Skin"', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society,* 28 (2015), pp. 191-213 (p. 197).
[904] While there are too many instances to look at here, readers can see: Gray, *The Art of Love Poetry*, p. 85; Bombaugh, *The Literature of Kissing*, pp. 93, 318, 362.
[905] Quoted in: Bombaugh, *The Literature of Kissing*, p. 20.
[906] Nyrop, *The Kiss and Its History*, pp. 79-80.

What is complicated about the forced kiss is that it can be presented, as Ovid does in 'The Art of Love', as something tender. This 'violence', if unwanted, at least causes no physical harm. This false assumption is emphasised by the euphemistic label frequently assigned to this literary tradition: the 'stolen kiss'. Tellingly, this tradition is named in the 1904 article in *The Fortnightly Review* by Norman Pearson, who writes that '[t]he stolen kiss has always appealed strongly to the imagination of poets and others.'[907] This trope also appears in Stephen Gaselee's 1924 article in *The Criterion*, in which he gives an example of an ancient Greek novel in which one character 'steals a kiss' from another.[908] These articles show that the forced kiss was received in the early twentieth century as an innocuous and reversible act that belongs in the realm of the poetic. The words 'stolen' or 'steals' suggests that the experience of one's own body is an object that can be taken and returned. Returning the kiss is also an object of misogynistic humour in this so-called tradition. Eighteenth-century poet Horace Walpole (whose name is tellingly similar to Hugh Walpole's in *Mrs Dalloway*) jokes in his poem 'Yielding to Temptation' (published posthumously 1798), '[i]f you say that I stole it – why, take it again.'[909] These problems are sidestepped in Pearson's article. Quoting the eighteenth-century poet James Thomson, Pearson asserts that 'the popularity in literature of "the kiss, snatch'd hasty from the sidelong maid," is undeniable.'[910] Not only, then, did writers in the twentieth century receive the forced kiss as an innocent trope, but also a popular one.

[907] Pearson, 'The Kiss Poetical', p. 299.
[908] Gaselee, 'The Soul in the Kiss', p. 351.
[909] Quoted in Bombaugh, *The Literature of Kissing*, p. 97. Alex Wong points out that other poets such as Philip Sidney have riffed on the same idea, yet Wong's uncritical use of the term 'stolen kiss' shows that this is still treated as a poetic literary tradition rather than dissected as a problem: Wong, *The Poetry of Kissing in Early Modern Europe*, p. 204.
[910] Pearson, 'The Kiss Poetical', p. 299.

Dublin residents in 1904 – both the year Pearson's article was published, and the year depicted in *Ulysses* (1922) – would have been aware of the popularity of such a trope. This point prompts a closer examination of the 'Nausicaa' episode, in which Gerty MacDowell sits on the beach and thinks about the failures of her courtship with Reggy Wylie, whom she fantasises about marrying. The episode often dwells upon Reggy's failures to reciprocate her interests, but James Joyce presents a forced kiss that complicates matters:

> The night of the party long ago in Stoer's (he was still in short trousers) when they were alone and he stole an arm round her waist she went white to the very lips. He called her little one in a strangely husky voice and snatched a half kiss (the first!) but it was only the end of her nose and then he hastened from the room with a remark about refreshments. Impetuous fellow![911]

Gerty, having never experienced a kiss before this, does want to be pursued. She is excited at the prospect of the kiss, 'the first', like Molly Bloom and many others seen in this thesis. But Reggy's execution is haphazard and does not wait for reciprocation: he 'stole' an embrace, and 'snatched a half kiss', the 'half' suggesting that only one party of two is doing the kissing. Gerty's fearful affect is embodied by her whitening lips which Reggy presumably does not notice. The 'half kiss' does not even land on her lips but rather her nose, both suggesting his ludicrous inexperience and reinforcing his lack of care and notice of her body, and hence his disinterest in her own subjectivity. Gerty craves not simply interest from Reggy but reciprocity, a process which must acknowledge both parties as kissing subjects. She finally calls him 'impetuous'. Like Woolf's use of the word 'insulted', this word characterises an otherwise ambiguous incident as forceful, rapid and violent. Indeed, though Gerty craves love, she resolves later to 'give him one look of measured scorn that would make him shrivel up on the spot' if 'he dared to presume' upon her again – that is, if he is

