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The Dislocated Spectator's Relationship to Enchanted Objects in Early Film and Modernist Poetry

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The Dislocated Spectator's Relationship to Enchanted Objects

In Early Film and Modernist Poetry

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Humanities
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ABSTRACT

In the early 1900s, industry and new technologies dislocated our sense of selfhood. Since the Industrial Revolution, the world had become increasingly crammed with material objects, leading up to when the invention of radio and the rise of electricity perpetuated and evidenced an interest in the immaterial. A similar fascination with magic as expressed in cultural forms such as the traveling show and the séance pointed to our new relationship to the object world: the self, dislocated from the body, could relocate in objects, forming a circuitous relationship akin to electricity. This phenomenon is encapsulated by the representation of *enchanted objects* in the poetry and film of this era. T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* (1922) and *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (1915) make a natural pairing with the films of French Impressionism, particularly Dimitri Kirsanoff's *Ménilmontant* (1926) and Jean Epstein's *Coeur Fidèle* (1923), because these works all depict central characters whose selfhood extends beyond themselves and projects into objects, animating them and imbuing them with autonomous, lifelike characteristics in a manner analogous to an electrical current. Humans function increasingly like objects and objects begin to take on the qualities of living people, emphasized by both the formal and thematic elements of these poems and films. However, rather than isolating human beings in a soulless world of objects, this projection has the potential to introduce a new form of intersubjective and interobjective connectivity.

INTRODUCTION

Texts and Contexts

In T.S. Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, the speaker's call for a magic lantern to "[throw] the nerves in patterns on a screen" accomplishes this projection in the act of demanding it. Eliot gives voice to a collective longing for individual consciousness to extend outside the body so that it may be seen and understood, a desire that paradoxically reacts against and retreats into the object world. The works of both Eliot and early filmmakers (with literal "magic lanterns") captured the public's fluctuating sense of locatedness and dislocatedness that resulted from industrial modernity. My research specifically examines the poetry of T.S. Eliot, particularly *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (1915) and *The Wasteland* (1922), alongside several films of French Impressionism, Jean Epstein's *Coeur Fidèle* (1923) and *La Chute de la maison Usher* (1928) as well as Dimitri Kirsanoff's *Ménilmontant* (1926). I explore how these works respond to modernity and industrialization through their depictions of mechanization and magic in subject-object relationships.

For the purposes of this argument, I use the term *enchanted objects* to describe how the treatment of objects in these media makes them seem imbued with a magical quality, appearing capable of independent movement or thought. One component of enchanted objects is that they are often personified or anthropomorphized through formal elements in film and poetry. In terms of their aesthetics, many of these objects have mechanized components that bring to mind the factory, the magic show, and the cinema, all of which in some way used mechanized devices

capable of autonomous movement. But most importantly, the way these objects function in relation to subjects is the crucial feature that marks them as enchanted. When the subject gazes upon the object world, she reconstitutes the object, seeing it as alive or friendly or menacing. The object, in turn, reconstitutes the subject. Surrounded by objects charged with their own unique presence, the subject feels happy or sad in resonance with the objects, thrust into chaos by an exterior world that she sees as chaotic or newly arranged in an orderly manner upon viewing a set of spoons neatly arranged in a drawer. She feels her own body as an object like she feels the objects around her. In recognizing her body as an object, she can care for other objects. The enchanted objects in the poems and films under discussion exist in such circuits of remediation with subjects, and through them the poets and filmmakers explore the potential for intersubjective and interobjective connections.

Early twentieth century filmmakers and poets interested themselves in this dynamic as a response to a public sense of dislocatedness. This stemmed from the spread of auditory, distance-traversing technologies like radio and the proliferation of mass-produced household objects that reoriented the spectator towards the object world. The response to this dislocatedness, in part caused by objects, is actually a return to the object world as things locate this roaming selfhood in space and actually reshape the self that lingers on them. Both modernist poetry and French Impressionist cinema captured this circuitous dynamic, taking parallel courses stylistically and in terms of content. Their similarities are not simply a case of cross-media mimicry but rather evidence their common lineage in culture. Their common end, in both cases, is a new mode of intersubjective and interobjective connectivity mediated by objects.

Single components of my circuit—dislocation, relocation, intersubjectivity, and interobjectivity—emerge in film theory and literary theory respectively. Film theorists Richard Abel and Jean Epstein, along with literary theorists William Skaff and Leonard Unger, have all discussed fragments of the relationship I wish to establish between subjects and objects. But the discourse that discusses film and poetry in tandem has neglected to analyze this similarity. When scholars analyze both poetry and film, the focus is frequently on formal correspondences rather than how their similar formal elements are produced by similar relationships to their cultural moment. Film critics speak of “poetic” films and literary scholars speak of “filmic” poems, but often they apply these terms in their connotative sense, e.g. poetic simply meaning “beautiful” or “for purposes other than narrative” and filmic meaning that a poem consists largely of a succession of images. David Trotter, for instance, claims, “Writers and film-makers were engaged, it would seem, in some kind of exchange of transferable narrative techniques” (238). He notes specifically that Eliot’s writings on early cinema evidence “an acute understanding not only of the narrative conventions of popular cinema, but also of the techniques it favored” such as crosscutting and reverse-angle shots (249).

The gap in the scholarship of poetry and film results from the tendency for critics to focus on the one-to-one relationship of technical devices, rather than performing in-depth analyses of specific poems alongside specific films. As a result, there are few analyses of how the common cultural impetuses and themes behind each medium interact with its technical elements. For instance, Sergei Eisenstein’s montage theories illustrate his claims about film by using references to poetry. But it is also important that such stylistic similarities point to historic structures of feeling, in this case the sense of dislocation and relocation in the object world. A select group of scholars

who write about poetry and film in tandem, such as Susan McCabe and Elisabeth Däumer, consider how social forces shaped both mediums simultaneously, in their cases the destructive forces of modernity such as war and atomization, respectively. But neither recognizes the enchanted quality of this modern period, and the potential that enchanted objects have to redefine interpersonal connectivity in fluid ways. I therefore perform such an analysis.

One key facet of the cultural context that defines the dislocated and relocated relationship between subject and object is the invention of the telegraph and radio, which were deeply imbedded in the collective consciousness of the early 1900s. These technologies introduced the possibility of perception outside of one's body: as soon as a message could be transported across thousands of miles, people began to speculate about the prospect of teleportation or even a connection with the dead via radio. Traces of this sentiment were appearing with the invention of the telegraph in the nineteenth century, but radio's ability to transport the human voice in real time more fully delocalized notions of human selfhood.

At the same time that the self became less clearly localized in space, a seemingly paradoxical fascination with materiality rose. This was because the increasingly unanchored self sought out objects to provide stability, concurrently fetishizing them, mentally inhabiting them, and viewing them as separate, living entities. Hence, subject-object relationships had a circuitous quality: the mechanized technologies and profusion of objects that had been steadily filling homes over the last decade made people feel less clearly located in their own bodies, but once their non-corporeal selves were loosened they could flit between objects and become relocated in things, if in a manner that contained dislocative elements. In a manner resonant with this notion of "completing the circuit," the delocalized self is analogous to electricity, the fluid force animating the mechanized

world and itself still an object of curiosity at the turn of the century. Like electricity, the individual consciousness could course through physical objects and give them a sense of life, which is depicted in the poems and films under discussion.

The dislocated self is also symbolically represented in the writings and films of this era through the presence of fog, smoke, water, perfumes, etc. Prufrock drifts with his personified yellow fog, Epstein superimposes water over characters' faces in *Coeur Fidèle*, Kirsanoff's characters speak through condensation in *Ménilmontant*, and *The Wasteland* onomatopoeically oozes fluids. In each moment of barrier crossing between the self and the material world, the subject enters a circuit with the enchanted object as if electrically wired together. Prufrock not only watches the yellow smoke; he also overwrites it with his own isolation and longing, as it presses in at the windows of the houses. Conversely, the fog also acts upon Prufrock, the only recognizable companion that accompanies him despite the opening line's assertion that "you and I" exist in the poem. The smoke comfortingly curls up and falls asleep at his side, and Prufrock slips into the stanza of reassuring himself he is not out of time, saying, "And indeed there will be time/For the yellow smoke that slides along the street" (23-24). If there is time for the fog, there is time for Prufrock, and the two have become inextricably linked in a fluid, cyclical manner.

Of course, poetry and film were not the only outlets for the self to examine its relationship with the material world. The notion of humans leaving their bodies and objects coming to life evokes the supernatural, and so this part of the collective consciousness manifested through the popularity of magic shows, fairground exhibitions, and the occult. All three bore a marked relationship to modernity through common aesthetics: moving gears, wires, smoke, electric lighting, etc. Different expressions of the same impulse, poetry and film drew on these cultural

expressions of magic on several levels. One component of this connection is the very lineage of film in the traveling show, as early works in the cinema of attractions were exhibited by carnival barkers and borrowed techniques from the magic show. Writers and filmmakers certainly borrowed imagery from these outposts of magical curiosity—*Coeur Fidèle* features a dizzying carnival, *The Wasteland* a clairvoyant reader of tarot cards—but the connection runs deeper. Cinema cannibalized magic shows, replicating and perfecting the magician's tricks, and consuming its predecessor only heightened film's latent aesthetics and themes. Anticipation and shock, the juxtaposition of the beautiful with the horrifying, the sense that objects are alive, rapid eye movements from image to image at the behest of the director. Film crystalized these hallmarks of the magic show. Furthermore, the same techniques manifested in the poetry of Eliot in his descriptions of a living, watchful object world endowed with supernatural abilities, a world that frequently obeys the aesthetics of the magic show as it invokes the mechanical and juxtaposes living matter with decay.

Literature Review

Scholarship on modernist poetry has long sought to define the relationship between T.S. Eliot, the object world, and his representation of subjective experience through images. Eliot himself threw down the gauntlet for this sort of analysis in "Hamlet and his Problems" when argued that good writers must find an "objective correlative," or "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked" (Eliot). William Skaff claims, "Through his theory of the objective correlative, then, Eliot stipulates that the esthetic act involves the artist seeking the unconscious mind and then

simulating in his work of art the nature of immediate experience that he found there” (161). The arguments of scholars like Skaff are therefore in harmony with the final aims of my own argument, but I take them further. Instead of merely noting the “immediate experience” Eliot provides for the solitary reader, I argue for a new mode of intersubjectivity and interobjectivity produced both by Eliot’s enchanted objects and those present in the films.