[911] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 288.

ever to take liberties with her body without consent.[912] Gerty longs for a 'manly man […] who would understand, take her in his sheltering arms, strain her to him in all the strength of his deep passionate nature and comfort her with a long long kiss.'[913] Her constructions of masculinity fall in the realm of protection, and these sentiments of 'sheltering' and 'comfort' are very different from Reggy's snatched and stolen intimacies.

What, then, is the implication of the fact that her thoughts are framed by Leopold Bloom masturbating nearby, watching her recline in the sand? Gerty's 'woman's instincts told her that she had raised the devil in him' and she sees him 'eyeing her as a snake eyes its prey', suggesting that whatever interpersonal interaction is taking place between voyeur and poseur is framed within similar parameters to snatching or stealing.[914] However, while Bloom engages in a solitary act, Gerty does not see it as entirely solitary. She feels an interaction between them, which is different to the solitary masturbation about which she is told by a female confidante: 'there was all the difference because she could almost feel him draw her face to his and the first quick hot touch of his handsome lips'.[915] Joyce uses kissing imagery to construct tension between reciprocity and autoeroticism. Bloom's voyeurism asks us to question what is consensual and what is reciprocal as he masturbates while Gerty raises her skirts, but crucially, it is the fact that Gerty imagines a kiss that complicates matters. What the kiss hence consistently carries through the 'Nausicaa' episode is a demand for reciprocity that makes more apparent the transgressions of a forced kiss. The impetus of the novel is indeed heading towards the final lines of 'yes I said yes I will Yes', ringing out the breathless

[912] Ibid. p. 297.
[913] Ibid. p. 288.
[914] Ibid. p. 295.
[915] Ibid. p. 300.

utterance of verbalised consent.[916] The embodied currents of *Ulysses* suggest that consent can be read in relation to the body, and that this is made legible in part via this snatched kiss.

These instances of forced kisses in modernist writing offer scenarios in which the embodied subjectivity of one person is ignored and reduced by a kisser who pursues only an object to be kissed. If this is true, then our understanding of the forced kiss would be incomplete without using it to approach the phenomenology of the body. In this thesis I have used phenomenology as a way to consider the kiss as experience, one that incorporates the concepts of subject and object and intersubjectivity, given that the experiences of kissers intersect, and their actions ignite questions about who gives and receives. This phenomenological approach illuminates modernist conceptions of the body's sense of space (Chapter One), tactile encounters with a racial other (Chapter Two), feminised forms of touch (Chapter Three), and interactions between dancers and audience (Chapter Four). The case of forced kisses leads us to ask how we account for consent in these phenomenological frameworks. In Chapter Three I outlined Edmund Husserl's conception of 'twofold directedness', in which we apprehend an object and then take a direction towards it. One example he chooses is that 'in acts of love [we turn] to the beloved'.[917] Yet, as illustrated in the cases of Sally, Rachel and Gerty, above, the processes of nearness do not always involve choice or an intention of love or enjoyment. And while Sara Ahmed's queer reading of Husserl asserts that '[o]rientations are about the direction we take that puts some things and not others in our reach', being directed away from something does not always make us out of reach.[918] Consent, or lack thereof, re-orientates these ideas. The word 'consent' itself is a portmanteau of '*con-* (with) and *sentire* (feel)', suggesting that consensual encounters are

[916] Ibid. p. 644.
[917] Husserl, *Ideas*, p. 122.
[918] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 56.

about coexisting or 'feeling-with' another desiring body in an intersubjective way.[919] Discussions about consent therefore offer an opportunity for new directions in phenomenological thinking. Looking at forced kisses in modernist literature has significant applications. It ignites questions about how an aesthetic movement, contemporaneous to and in dialogue with phenomenology, articulates the boundaries of bodily experience and the concept of reciprocity. This thesis has examined how modernist writers use the kiss to contend with encounters between subjects: feeling and being felt, approaching an other, embodying an escape from patriarchal structures, or experiencing joy. Questions of consent point to future work in kiss studies, not only to step away from oppressive constructions of 'stolen kisses', but also to reconsider modernist articulations of embodied encounters.