Early cinema is all the more appropriate a lens for understanding Eliot’s use of objects because many Eliot scholars like Leonard Unger, whose focus is not film, nonetheless return to filmic references to explain Eliot’s use of imagery. Unger argues that *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* is a series of slides, “Each slide...an isolated, fragmentary image, producing its own effect, including suggestions of some larger action or situation of which it is but an arrested moment” (19). On one hand, this seems like an apt, filmic comparison, reminiscent of individual frames of film. But Unger connects this idea to “the idea of isolation, of the impossibility of communication and understanding” (19). He emphasizes the static, frozen quality of the slides, whereas I contend there is a living, magical quality to these images: like the film in motion, the static object is capable of autonomous movement and even thought, while this sense of motion does not efface its static objecthood. Therefore, Unger ascribes a sense of locatedness to the filmic qualities of poetry, but I on the other hand emphasize the dislocatedness produced by these filmic qualities because the objects exist in circuitous relationships with subjects like Prufrock. Such relationships foster intersubjective and interobjective connections rather than the “impossibility of communication and understanding” Unger emphasizes.

In order to support my argument that filmmakers like Jean Epstein and Dimitri Kirsanoff concerned themselves with depictions of a dislocated consciousness, I draw on the writings of key

film scholars of French Impressionism. Citing pieces by filmmakers themselves, such as Epstein, as well as later scholarship on their work from Richard Abel and Antonin Artaud, I reveal the extent to which these filmmakers were aware of this dislocation and how it reshaped subject-object relationships in their own works. I then enumerate the formal elements of their works that point to this dynamic, going beyond what they themselves indicate and eventually setting these moments alongside parallel elements in the poems under discussion. Comparing the dynamic of dislocation and location across media renders it a cultural phenomenon rather than a mere formal technique. For instance, Abel's writings on "astral bodies" are evocative of what I call dislocated consciousness. However, he mostly emphasizes film's ability to reach outward towards spectators, writing, "The camera turned certain actors, for instance, into 'astral bodies' whose essence was delivered up to the spectator in a direct, intimate, and profound encounter" (21). I extend this argument: not only are the spectators touched by "astral bodies" coming from the film, but these dislocated selves within the film interact with objects in much the same manner, just as the real-world dislocated consciousness of a 1920s subject established a circuitous relationship with enchanted objects. Indeed, even the reversal of Abel's claim is true: as the film reaches out to the spectator, so, too, the spectator herself is relocated inside the film. Therefore, even as I advocate a more widespread sense of dislocation than Abel, extending to characters and spectators alike, I also account for a sense of relocation in the enchanted objects present.

Abel's notion of a "direct, intimate, and profound encounter" is especially relevant for the final section of my paper in which I discuss the implications of these reformulated subject-object relationships in terms of interpersonal connectivity. It is not merely the immediacy of film I wish to discuss but instead the manner in which all subject-object relationships restructure all

relationships among subjects and objects, and this dynamic shifted in the early 1900s due to our sense of dislocation. Abel also directly discusses what is and is not poetic about the filmic medium, discussing Guillaume Apollinaire's *simultaneism* and speculating about the "remotivation" of objects, décor, and landscapes in relation to characters on screen in a manner approaching—though not directly citing—Eliot's notion of the objective correlative (24). In a different vein, Artaud discuss the magical, at times outright occult associations of early cinema. Hence, my notion of enchanted objects unifies the occult associations brought up by Artaud with the "astral bodies" Abel discusses.

In addition to directing *Coeur Fidèle* and *La Chute de la maison Usher*, Epstein also wrote about subject-object relations, and in *The Intelligence of a Machine* he emphasizes the qualities humans share with objects. He contends that the film camera is capable of thought, making the camera itself an "enchanted object" in my terminology. This argument hinges on distinguishing the cinématographe from other machines like magnifying glasses and telescopes because the cinématographe conjoins time and space, while the other machines offer only a new ocular vision. Thus the film camera gives time and space "rhythms of succession," which Epstein equates to the camera possessing its own ideas (65). In the same argument he also argues for the body's ultimate relativity to the surrounding universe, attempting to dislocate the reader from his/her notion of stability in space and time by comparing atoms to galaxies and asserting there is no up or down. This notion is reminiscent of Jeffrey Sconce's observation that electronic surfaces like the television screen (and, one can infer, film projection) negate depth perception. He connects the loss of depth associated with simulations to the loss of knowable subjects, writing, "Where there was once the 'real,' there is now only the electronic generation and circulation of simulations.

Where there were once whole human subjects, there are now only fragmented and decentered subjectivities” (18). According to Epstein, seeing oneself in such a simulation on film is uncomfortable because it calls to mind one’s status as object. Once he has destabilized the reader’s sense of orientation in place and time, Epstein advocates another mode of truth-telling: “Hence, today, the reality of space and time, determinism and freedom, matter and spirit, or the universe’s continuity and discontinuity loses its contours, ... and tends to become a conditional, floating, allegorical, and intermittent reality: all in all, it becomes poetry” (55). This poetic mode of understanding achieved by “floating” through reality calls to mind the flitting from personage to personage in a work like Eliot’s *Wasteland*.

A small subset of scholars specializes in both modernist poetry and early film, and theorists like P Adams Sitney and Susan McCabe have built a framework that I will build upon. Sitney’s *The Cinema of Poetry* performs a close reading of *Ménilmontant*, examining the film’s poetic qualities such as ellipsis, double-functioning tropes, zeugma, syllepsis, and delays of comprehension. This is an example of the sort of analysis that primarily borrows terminology from one discipline and applies it to the other. Doing so yields a dense technical analysis but neglects to recognize how the thematic convergence of poetry and cinema is conveyed through these devices. *Cinematic Modernism* by McCabe is an exception to this trend. McCabe specifically analyzes Eliot’s poetry in relation to early cinema, and contextualizes both in her discussion of World War I. McCabe writes, “The body of the hysteric fascinated poets as a correlative for what Eliot refers to as ‘dissociation of sensibility’” (5). My own argument converges with McCabe’s regarding this sense of dislocation, but I identify the causes in the industrialized world and the invention of radio, both

of which have positive, connective, and magical elements, whereas she centers her argument around war, a primarily destructive force for the subject.

Furthermore, McCabe writes about bodily dislocation in Eliot's poetry and early film stemming from World War I but construes it as disfigurement rather than as projection from the self onto the object world. Therefore, she aligns Eliot with films like Fernand Léger's *Ballet Mécanique* (1924) and emphasizes Eliot's "fragmentary" qualities. Instead of using the language of fragmentation, I use the language of connection. To represent the difference between our arguments, I invoke the image of a shattered mirror (reminiscent of McCabe) and the image of a spider web (reminiscent of my construction). In both cases the subject encounters the object world, and then the subject is either broken by the encounter or entangled in a web of interobjective and intersubjective connections. The latter, my conception of this dynamic, emphasizes how subject and object are reconstituted through their dislocation and circuitous relocation.

In a manner similar to McCabe, Elisabeth Däumer points to dislocation in Epstein and Eliot, and like McCabe she frames this dynamic as a largely negative sense of shell shock resulting from modernity. In "T.S. Eliot, Jean Epstein, and the Physiology of Modern Poetry," Däumer extrapolates Eliot's brief reference to Epstein's *La Poésie d'aujourd'hui* (1921) in one of his personal letters to argue the filmmaker had a more profound effect on Eliot's work than previously documented. Däumer's primary contention is that Epstein directly influenced Eliot, while I more heavily emphasize both writers' relationships to their historical circumstances. When Däumer does address the historical circumstances that gave rise to both artists' works, she focuses on a sense of "nervousness" and "sensibility" resulting from the overstimulation of the modern world

(116). My own argument recognizes this dislocated energy but goes one step further in connecting the various stimuli of the modern, mechanized world to a sense of magic, and I specifically root this concept in the cultural response to radio and the related interest in magic shows and the occult, which then point to a transformation in subject-object relationships. Däumer does suggest that this “nervousness” required an “effigy” or “mannequin” for emotional release, which bears some resemblance to my own notion of a “dislocated consciousness” reaching outside the body and relocating inside objects. However, my notion of enchanted objects and the circuitous relationships they form with human subjects is a separate project from Däumer’s aims, and ultimately, I suggest the electrical, fluid sharing between subjects and objects contributes to intersubjectivity and interobjectivity rather than isolated out-of-body sensations.

Methodology

Industrial modernity perpetuated a dynamic of locatedness and dislocatedness, initially arising from the proliferation of objects steadily building since the Industrial Revolution. Subjects were becoming more like objects and objects were becoming more like subjects, but then the popularization of radio extended this sense of dislocation and evidenced an interest in the immaterial. This prompts a question that seems to *constrain* our notion of subjecthood: “Are you still a human if you function like an object?” Radio couples this proposition with a question that, in an equally destabilizing fashion, *stretches* the self into a vacuous abyss: “Is your selfhood contained in your body if your voice can be transported across hundreds of miles?” In the early twentieth century, these questions also sparked interest in accessing the occult through mechanical means and supported the popularity of the magic show.

The first question listed above, that of commodification, has long been posed by Marxist scholars, and thing theorist Bill Brown draws on Karl Marx's notions of "the personification of things and the reification [Versachlichung] of persons" to understand subject-object relationships ("American Uncanny" 180). Brown remarks on how objects can shape personhood, and he is also attentive to how objects become lifelike even in a society based on mass production, stating, "For even when the commodity form saturates society (even when, that is, we are dealing with capitalism), culture works to singularize objects" (177). Understanding the singularization of objects is key to understanding the nature of enchanted objects, which foster a sense of locatedness when they cease to be interchangeable with other things: Prufrock's coffee spoons that measure out days of his life are no longer ordinary coffee spoons, and therefore anchor his dislocated persona even as his anxieties about aging prompt new dislocations.

The sense of locatedness and dislocatedness in modernist poetry and French Impressionist films arose from and directly referenced cultural forces such as the interest in radio and magic. In the works themselves, the primary mode of characterization is through physical objects. As such, the personas existent in the text hover beyond the actors'/characters' physical bodies and intermingle with the objects that represent them. Like the dislocated voice that drifts over the radio waves, symbols of barrier crossing represent dislocated consciousnesses. Enchanted objects become animate through their circuitous relationships between spectators and characters alike, assuming a magical, lifelike quality.

Sconce's *Haunted Media* provides a theoretical grounding for how electronic media give the spectator a sense of dislocatedness. He details how this sensation has been described as "presence,' 'simultaneity,' 'instantaneity,' 'immediacy,' 'now-ness[,]... 'a *This-is-going-on*' rather than

a “*That-has-been*” in various texts (6). Radio and other auditory, distance-traversing technologies lead people to feel both an extension of their own bodies, as they are able to perceive what is happening elsewhere, as well as a belief in other invisible, living forces whose existence is mediated by the object world (be it a telegraph, radio, or television). Sconce delineates the effect of this everywhere-and-nowhere sense, writing, “Where there was once the ‘real,’ there is now only the electronic generation and circulation of simulations. Where there were once whole human subjects, there are now only fragmented and decentered subjectivities” (18). Sconce connects this to an interest in the occult by observing that the rising literacy rate in this age of invention was fodder for wild speculation about physics and metaphysics among the general population. Even in scientific circles, physics and metaphysics were not clearly distinguished from one another. He traces how a “dream of electronically evacuating the body” arose (44). He furthermore gives a detailed history of occult activities in response to communications technologies, tracing an association between media and contacting the dead all the way back to the telegraph.

Along a similar vein, *Listening In* author Susan J. Douglas discusses radio’s role in the rise of spiritualism. Two chapters prove especially useful for my argument: “The Zen of Listening” and “The Ethereal World.” In the latter, Douglas writes about a cultural hope for “spiritual transcendence not at odds with, but made possible by, machines” (41). The dislocated, insubstantial, expansive self, depicted in the works of Eliot, Kirsanoff, and Epstein, also seeks empathetic encounters mediated by enchanted objects. While these artists do not depict purely utopian results from this dislocatedness, the fact that they foster a more enmeshed encounter on the part of spectator suggests objects and machines may produce empathetic ends. In tracing the relationship between dislocation, magic, and empathy Douglas and Sconce introduce an

alternative, highly connected view of modernity that enables me to nuance the themes of isolation underscored by other critics. Magic characterizes the qualities of this connection.

Many of the enchanted objects I examine in the films and poems under discussion are mechanical in nature. Neil Harris theorizes why in his book *Humbug*, observing how the citizens of the modern world recoiled from factory life but gloried in the materiality of the machines. He attributes this to the rising interest in how-to manuals, technological jargon, and mechanical organization and construction. He views it as a response to the atomization brought about by the age of the machine and the horror of war. Understanding the workings of machines gave citizens a sense of control. Erik Barnouw further establishes how certain tropes transitioned from the magic show to the cinema (and, I contend, poetry), such as the show-stopping acts of “self-capitulation” common to magic shows of this time period, with the magician holding his own head at the end of the night. Not only is this specific image paralleled in *Prufrock*, but it evidences the broader convention of embedding a single, disturbing image in an otherwise picturesque passage or clip, common to both poetry and cinema of this era. Tom Gunning’s “Aesthetic of Astonishment” discusses this particular convention in great detail and solidifies the conventions between film and the fairground by way of shocks, or thrills.

The final section of my argument leans on the work of thing theorists outside French impressionism, shifting from cultural excavation to an aesthetic examination of subject-object relationships. Incorporating thing theory not only helps characterize the dynamic between subjects and enchanted objects in the early 1900s, but also extends the principles I uncover in this cultural context to other eras. One key text is Brown’s essay, “How to do Things with Things.” His explanation of Gaston Bachelard’s “hybrid objects” has much in common with my own notion of

enchanted objects as places that the subject can inhabit. While Bachelard views objects as prosthetic placeholders that anchor the subject's interior world, I however would qualify that not only are the objects entangled with inner worlds, but the subject furthermore has an impulse to view this relationship as supernatural. With reference to J.L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words*, Brown acknowledges that language does not require references to things in order to make communication effective, but he also claims, "things can nonetheless, in the ventriloquism of everyday life, people the world we address, the world that addresses us. The hybrid object, then, may be figured as a participant in the intersubjective constitution of reality" (942). I would like to pick up where Brown leaves off. What exactly does the inclusion of objects do for poetry, particularly these hybrid or enchanted objects? I also find it useful how Brown distinguishes *things* from *objects*, emphasizing our need to repurpose and rediscover objects, rescuing them from the horrors of mass production.

Vital materialist Jane Bennett aims towards similar ends, and her notion of "thing power," which is "the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle," provides a framework for understanding how the enchanted objects under discussion can seem vaguely, mysteriously alive without the text suggesting they literally possess sentience (6). Vivian Sobchack provides the other half of the equation—how subjects become aware of their objecthood—in *Carnal Thoughts*. She makes a case for "interobjectivity," which is "a mode of corporeal engagement with the material world" that reminds subjects of their objecthood and allows them to relate to other objects as such (296). Interobjectivity is brought about when the subject encounters her own body often through suffering and realizes the body is made out of material. Therefore it is an object, and in this state the body can "feel mimetically the passionate

and porous possibilities of those material others and objects that constitute our environment” (296). My argument draws on this claim of Sobchack’s in defining how the circuitous relationship between subjects and enchanted objects reconstitutes how the subject conceives of itself and the object world.

Consequences within Discipline and for Interobjectivity/Intersubjectivity

This thesis has consequences for the separate disciplines of poetry and film and also aims to reconceive of subject-object relationships through the lens of a specific historical context. Both poets and filmmakers show an analytical interest in topics relevant to each other’s disciplines, reaching towards each other’s disciplines, even if unconsciously. T.S. Eliot scholars (and scholars of modernist poetry more generally) have long discussed the role of objects in the Imagist aesthetic, ever since Eliot set that task before them with his notion of the objective correlative in “Hamlet and His Problems.” The visual media of cinema abides by and supplements the impulses of Imagist poetry. Eliot suggested that the interior state of a character should have its correlative in the object world, and this is a dynamic film is compelled to enact because of its visual quality. Therefore film can provide insight into the same subject-object relationships with which Imagist poets concerned themselves. Film, too, can benefit from this comparison, since from its early days filmmakers have aptly—if incompletely—remarked on film’s similarities to poetry. Some of the avant-garde films that self-identify as *cinépoems*, such as the works of Man Ray and Hans Richter, do indeed have poetic components in the sense that they jump from one disjointed image to the next, but the more narrative, protagonist-centered works of French impressionism have other poetic qualities. Defining these similarities across media takes us into the territory of subject-object relationships, ultimately extending the artist’s representation of objects to understand how objects

contribute to intimacy and immediacy in all interpersonal relationships. It furthermore extends the discussion of cross-media similarities, a discussion initiated by the artists themselves.

From there I invoke Jane Bennett's notion of assemblage and put it in conversation with Vivian Sobchack's understanding of intersubjectivity and interobjectivity. I then uncover in the poems and films under discussion a mode for intersubjective and interobjective relationships that operate through an awareness of assemblages. Recounting Bennett's (and Theodor Adorno's) call for a "concept of nonidentity," I demonstrate how assemblages foster a more honest mode of intersubjective and interobjective encounter, honest in that it recognizes the limits of what can be known about the other.

CHAPTER ONE:
 SOCIETY IN SHOCK: LOCATION AND DISLOCATION THROUGH MASS
 PRODUCTION AND RADIO

Fearful and Fascinated Responses to Modernity Reflected in Poetry and Film

The beginning of the twentieth century established a seemingly confrontational dynamic between the subject and the material world. Tom Gunning attributes this to, among other things, “expanding urbanization with its kaleidoscopic succession of city sights, the growth of consumer society with its new emphasis on stimulating spending through visual display, and the escalating horizons of colonial exploration with new peoples and territories to be categorized and exploited” (“Aesthetic” 125). Since the industrial revolution, labor had become increasingly associated with the production of material objects; both the methods by which these objects were produced (the factory system) and the objects themselves had a dislocative effect on the public, seeking situatedness in their constantly shifting kaleidoscope.

To understand the historic structures of feeling present in the early decades of the twentieth century, it is useful to understand how Karl Marx characterized factory labor half a century earlier. In his essays, Marx traces how labor not only estranged laborers from the objects they produced but furthermore transformed these living humans into objects, and objects whose very existences were furthermore threatened by mass production. As Marx argues in *Estranged Labor*, “The *alienation* of the worker in his product means not only that his labor becomes an object, an *external* existence, but that it exists *outside him*, independently, as something alien to him,

and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him.” Thus, work became a dislocating experience, divorcing the worker from his labor as this labor became an alien master exerting power over the worker. Work no longer sprang forth from the human body but antagonized the human body from the outside. Marx goes further to suggest the more a laborer produces, the more his own existence is diminished. This is true in two ways: First, his work is not spontaneously, intrinsically motivated, but rather, is imposed by external forces, limiting his autonomy. Second, his own ability to meet basic, physical needs is reduced by increased production because the more he produces, the more cheaply he can be paid, which may eventually lead to his physical diminution and literal starvation. While the worker’s existence is diminished, the objects he produces become storehouses of value, or fetishes, and gain in this value as the worker loses his. Therefore, the worker is “confronted” by his work as an oppositional force: while the worker becomes increasingly commodified, resembling more forcibly the world of objects, the work he produces takes on an lifelike autonomy of its own.

I acknowledge this observation as accurate but incomplete, and offer a fuller alternative in this and the chapter that follows. The relationship between subject and object is not an opposition but a circuit: the subject, estranged from the world of objects, is prompted to cast an anthropomorphizing gaze on these newly autonomous and thereby enchanted objects. Such an enchanted object takes on qualities of the subject as the subject, in turn, takes on qualities of the object, and the circuitous relationship between them anchors these otherwise dislocated entities (not in relation to the rest of the world, but in relation to each other). Realizing one’s own objecthood can elevate objects rather than simply debasing subjects, and it in cultivating care for objects the subject can better care for itself as an object.

In the early twentieth century, the labor of mass production was in many ways a strictly dehumanizing force, but when the worker left the factory, he or she entered the world peopled by the objects from the assembly lines, and the subject's relationships to these objects was not unilaterally dehumanizing, especially in regards to aesthetic experience. Therefore, in my conception, the human subject does not slowly calcify into a statuesque vestige of a living person, descending into the hollow objecthood that may be suggested by Marx's oppositional framing. Instead, the human consciousness simply becomes less fully grounded in the corporeal body and senses itself roosting in new locations, in new objects other than the object of the body alone. Reciprocally, the object now has an autonomy different from that associated with Marx's commodity fetishism, an autonomy that does not menace the subject but instead anchors him or her. In relationship to each other, the subject acts upon the object and the object acts upon the subject. However, the subject is not newly affixed in the objects that give it a sense of locatedness—the self does not now inhabit a grandfather clock and forever chime on the hour, but it absorbs a bit of the grandfather clock and brings something of the mechanical chiming back to the body.