'What did that mean, to kiss?'[920] Modernist writers found in the kiss a way to probe questions of meaning. Throughout this thesis, particular questions have surfaced regarding whether the kiss is a private or public act; whether the kiss is more than a precursor to sex; how we can encounter others as subjects. As the mid-century drew near, the kiss in the Western Anglosphere had become something casual yet intimate, public yet with private associations, and common yet concerning. An educator writing in 1939 on the experiences of love in adolescence questioned, without a conclusion, '[w]hether kissing between unengaged couples is becoming more indiscriminate and meaningless than formerly'.[921] This observation of a descent towards meaninglessness suggests a cultural shift. The kiss, with its ambiguities and paradoxes, is no longer brimming with meaning but divested of its meaning, like finding stillness at the extreme of speed (Chapter One). This shift is signalled alongside the

[919] See Ellie Anderson, 'A Phenomenological Approach to Sexual Consent', *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly,* 8 (2022), Article 1 (pp. 3, 15).
[920] Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, p. 33.
[921] Oliver M. Butterfield, *Love Problems of Adolescence* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1939), p. 47.

emergence of dominant youth culture, when words such as 'snogging' (1945) and 'making out' (1953) were first recorded as slang and fleshed out an ever-expanding osculatory lexicon.[922] But in the years preceding this shift, modernist writers represented the evolving meanings of the kiss amid 'modern life'. The kiss traces the contours of the meanings of embodied experience, from forms of oppression to ethical encounters, and from the pits of crisis to the joys of celebrating a physical life.

Modernist writers use the kiss to relate the feelings of modern experience. Kissing has, for centuries, been a vital part of the literary tradition and been tied closely to culture. The modernist period is a significant node in the literature and culture of kissing because of the rapid modernisation (of technology, work, travel, social conditions, science) that altered the possibilities of embodied experience, the new conceptualisations of touch, and the emergence of phenomenological thinking. Analysing the kiss in modernist literature enriches our understanding not just of canonical novels (*The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, *Orlando*, *Brave New World*, *The Well of Loneliness, Nightwood*), but also opens discussion about less well-known texts (*Dusty Answer*, 'Geisha Man', 'Smoke, Lilies and Jade', 'Slender Length of Beauty'). The ways that these texts approach kissing come to us with fresh relevance now that we sit at the latter end of a period when, to protect public health, kissing has been sanctioned – for some.[923] The cultures of power that we find bound up in the kiss in modernist literature that govern (sometimes literally) who kisses whom, and in what context,

[922] 'Snogging' in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online] <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/183384> [accessed 28 November 2022]; 'Make' in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/112645> [accessed 28 November 2022].
[923] On 25 June 2021, *The Sun* newspaper published footage of the United Kingdom's then-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matthew Hancock, kissing his aide in breach of Covid-19 social distancing guidelines: Rob Pattinson and Harry Cole, 'Cheating Hancock: Matt Hancock's secret affair with aide Gina Coladangelo is exposed after office snogs while Covid raged on', *The Sun,* 25 June 2021 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/15388014/matt-hancock-secret-affair-with-aide/> [accessed 29 November 2022].

survive in new iterations. Looking at the role of the kiss in modernism's aesthetic project reveals oppressive structures in a new light, but also cultural attitudes towards modernisation, and, crucially, towards how bodies meet the world. Our understanding of the way modernist writers relate their embodied part in a modernising world is not sealed, but opened up, with a kiss.

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