A wealth of films and poems in this era address this Marxist anxiety of humans behaving like objects and objects behaving like humans as a product of modernity, at times framing it as an oppositional relationship (for film, in both actualities and comedies, and in poetry as a protest) but in other moments setting subjects and objects in a more circuitous relationship with one another. An overwhelming sense of de-individuation was a common theme in early films like the Lumière brothers' actuality *Workers Leaving the Factory* in 1895, in which the steady stream of exiting laborers eventually feels like a homogenous mass, so much so that the spectator is inclined to wonder if he/she is watching the same clip looped again and again. In a more aggressive manner,

Imagist poet D.H. Lawrence, addresses similar perceptions in his poem, “What Have They Done to You?” (1930). His speaker bemoans the “men of the masses, creeping back and forth to work” to be “[devoured with] the machine, the vast maw of iron” (1, 4). Such a description is almost an exact match with Fritz Lang’s 1927 film *Metropolis*, in which a machine literally stretches a pair of iron jaws looming out of its monstrous face to swallow workers marching lockstep down a gullet of gears.

The Marxist antagonism between man and machine, like most social anxieties, was also fodder for comedy. Charlie Chaplin’s 1936 film *Modern Times* humorously dramatizes several of Marx’s assertions. For instance, when discussing the ever-diminishing differences between man and machine, Marx observed, “The worker consumes his means of subsistence during pauses in the direct labour process, whereas the *machine* consumes what it requires *while functioning*.” Chaplin suggests even the need to eat—an unfortunate impediment to productivity—could be overcome by a ruthless boss, and he reciprocally becomes food for a machine. First his employers strap the protagonist’s body into a vice and force-feed him bite-sized squares of food in hopes of eliminating pauses in the labor process, thus fusing man and machine. Of course, the machine malfunctions and Chaplin’s character cannot be mechanized, if only due to his slapstick human clumsiness. Then, in the following scene, Chaplin himself is pulled into the bowels of a machine, but the dutiful worker continues to nonchalantly tighten bolts as he advances through the spinning gears. In satirizing the consumptive force of the factory system, Chaplin implicitly recognizes the antagonistic relationship Marx identifies. However, Chaplin addresses it not with the horror of Lang’s *Metropolis*, but instead presents audiences with the mitigating factor of a

protagonist whose humor allows him to operate outside the system (even as he is literally sucked into the machine).

Other depictions of modernity in film and poetry also recognized the subject's more ambiguous relationship to the modern world, understanding it through simultaneous attraction and repulsion. At times these works reference a Marx-like notion of antagonism between subject and object, but in other moments, they acknowledge the curious draw of modernity through circuitous subject-object relationships. Poet Ezra Pound plays both sides in "The Plunge" (1912) in which he simultaneously laments, "I burn, I scald so for the new," voicing a desire to see strange new cities, but he also asserts, "Do I not loathe all walls, streets, stones,/All mire, mist, all fog, All ways of traffic?" (3, 11-12) This tension likewise undergirded the "cinema of attractions," a term Gunning coins to describe early films that used aesthetics similar to amusement parks, often confronting audiences with some element of the modern world. Gunning writes of the Lumière brothers' *Arrival of a Train* (1896), "The on-rushing train did not simply produce the negative experience of fear but the particularly modern entertainment form of the thrill" ("Aesthetic" 122). The source of this thrill was the audience's encounter with two machines, the unstoppable approaching train and the camera that reproduced its ghostly specter, but the curiosity of the camera and the initial jolt of the approaching, antagonizing train only made the audience lean in closer, fascinated by the humanoid and superhuman abilities of these objects. Walter Benjamin uses the metaphor of inoculation to explain this attraction: the public, faced with the uprooting and dislocating elements of the busy modern world, sees these dislocative features distilled in the safety of a film, and they can therefore return to the world with some level of immunity. Going one step further, early cinema and modernist poetry not only reflected modernity but took active

roles in shaping the subject's conceptions of subject-object relationships, emphasizing the circuitous (rather than oppositional) qualities of these relationships, because of the distinctive formal features of their media. These formal features harnessed mechanization for the sake of subjective ends, accruing an arsenal of enchanted objects that often evidence a heritage in the mechanized world. The manner in which poetry and film invoke subjectivity through mechanization is a topic to be addressed in the section that follows.

Film and Poetry as Agents of Modernity

Early films and modernist poems reflect their era by frequently invoking mechanized formal elements. For film, these formal features include the physical apparatus of the camera, the literal and figurative darkness of film, and the potential for film to disorient and deconstruct. Modernist poets, on the other hand, invoke a mechanical effect through elements like irregular meters and rhyme schemes, repetition, long lists of objects, and synecdoche. While it would be easy to map a purely Marxist reading onto these elements, viewing the mechanization as establishing an oppositional relationship between subjects and objects, I establish how these mechanized elements provide an opening to uncover the circuitous relationships between subjects and objects.

Many of society's anxieties about how new, mechanized technologies remediated subject-object relationships specifically concerned film itself. The public's at times horrified response to film gives credence to the Marxist construction of an opposition between subjects and objects, but the fact that this relationship is tempered by a simultaneous fascination with the medium suggests a sharing between subjects and objects, not a one-way antagonism. The projector, an enchanted object of interest at fairground exhibitions of early films, was one component of the

aforementioned terror, but film also fascinated spectators by literally shedding light on an immaterial world as viewed through a mechanical reproduction.

Early films, such as those considered part of the cinema of attractions, were especially self-conscious of the capacities of their new medium, producing both horror and delight. When James Williamson filmed “The Big Swallow” in 1901 (a short film in which the camera slowly approaches a talking man whose mouth fills more and more of the screen until he eventually swallows the cameraman whole), he plunged audiences into a new cinematic void. This void—not merely the actor’s oral cavity—is film’s dark capacity to disorient the viewer, to make previously familiar objects strange in a way that evokes both primal fears and irresistible curiosity. Maxim Gorky perceived this “monstrous” quality of film as threatening because of how it fostered a confrontation with the object (and objectifying) world. When he reviewed an exhibition of Lumière films in 1896, he referred to the medium of film as a “Kingdom of Shadows,” in which existed “not life but its shadow, [not] motion but its soundless spectre” (1). For Gorky, *Arrival of a Train* is terrifying not because he is afraid of being run over but because “this, too, is but a train of shadows,” and it does not produce the proper consequences of turning one into “a ripped sack full of lacerated flesh and splintered bones” (2). According to Gorky, film’s horror is imagined but not acted out, and therefore it imbeds the horrifying image in the spectator’s brain, allowing no physical, cathartic confrontation. It is manufactured, mechanical life, not life itself. Gorky’s terrifying void appears to threaten the subject, but as Epstein later notes, the experience of such voids takes the subject out of a position of presuming human mastery of the world through knowledge, and instead re-presents the world as foreign, and yes, shadowy.

Gorky saw film as purely horrifying because its mechanical qualities could not actually reproduce life, because of film's *incapability*. On the other hand, these mechanical qualities have their own *capabilities* that appear to turn subjects into objects. Epstein reveals how the act of humans viewing themselves as objects sets them in circuitous relationships with the enchanted object of the camera. An example of the filmic capabilities Epstein analyzes is exemplified by the Lumière brothers' *Demolition of a Wall* (1896). In the film, a group of laborers knock down a stone wall, and then the same clip is played backwards, with pickaxes appearing to suction gravel from the ground, which rapidly forms into solid pieces of rock. The floating dust contracts as if sipped through a giant straw, and the tipped block swoops upwards to settle into its original position without a single crack in the edifice. Tricks like these that relied on the mechanized workings of the projector furthermore uncovered the mechanized facts of existence beyond the world of the film. Played backwards, the rhythmical swings of the humans with pickaxes seemed to abide by a set of laws not so different from the wall they demolished (and seemingly rebuilt). This suggests an inherent and uncomfortable similarity between subjects and objects that could prompt a perceived need for subjects to assert their separateness so as not to lose their humanity, but sensing one's own objecthood can also offer an honest perspective on selfhood that elevates objects instead of lowering subjects.

Epstein makes similar observations in *The Intelligence of a Machine*, recognizing the anxiety of losing one's humanity but pointing to a circuitous quality in the relationship between subjects and objects as represented by film. He first argues the film camera (and, by extension, the projector) is a machine not only for art but for philosophy. Enlightened by the capacities of the *cinématographe*, he criticizes our human propensity to link causes and effects as inseparable

entities by referencing the reversibility of film. We perceive time as moving forward, but who is to say that smoke does not generate fire if we perceived time backwards, as film allows us to do? As Epstein articulates, “The cinematograph suddenly describes, with clear precision, a world that would go from its end to its beginning, an anti-universe that previously, humanity could scarcely represent to itself” (“Intelligence” 4). When causes, effects, and natural laws begin to break down, Epstein suggests this might imply humans have less autonomy than they previously thought; machines may function much more like brains and vice versa, culminating in his assertion that the camera itself has a kind of *intelligence*. In the filmic world, humans function in a manner similar to objects. They are projected shapes, and their actions are as predetermined on the celluloid as any of the objects that surround them. Just as objects can be intelligent, subjects can have a different sort of intelligence when they are remanded to their objecthood, an intelligence that sees the world with the objectivity of the camera.

Epstein therefore conceives of a notion of beauty that positions the camera to mediate subjectivity rather than negate it. He imagines that when standard notions of space, time, freedom, and continuity are unseated, the world “become[s] a conditional, floating, allegorical, and intermittent reality: all in all, it becomes poetry” (“Intelligence” 55). When one believes less in the laws that appear to govern reality, one can experience that reality more honestly. The opportunity to see oneself on film is particularly revelatory, often producing embarrassment and unease. The subject does not want to see him or herself accurately, namely as a flawed object. But if the subject can allow him or herself to be remediated by the camera and projector, by these enchanted objects, Epstein claims the subject can release anxiety through the ultimate confessional of the screen. Then the subject, in turn, might see the life of the camera and projector and see life through the

camera and projector. Epstein phrases it thusly: “It seems that, stripped of the embellishments of illusion, we suddenly discover the incomprehensible: true magic,” which is, namely, the boundless insights offered by the profound objectivity of the camera (“Intelligence” 92). Epstein recognizes the mechanical medium of film reorients subjects and objects, allowing subjects to perceive themselves, other selves, the world of objects, and the very camera more accurately as they too are *seen* by the enchanted object of the camera.

Epstein therefore complicates the criticisms of film’s supposed lifelessness from writers like Gorky by wedding mechanization to circuitous subject-object relationships. Other critics would similarly rebuke modernist writers for invoking similarly mechanized devices. For instance, in an article entitled, “The Cinematograph,” O. Winter explicitly criticized modern writers, and interestingly, he denounces Americans as particularly objective in this manner, with their “machine-made” novels (296). T.S. Eliot’s *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* may at first appear to be the work of a machine cramming together lists of objects and miscellaneous nonsensical moments, but Eliot is able to depict Prufrock’s subjectivity *through* mechanized means. The formal elements of *Prufrock* contribute to this mechanical effect. The inconsistent rhymes communicate circular anxieties with their repetitive nature, as in the following stanza:

And indeed there will be time
 To wonder, “Do I dare?” and, “Do I dare?”
 Time to turn back and descend the stair,
 With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—
 (They will say: “How his hair is growing thin!”)
 My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,

My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin—

(They will say: “But how his arms and legs are thin!”). (37-48)

The rhymes dare, stair, hair and chin, pin, thin drop hard at the end of their lines, underscoring Prufrock’s obsessiveness, enhanced by the lack of meter (the presence of which would propel the reader to the end of the line, rather than letting the sentences slip out like half-formed thoughts) and the fact that the third word seems like an extra add-on, most ears being accustomed to couplets. Therefore, it is a dull obsessiveness, a rambling list of worries that escape in a disimpassioned, mechanical voice.

In the same vein, Prufrock’s long lists of enchanted objects tinkle out in succession like a wound-up music box, as in lines 101-103: “After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,/After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor—.” Eliot uses a similar device in *The Wasteland*, writing, “On the divan are piled (at night her bed)/Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays” (226-227). The repetitive lists make Prufrock seem mechanized in detailing them, but it gives the objects a quality of enchantment because they are functioning beyond their denotative meaning. In the former example, the enchanted objects share something of their essence with Prufrock: Readers can imagine the sort of polite conversation that surrounds novels, teacups, and skirts trailing along the floor, connoting a refined world that passes Prufrock by. They connect to the earlier “tea and cake and ices” that contrast with Prufrock’s need to “force the moment to its crisis,” and the pairing suggests this oppressively lackadaisical refinement prompts Prufrock’s crisis because he cannot relax about his future, and he cannot make himself adequately refined to secure this future. The objects manifest his life slowly slipping,

unremarkably, into old age, and so, too, his head might be brought in on one of those insufferably unremarkable platters (79, 80).

All of these qualities are conveyed through the object world. Prufrock is evoked through his own absence in the poem, spotlighting the objects that are in circuitous relationship with him and therefore contain something of his character, making them function as subjects, while his narrative voice becomes mechanical and thus Prufrock seems more like an object. When Prufrock does take the spotlight, he still manages to be self-effacing by describing himself in the same rambling fashion with which he listed the objects, calling himself, “Deferential, glad to be of use,/Politic, cautious, and meticulous;/Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse,/At times, indeed, almost ridiculous,/Almost, at times, the Fool” (115-119). Prufrock views himself as an object to be scrutinized and lists his qualities in the same manner that he lists physical surroundings. The purpose of his lists is not to produce a mechanized effect but to reveal how these objects constitute his frame of mind. Likewise, he constitutes them: Their construction as an often unsympathetic setting is his perception giving them animus.

Finally, Eliot’s mechanized effect is also accomplished by implying his speaker is acted upon by outside forces. Prufrock cannot actively wonder about his romantic prospects; rather, as if he is on a conveyer belt, disembodied forces “lift and drop a question on [his] plate” (30). He does not take toast and tea; he experiences “the taking of a toast and tea” (34); he tries to make “decisions and revisions” but acknowledges that “a minute will reverse” them (48); and, as a resounding example of his helplessness, he ends up “formulated, sprawling on pin...and wriggling on the wall” (57-58). Therefore, Eliot’s Prufrock is passively acted on by an animate mechanized

world. It remains evident at the same time that even in acted upon as an object by his mechanized world, Prufrock seeks subjective expression.

In a manner akin to Eliot's creation of Prufrock, Epstein creates a mechanized external world that mirrors a character's internal state in his 1923 film *Coeur Fidèle*. In this film, the setting dramatizes the antagonistic forces facing Marie, Epstein's protagonist. Marie has been captured by the villainous Petit Paul, a prospective husband of her parents' choosing, and she pines for her lover Jean. In an unsuccessful attempt to woo her, Petit Paul takes Marie to an amusement park and forcefully drags her onto the carnival rides. Like Prufrock, she, too, is trapped in a rhythmical, circular world; like Prufrock, her internal state is externalized through the presence of enchanted objects; and like Prufrock pinned against the wall, so, too, does Marie experience something else's invasive movements. Fittingly, Epstein chooses a fairground as his setting, which calls to mind elements of the cinema of attractions. Referencing Gunning, Susan McCabe writes, "Early cinema is not dominated by narrative' but rather 'partakes of the sensual and psychological impact' of the fairground, suggestive of a kaleidoscopic sensory experience" (9). Both Eliot and Epstein use elements of this kaleidoscope of carnival attractions, as in Eliot's references to grotesque imagery or Epstein's disorienting carnival rides, but in a manner that always connects the subject to the object world.

In this film, Marie's state of disorientation caused by her kidnapping is reciprocated in the enchanted objects of the carnival, and one solitary enchanted object encapsulates her emotional response to the disorientation. The mechanized setting produces the effect: Marie is caught in the cogs of a machine, dragging along on a carnival ride and clinging to her seat against the centrifugal motion that would push her against her unwanted paramour, Petit Paul. Furthermore, she is

surrounded by other carnival rides so that not even her eyes (looking in every direction except at the gentleman next to her) can settle on a stable object. Her surroundings are further destabilized for the viewer, as the moving pieces of the rides are filmed from below at neck-craning angles or dart in and out of shots at upward angles, unpredictably dominating the entire field of vision or simply appearing as a flash in the corner. The mechanization of the fairground could be construed as a hostile, oppositional force pitted against Marie, but the setting is not the actual source of her agony. Petit Paul is. The setting might be viewed as adding to the antagonism, but it also resonates with her emotions, not Petit Paul's, and is in this way sympathetic. It furthermore prompts a sympathetic response on the part of the spectator, who is likely to find the cyclical, mechanical movements physically nauseating and psychologically oppressive, building up a desire to arrest the repetitive motion as rides swing in and out of the camera frame, interrupting the viewer's attempts to make sense of the surroundings. Marie can be understood through these mechanical objects, and her presence also remediates the audience's perception of these fairground objects that might otherwise appear on screen as a source of youthful delight.

In addition to the rides, another set of enchanted objects emerges: the set of mechanical dolls affixed to the merry-go-round's organ. This is analogous to Prufrock's magic lantern, revealing that the mechanized world can be an outlet for self-expression, though Prufrock actively seeks his magic lantern, while Marie's dolls seem like an incidental reflection of her mental state. While the rest of the carnival represents the sense of disorientation that has been inflicted upon her, these dolls may be seen as Marie's emotional response from a diminished (and literally smaller) self. One even cranes her head to the side in the same direction as Marie in a later shot on the swings away from Petit Paul, and the doll jerks her head from side to side in a barely

perceptible movement as if to say “no.” Notably, they are the only figures that do not shift their orientation within the frame besides earlier shots of the actual characters. The connection between Marie and the doll is cemented by Marie’s stony expression as well as a moment in an earlier shot when Petit Paul jostles her with his shoulder, and she jerks side to side in much the same manner as the windup dolls, limply obedient and facially unreactive. Therefore, while Prufrock seeks a magic lantern as a form of self-expression, Marie actually experiences a sympathetic mirroring by her enchanted object. This is a fitting contrast, since Prufrock appears to be asking for a camera, and a camera is precisely what has revealed Marie to the film’s audience.

The formal elements of Eliot and Epstein’s works therefore use mechanization to unearth subject-object relationships. The enchanted objects surrounding Eliot’s Prufrock and Epstein’s Marie at times are the agents of seemingly oppressive forces that act upon these characters, but they also offer the characters opportunities to express their feelings of oppression rather than themselves constituting oppression. Thus, they can reveal elements of these characters’ subjectivities. Their subjecthood, likewise, frames our own understanding of the objects. In many cases, mechanization—whether in Prufrock’s coffee spoons or the mechanical doll in *Coeur Fidèle*—makes the objects seem alive. The following section traces the relationship between mechanization, magic, and the world of enchanted objects.

Magic Shows and Enchanted Objects

Just as Marie experiences a simultaneous loss of control and outlet for empathy in the mechanical world, in a similar manner the real-life citizens of the modern world recoiled from factory life but incorporated machines into entertainment. This was reflected in the newly popularized language of the late 1800s/early 1900s with the spread of “jargon that concentrated

on methods of operation, on aspects of mechanical organization and construction, on horsepower, gears, pulleys, and safety valves” (Harris 75). “Recreational literature” came to include the “how-to-do-it” book (75). In response to the atomization brought about by the age of the machine and the horror of war, a public interest in magic proliferated. Many people, fancying themselves amateur sleuths, sought the satisfaction of debunking tricks in the same manner they studied the inner workings of machines. Citizens reclaimed a sense of control by scrutinizing “humbugs,” and the rapidly advancing technology of the modern age only egged on their imaginations to outpace actual accomplishments, leading to the result that, as Erik Barnouw puts it, “the magician was King of Entertainment” (Barnouw 3). In context of the magic show, people could have their cake and eat it, too, trying to debug how the magician worked his or her magic while also delighting in the adeptness of the trick.

As Tom Gunning recounts in “An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator,” films were exhibited alongside other traveling show curiosities, and the early cinema of attractions reveled in the materiality of the objects in the film more than it did in narrative. In fact, early filmmakers often had personal histories as magicians, taking their stunts to whole new levels with trick filmmaking. Vitagraph exhibitionist J. Stuart Blackton would only intensify the sense of magician-like showmanship with his dramatic patterns, seeming to transform still images into moving pictures with the power of his voice. Gunning emphasizes that these devices made the world of the film less immersive and more arresting, stating, “These early films explicitly acknowledge their spectator, seeming to reach outwards and confront. The viewer’s curiosity is aroused and fulfilled through a marked encounter, a direct stimulus, a succession of shocks” (“Aesthetic”123-124). And because these shocks involved the manipulation of the physical

world, defamiliarizing it in the world of the film, it gave the audience a heightened sense of their own materiality.

The lens of magic and enchantment reinforces what the close-up does for film and synecdoche does for poetry: enchanted objects are not limited to inorganic matter but can also describe human body parts isolated from one another. On the one hand, the inorganic can become sentient. Eliot's *Prufrock* abounds with enchanted objects amid a dearth of people: a plate full of questions, coffee spoons that measure out life itself, and the sense of restless wandering Prufrock associates with previously slurped oyster shells lying discarded. Not only do they possess symbolic qualities, but they also appear to be vaguely conscious beings. The streets Prufrock wanders have an "insidious intent" and consciously "lead [him] to an overwhelming question" (9-10). Eliot represents his fellow partygoers as fragmented body parts as a means of confronting the perceived threat they pose. His dismissive statement, "I have known the eyes already, known the all—the echoing line, "I have known the arms already, known them all—" suggests that, in reducing judgmental women to mere body parts, he may dismiss their anticipated criticisms (55, 62). However, in doing so, he magnifies the women and gives them a life of their own. Their eyes can stare daggers in a very literal manner, "[fixing him] in a formulated phrase" and pinning him to the wall (56). Synecdochally referring to women as disembodied voices, arms wrapping around shawls, and heads leaning against pillows does not dismiss their power, but rather contributes to the sense that he is surrounded by watchful body parts. Prufrock's synecdochal accounts of body parts also gives them a level of sentience that exceeds the expressivity of the whole person. He animates the sea of eyes that "fix [him] in a formulated phrase" and seem to stab him with pins. All of the malice he imagines in the partygoers is localized in their eyes, which are far more

communicative than the rest of their bodies. A woman can vaguely reject him with the phrase, “That is not it at all,/That is not what I meant, at all,” but her eyes will actively pierce him (109-110). In Prufrock’s enchanted world, the power his synecdochal women is heightened.

Individual bodily members are similarly communicative in Dimitri Kirsanoff’s *Ménilmontant*, an effect that is achieved through the close-up. The countless women’s hands gathering silk flowers provide a visual rhyme with the bustling crowds of the previous shot, moving like machines. This seems to imply that they are merely mechanized objects; yet, in the scenes with their lovers, the close-ups of their hands are just as revelatory as the shots of their faces. These prolonged close-ups alternate between the younger sister’s face, her communicative hands, and an occasional profile of her lover looking down at his paramour. At a moment when the lovers should be coming together, in the frame as well as in the narrative, both inhabit separate shots. The hands are separate too, telling a story of coercion in harsher tones than is conveyed by the uncertainty on the young woman’s face. As she gazes into her lover’s eyes, her fingers interpose themselves between her face and him as if to distance her, wiggling across her mouth with a mind of their own. He grasps her arms with greedy, authoritative hands, repositioning her entire body and digging his fingers between hers, at times physically picking up her hand and enclosing it between both of his. When he coerces her to come into his apartment, his hands pinch her arm, causing her to look down his grasping motion, and she even lays her hand on top of his to stop him from opening the door. As she is pulled into the darkness of his hallway, the only visible objects are his pale hands pushing on her back and her fingers reluctantly leaving the handle.

In this way, human body parts are first *objectified* by close-ups that emphasize their materiality, then *personified* in moments when they seem to communicate, and indeed

communicate better, than the persons to whom they belong. These fragmented body parts are assimilated into a sea of enchanted objects, all of which are equally expressive and imbued with life. Interestingly, Hugh Kenner even calls Eliot the “poet of the alarm clock,” and this is a spot-on match for a ubiquitous enchanted object in *Ménilmontant* (Trotter 239). The clock commands the viewer’s attention through its controlled movements, much like Epstein’s description of the *photogénie*, the French Impressionist term for the aesthetic of movement that cinema, among all art forms, uniquely conveys. Epstein writes of the experience of the *photogénie* as follows: “I haven’t the right to think of anything but this telephone... It looks like an idea” (Epstein 15). The clock in Kirsanoff’s *Ménilmontant* communicates its “idea” through small yet dramatic motions.

In its first appearance, the clock appears entirely stationary, although low-key lighting and long shadow lend it an element of drama that compels us to pay attention. In its second appearance, the clock is turned away from the camera so its back is visible, and an oddly captivating dial rotates (Figure 1). This contrasts with the motionless close-ups of shoes on the floor and trash in piles shown immediately before, but it also contrasts with the frenzied motions of the girls frantically dancing and jumping on the bed immediately after. The quiet insistence of the clock’s movement—controlled, easy to follow—is pleasurable for the audience in a way that the frenzied sequences are not; it is as if a character has entered the scene who can slowly, deliberately, tell us something about what is happening.

The clock furthermore points viewers to other moments that exemplify the *photogénie*. Its small steady motion contrasts with the jumping girls in this instance, but it does have a human analogue in other scenes, an analogue that suggests humans and objects are communicative in similar ways. When the younger sister first meets her lover (Figure 2) and after she leaves the site

of their sexual encounter (Figure 3), her round face calls to mind the shape of the clock's face, topped by a hat instead of a bell. In the calm stasis of a prolonged close-up, the audience watches as her face unwinds with the same steady motion as the clock's dial. This is not the frantic motion that so often characterizes the young woman when she is depicted in long or medium shots. Instead, in these close-ups, one expression melts smoothly into the next, keeping her face constantly and evenly in motion, though that motion is subtle. This draws the viewer into her interior world as they are compelled to watch closely for the subtlety of movement and infer what she is feeling as it unfolds. It is an intersubjective opening in which the viewer must fill in the gaps and constitute the substance of what the woman is thinking without ever being sure of these suppositions.

The insistence that viewers pay attention to the time is also repeated: a brief shot shows an insistent hand pointing at her watch (5:47), and the clock in the town square stands stationary above the oscillations of city life. On the one hand, the clock brings to mind the labor clock, which measures and enforces the work schedule. The clock is also connected to the train schedules and the bustling world of transportation. These public clocks invoke such associations. The clock in the girls' bedroom is more complex: it calls to mind the modern world, but the prolonged shots take the spectator out of time, or out of the frenzy of time. It is a reminder that a quieter world indeed exists, a world not cluttered by the blurred, crisscrossing sequence of car wheels (a reappearing motif) or the jumping girls whose movements resemble the cars. With the alarm clock's steady, winding movement, the spectator is reminded the interior world of the characters, which moves at the same slow, steady pace.

Therefore, the objects in *Prufrock* and *Ménilmontant* become enchanted as their capacity for movement lends them an air of sentience, but their magical components invoke their materiality rather than departing from it in a manner that runs parallel to other outposts of magic in the early twentieth century. The magic shows popular at this time wedded the material and the immaterial in a similar manner, and the form this aesthetic took evidences magic's ties to modernity, incorporating smoke, gears, moving parts, and other emblems of the factory. For instance, Robert Houdin's audience was significantly more interested in his working automaton when he added unnecessary, mechanical sound effects (Harris 89). It seems like a contradiction: audiences wanted to experience the immaterial forces beyond their comprehension that characterize magic, but they also wanted a very material encounter with tactile symbols of modernity that could be understood and puzzled together. The image of one gear fitting into another like a lock and key concretizes the audience's broader desire to *see how it all fits together*, in a manner of speaking, with *it* referring to both material and immaterial components. It reminds the spectator of their own bodily dislocatedness, as they seek a sense of relocation resonant with the interlocking gears.

The apparent contradiction between the desire for the unknowable immaterial and the desire for the fully knowable material can be reconciled: showcasing human progress in the magic show suggested a human mode of entry into the immaterial, ethereal world through material technology. Neil Harris writes of the "operational aesthetic" prevalent in the traveling show, suggesting, "The coming of steam, of railroads, of telegraphs indicated the futility of declaring anything impossible or incredible. Nothing mechanical was beyond the range of Nature's imagination" (73). This also calls to mind David Trotter's assertion that other immaterial forces, namely thoughts and ideas, can "only be known technologically" (242). However, they cannot

fully be known. Rather than effectually charting out the entire unknown world of the immaterial, technologies offer a mode of exploration. These technologies overlap with my notion of enchanted objects: frequently the objects showcased in these films and poems feature gears and moving parts that contribute to their perceived autonomy, and the proliferation of these objects was linked to the factory system, but they also function in a manner similar to Harris's and Trotter's theories regarding technology. The knowable, graspable material world is acted upon by the immaterial, and therefore offers a mode of entry into understanding the immaterial. In *Ménilmontant*, enchanted objects like the clock indeed point spectators to characters' internal thoughts and ideas by acting with a seemingly autonomous movement in these moments of close-up and concretizing the immaterial, emotional forces within the characters.

The clock's second appearance builds on its earlier feat of directing spectators to the characters' internal state by now showing how this state is less internal than we might think: the self is enmeshed with the world, including even its own body. The protagonist's sexual encounter with her lover is intercut with shots of the clock's inner gears suddenly exposed, much like the lovers (Figure 4). Viewers see all the internal workings superimposed over rushing motorcars on busy streets (Figure 5), only to fade into the lovers' intertwined bodies, likewise superimposed (Figure 6). It appears that their affair does not represent a connection between the partners but rather a clashing encounter with the outside world, mediated by a mechanical yet sympathetically exposed clock. We sense the movement of immaterial forces connecting self and world in a manner that accesses the immaterial *through* the material rather than *negating* either the immaterial or the immaterial. The clock's exposed gears make it seem all the more solid and stable, forming a functioning whole, while at this very moment the superimposed image of the clock is collided with

a world trafficked by humans and machines (Figure 5). When the lovers' bodies replace the clock in the next shot, they and the clock are bound up together. Their sexual encounter is not just the meeting of two human bodies; rather, they also meet a whole world of objects possessing a subjectivity akin to their own. Their frenzy is the world's frenzy (the resonance between jumping bodies and crisscrossing cars), and their introspection is the world's introspection (the resonance between a winding dial and the slow progress of emotions over a human face). Subject and object, the lovers and the clock, are not oppositional forces but rather ones that seep into and shape each other.

Other elements of the film, such as the use shadows, expand the points of contact between self and world. These insubstantial shadows, like the enchanted object of the clock, might have a life of their own: the lover's shadow, stretched across the cobblestones, seems much more imposing than his actual physique. In Figure 6 the lovers' skin appears scaled through the shadows of grating, obscured not only by the rushing cars, but also by this second element. When the younger sister suspects her older sister's betrayal, she reaches towards her own shadow for support, even looks towards it in supplication. And finally, her breath on the park bench is an unusually expressive vapor, the only part of her that reaches outside the frame, perhaps mingling with the breath of the kind stranger who gives her bread.

Prufrock is likewise shrouded in a haze that seems at once magical and invasive, beginning with a personified yellow fog that serves a similarly obfuscating yet revelatory purpose. Alone on the "tedious," "insidious" streets, Prufrock invents (or actually perceives?) an animal-like smoke that can rub its muzzle, lick its tongue, leap over pools, and comfortably curl up around him. The haze follows Prufrock throughout the poem, imbued with supernatural powers. He wishes he

could tell the women about seeing “the smoke that rises from the pipes/Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows” because that might help them understand his sense of isolation (71-72). He is distracted by a waft of perfume from a dress, losing his train of thought entirely. Prufrock even imagines some strange, invisible animal asleep by his side, “asleep...tired...or it malingers,/Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me” (77-78). This personified presence may go so far as to hint at the overt presence of magic, and at least provides an abstract source of comfort for Prufrock. Yet the fog’s yellow hue also brings to mind poison or industrial waste. It is one of many enchanted objects in both *Prufrock* and *Ménilmontant* that invade the body and provoke an experience of the abject, which is all the more heightened by their magical qualities.

Abject Anxieties

As previously discussed, the cinema of attractions produced simultaneous feelings of attraction and revulsion among audience members, often through bodily transgressions like in James Williamson’s “The Big Swallow.” Such bodily transgressions in which the exterior world invades the interior world of the self likewise occur in French Impressionism and modernist poetry in the circuitous subject-object relationships. Julia Kristeva names this experience of simultaneous attraction and repulsion the *abject*, a product of when self and world mix. It is an anxiety surrounding barrier-crossing, a sense of disgust and ill ease aroused by barriers such as the skin on a glass of milk, which call to mind the body’s own skin and our fundamental unease with having the body invaded (Kristeva 2). Likewise, there is an equivalent unease/fascination with experiencing what was once part of the body no longer belonging to it, which I illustrate by mentioning our disgust at finding hairs in shower drains. Kristeva explains, “It is death infecting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not

protect oneself as from an object” (4). One cannot remove the abject but merely pushes it to the side, where it remains threatening. Yet Kristeva also notes invoking the abject is essential for art because “The abject is edged with the sublime” (11). In her work, *Powers of Horror; An Essay on Abjection* Kristeva traces the influence of the abject on literature, and recognizes that the process of constantly renegotiating boundaries, *abjection*, is essential to the artistic process.

The barrier-crossings delineated in the previous section—the clock and traffic mingling with human bodies in *Ménilmontant* and the invasive yellow fog in *Prufrock*—produce this sense of the abject. This section establishes how in other moments Epstein and Eliot more forcefully remand readers to the bodily unease of the abject with punctuating images of disfigurement and bodily invasion. Such abject moments are logical sites of intersubjective and interobjective encounter because the subject is radically reminded of its own objecthood as it encounters the sort of exterior objects Kristeva claims we wish to declare is definitely not us. But in trying to distance ourselves, we discover it “is not an ‘other’ for ‘me,’” which leads Kristeva to conclude, “I expel *myself*, I spit *myself out*, I abject *myself* with the same motion through which “I” claim to establish *myself*” (3). Encountering the abject uncomfortably reminds the subject of the substance it shares with the object world. These texts provide sites to work out the anxieties of the abject. Many times in the films and poems under discussion, this sense of the abject calls upon the darker qualities of magic to illustrate the unease. Magic, as a cultural force, colored the representation of enchanted objects in the previous section, and in the same manner, it has tendrils in this more sinister enchantment.

The experience of the abject is present even in the historical relationship between cinema and magic. Cinema has a cannibalistic relationship with magic shows due to “the transfer to the screen of the magician’s most sensational illusions,” which caused cinema to become “a powerful

robot ousting its former master” (Barnouw 6-8). Initially, these spectacles were associated with trick films, but they have much farther-reaching extensions in later film and poetry. The speaker’s sleight of hand in *Prufrock* frequently juxtaposes the beautiful with the horrific like any good showman. No sooner is the reader imagining the comfort of the mundane, picturing “tea and cakes and ices” as the afternoon is “smoothed by long fingers” than Prufrock drops the bomb, “though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter” (79, 76, 82). This is a familiar image for Eliot’s audience: in Erik Barnouw’s *The Magician and the Cinema*, he describes the show-stopping acts of “self-capitulation” common to magic shows of this time period, with the magician holding his own head at the end of the night, a move that emphasizes the objecthood of the subject in harsh, abjected ways (3). And though this is horrifying, it is also the part audience has paid good money to see. They long for the simultaneous attraction and repulsion of the abject so as to confront those abject fears that linger at the edges of their awareness. Because self-capitulation in the magic show was such a hit, the trope of embedding a single, disturbing image in an otherwise picturesque passage or clip is common to both poetry and cinema of this era. Contrast, revulsion, and curiosity are reliable techniques for holding an audience’s interest. Tomi Huttunen comments on this technique, writing, “The author chooses the most shocking juxtapositions for metaphors in order to force the reader to participate in a reconstructive process of generating synthetic meanings” (4). In such a way, shock imbues a text with a sense of life. To be surprised is to feel one’s own heart pounding, and thereby to feel oneself as an object. Also, to a lesser extent, the shock within a text produces not an opposition against it but a curiosity allowing entrance into the text.

Many writers have associated the presence of morbidity in these works with the trauma of World War I. Christian Metz calls film “a prosthesis for our primally dislocated limbs,” all the more dislocated literally and symbolically by the war (McCabe 10). Paul Virilio points out that “the nitrocellulose that went into film stock was also used for the production of explosives,” an apt metaphor describing the close film’s potential for a therapeutic reenactment of violence (McCabe10). Modernist poets’ also demonstrate an obsession with “literal bodily disfigurements and psychological traumas” (McCabe10). Not only was this a response to the war, but it was also an extension of modernity’s mechanization. The public’s fascination with machines led to viewing the human body as a mechanical entity, which at first seems horrifically dehumanizing until the fragmented body is shown to be uniquely communicative. Eliot explores how the body, like a clock, could be dissected, its parts set in pieces on the examination table, like his “patient etherized upon a table” (3). This image from the poem’s opening is unsettling: one moment, Prufrock is directly addressing the reader in a romantic manner, verbally taking his/her hand, and saying, “Let us go then, you and I,/When the evening is spread out against the sky” (1-2). The next second, readers are slammed with a comparison of the night sky to surgery. Thus, human body and night sky become the subject of dissection and examination in a thoroughly de-romanticized and heavily abjected manner.

Both Eliot and Dimitri Kirsanoff juxtapose organic, living matter with decay. Prufrock discusses murder in the same breath as breakfast (28-34); Kirsanoff’s *Ménilmontant* pairs flowers with putrescent black goop (Figure 7), and later, a single pair of well-loved shoes slips into a shot of broken, trashed shoes on a garbage pile (Figures 8 and 9). This frame from *Ménilmontant* features dried or perhaps plastic flowers alongside a manmade glue that will cement them into

arrangements. In one regard, the flowers have become symbols of the inorganic as they are preserved with repulsive black tar, but they will certainly be sold for decoration in homes where they will seem organic in comparison to the other factory-produced trinkets decorating the shelves. Therefore, the flowers covalently represent both life and the simulacrum of it. Questioning the natural order and society's understanding of it is paramount to the thematic content of the film, as the protagonist faces such a perceived threat of shame for her pregnancy that she considers hurling her body into the river. She, like the shoes, can be walking down the street one moment and on the rubbish pile the next, and such frequent juxtapositions ask the spectator to question the condemnation heaped on the persons society deems abject.

Eliot evokes a similar image to Kirsanoff's flowers and tar in *The Wasteland*, and Eliot's abject moments are oddly grounding for the reader (and not just because he is writing about burial) even as they are unsettling. The very opening of the poem begins with a description of lilacs "breeding...out of the dead land" under which worms a network of "dried tubers" (1-2). The abject experience of the moment is heightened by Eliot's choice of the word "tubers," a phraseology that makes the plants seem alien, somewhere between life and death, creating the image of infestation underneath the "forgetful snow" (6-7). Likewise, the connotation of the word "breeding" is not quite the same as *growing*, *thriving*, or *blooming*. It associates growth with production: animals are bred for the purpose of producing new animals, generally to be sold and generate revenue. It is a term associated with life but also a term associated with economics. There is something sinister about this plant growth that comes to fruition at the end of "The Burial of the Dead," when a murdered corpse has been "planted" in a garden, and the speaker asks, "Will it bloom this year?" (71, 72) The corpse is not only occupying a space between life

and death, with the suggestion that it can reanimate in the spring, but it is also somewhere between human and plant matter. The corpse is an image Kristeva explicitly evokes (3), and furthermore, it is placed in the ground, an image resembling another abject image, human skin (3). This multi-layered abject object represents an extreme blurring of subjects and objects, and it is when boundaries are so fully violated that the subject's encounter with the object world is unsettling. However, the following section's discussion of radio will reveal how such images could be grounding for the dislocated subject.

Radio Circuitry

Early radio can help explain the new and circuitous subject-object relationships present in film and poetry in the early twentieth century. For the purposes of this argument, I will analyze radio as a medium of entertainment rather than an implement of war, though its history encompasses both elements. The historic structures of feeling surrounding the radio entertainment span several topics already under discussion, such as the prevalence of new technologies and the rising interest in the occult. It also responds to and helps constitute the sense of dislocation the subject experienced in the throes of modernity by offering a kind of spatial situatedness. Furthermore, the electrical circuitry of radio is a syllepsis for the new intersubjectivity and interobjectivity present in these works, serving as both a metaphor to illustrate these dynamics and being a literal, historical source of this effect. Radio enacts the experience of the abject through technology, as sound from another place enters the house, the room, even the body of the subject, and as such it reveals the intersubjective and interobjective potential of abject experience.

Radio, as well as its predecessors in distance-traversing technologies, perpetuated a sense of placelessness by transporting human voices across the country and transporting the listener into the recording studio or the music hall. This calls to mind what Walter Benjamin wrote in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” Benjamin understands the modern subject’s mode of engagement with art as a function of physical distance. He writes, “The cathedral leaves its locale to be received in the studio of a lover of art; the choral production, performed in an auditorium or in the open air, resounds in the drawing room,” a relocation that Benjamin claims depreciates the presence and authority of a work of art in a positive sense. Yes, in the opera, the sound is connected to the people producing it. It seems to exist in a single time and place, with a clear source. What is more, it occurs in a setting that requires specific social decorum: people attend the opera wearing suits and dresses; they sit up straight in their chairs; they are careful that their emotional responses to the music should be appropriate to the setting and acceptable to their companions. But the broadcasted performance comes directly into the listener’s home, mediated by the electrical box but unmediated by any human presence. Spatial situatedness is established by the connections between subject and objects; the subject is not in proximity to the world but rather to specific voices that touch his or her ears.

When subjects are reduced to voices, or even individual body parts, sometimes they become more knowable. Early radio singer Leon Alfred Duthernoy recounts a similar experience in his piece “Singing to Tens of Thousands; Impressions of an Artist during His First Radio Concert.” He details the lonely, dehumanizing radio studio in which he gave his first concert, paired with only an inattentive accompanist who spent much of the session knitted myopically in the dim light. He describes the “skinny arm, or skeletonized frame” of the transmitter (268). But

the passage that makes him most nearly resemble Prufrock is as follows: “In my mind I visualized a life-size map of the United States, and in every town, every hamlet, every crossroads, there was *nothing but ears*...I could see ears sticking out from behind library tables, bookcases and sideboards; the handles were ears, the glass knobs were ears, *and they were waiting for me*” (268). At first, he is struck by the dullness of his performance and the loneliness of singing to a skeleton arm with no applause. But then he imagines the ears in hospitals, sanitariums, and children’s wards.

This calls to mind the moments in *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* when Prufrock claims to variously know the voices, eyes, and arms of his fellow partygoers. Even though Prufrock finds these parts of humans as judgmental as their wholes, it nonetheless suggests an impulse to intimacy in that context. Individual eyes, arms, and other body parts are only experienced in isolation when two bodies are very close and they can fill the whole field of vision. Both Prufrock and Duthernoy synecdochally dissect the humans making up their audiences, materializing the body parts and giving them life, and Duthernoy more successfully reaches a point of intimacy with the subjects to whom the ears belong. It is not in spite of, but rather, because of this abject vivisectioning and personifying image that Duthernoy feels close to his invisible audience while still in the room of equally abject skeleton wires, an intimacy he prefers to the warm applause of the concert hall. The ubiquitous ears, some of which are attached to humans for whom he feels great sympathy, form a compelling audience. He can picture the specific, minute detail of the ears, corporealizing his otherwise invisible audience, but he also senses the vastness of this same audience “in every town, every hamlet, every crossroads” that would exceed the limits of the concert hall. Like Prufrock, Duthernoy is comforting by reducing humans to their object-like parts and uses these parts to foster a new intersubjectivity.

Radio especially capitalized on the new proximity of the auditory arts with “crooning,” or a soft, sentimental singing style that mimicked how mothers often sing to their babies. Timothy D. Taylor observes, “Crooning thus introduced a paradox: while radio was proclaimed as uniting disparate Americans into a single culture, the singing style that radio ushered into existence helped to create and maintain an illusion that listeners’ relationships to singers and other broadcasting individuals were unmediated and personal” (252). Singers intentionally sang in a manner to suggest their lips might brush the listener’s ears at any moment: low, soft, the way a mother sings to a child. It is easy to see why crooning became a popular style for love songs. When radio could produce a feeling of closeness, and as a byproduct produce a sense of placelessness, it also conveyed a sense of intimacy.

Radio displaced early listeners and reoriented their relationship with the object world. Bruce Bliven’s 1922 piece “The Ether Will Now Oblige” puts to words a historical structure of feeling occurring nationwide in this description of early clandestine radio parties, giving credence to this theory of displacement and relocatedness (Taylor et. al 260). In this *New Republic* article, readers are continually reminded of a sense of placelessness, salient in the opening line, “The taxi driver at 181st Street wasn’t at all sure he could find the place” (260). Emerging from the darkness of city streets and entering the party, the reader’s first true visual in the entire narrative is of intensely material whirligigs adorning the radio: “The face of this board was cluttered with instruments—dials, handles, and, dominating the rest, several hooded electric lights in glass tubes” (261). The specificity of these descriptions throws into relief the blurred, shadowy backdrop of the radio party in which no single person’s physical qualities are actually mentioned, with the exception of the overalls the speaker imagines on the radio enthusiasts, which evidence their

association with industrialization. In a vacuum of sensory details besides those related to the radio, those details that are present anchor readers, who might otherwise be sucked up into the void of missing details in the same manner as the radio waves, which “[have] been tossed off into the limitless ether which it fills for hundreds of miles in every direction” (262). Through the knobs and dials, readers have a specific space to occupy, protecting them drifting into the infinite space, akin to the ether that houses radio waves, which Bliven emphasizes is otherwise vast and frightful.

These enchanted objects therefore demand our attention, and they become the central characters of the narrative. Because readers share an anthropomorphizing impulse that assumes a story must have actors, and because we find no other actors present in Bliven’s descriptions, the objects develop a sense of agency and sentience. The phonograph horn emits a “shrill whistle...made by some far-off world as it flees shrieking in agony across the firmament” (262). Contrast the agonized shrieking of radio with the cool depersonalization of the party attenders and it is obvious which “characters” are the more sympathetic. I remark on the tendencies of Bliven’s style not to digress into a formal analysis of his particular writing but to argue his stylistic choices emerge from a cultural attitude towards radio that he merely captures in words. He situates readers in the attitude of listening to a broadcast, and it is the qualities of this attitude that matters. We are more attentive to the imaginary imagery (imaginary in the context of the narrative) than we are to the literal setting in which Bliven places us, with the exception of the technologies that bridge the gap into radio’s abstraction, because that is exactly how radio works. A medium devoid of visuals like radio is really *all about sight*, since it has to work doubly hard to provide listeners with a visual to direct their focus—hence, the great tradition storytelling via radio.

In Bliven's piece, he mimics this experience, presenting it in a manner that captures the dislocation and relocation of the medium, so we too, like the original listeners, are "listening in."

The influence of the historical structures of feeling related to radio on the medium of poetry is evident when T.S. Eliot's use of dialogue in *The Wasteland* accomplishes a similar effect to Bliven's radio encounter. It is not the interaction between the characters present that demands our attention, for we have minimal information about them and they exist for only a short moment in the poem. Rather, we focus on the content of their dialogue, especially the odd objects they discuss. This recalls the aforementioned corpse at end of "The Burial of the Dead," an abject moment that anchors the reader in a concrete moment even as it provokes bodily unease. The speaker in this scene stands on London Bridge in a Dantesque crowd of meandering, possibly deceased souls. We have a description neither of the speaker nor of the recipient of his apostrophic speech—all we know is he is named Stetson and fought in the Punic Wars, details we gather from the speaker's exclamation. He might not even really be present, a likely assumption given that the wars happened in 260 B.C. But then Eliot's speaker demands, "That corpse you planted last year in your garden,/Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?" (69-72). Suddenly, the featureless characters and drifting mob, both of which contribute to a sense of placelessness, give way to the *strange and therefore grounding* image of a corpse sprouting with plants, an image that was mentioned as an example of the abject the end of the previous section. (When an image is unusual, it seems to exist in a single place and time, whereas commonplace images blend into their ubiquitous doppelgangers). There is a verbal quality to this poem, as Eliot artfully inserts dialogue that has the quirks of realistic speech patterns to contrast with the unrealistic content, but because it is verbal, it is also intensely visual in much the same manner as radio.

Striking imagery like a corpse growing into a plant locates us in a vividly distinct, though imaginary, moment. The verbal quality of Eliot's poetry evidences a connection to radio, and exploring these connections reveals the possibilities of the poem's abject qualities.

This link between Eliot and the historicity of radio is even more apparent in Part II, "A Game of Chess." Here, a woman appears to have a conversation with her radio, which is suggested by the radio's brief lapse into an actual song by Joseph W. Stern & Company called "That Shakespeherian Rag." In this dialogue, the radio answers her ambiguous, ungrounded questions with sharp and disturbing visuals. She queries, "What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?" in a vacuum of meaning, to which her radio responds, "I think we are in the rats' alley/Where the dead men lost their bones" (113, 115-116). Again she demands, "Do/You know nothing? Do you see nothing?/Do you remember Nothing?" and the radio replies, "I remember/Those are pearls that were his eyes" (125-126). Rats in bone-filled alleys and pearls in eye sockets may not be particularly comforting imagery, but they have a locating effect: they give the reader an image, a moment, to inhabit instead of the nihilistic whirlpool of senseless questions. Significantly, this sense of location is provided by the radio. After radio delocalizes subjects—perhaps because radio delocalizes subjects—by nature of its invisible operations, it then relocalizes subjects through verbal specificity and vivid language, which nonetheless does not negate the original delocalization. We are not rerooted in our own bodies, but we are anchored in an image evoked by language, an image with which we engage in an embodied manner.

New modes of relating to one's own body and the bodies of others become crucial to this historical structure of feeling, and striking visual imagery fosters intersubjectivity. In the medium of radio, Bliven extrapolates our sense of disorientation not only by depriving the reader of visuals

but also through allusions to impossible visuals. He writes, “Friend No. 2 continues his knob-twirling and in a moment this celestial caterwauling is shouldered aside, so to speak, by the Sextette, being sung in our very ears and evidently by giants a hundred feet tall” (262). The giants are, in a sense, more real to us than Friend No. 2 because they are already fantastical.

Experiencing heightened disorientation reminds readers they are already disoriented and require external objects to establish spatial situatedness. In invoking the abject, radio also provides a mode of intimacy through proximity that relocates listeners. It traverses boundaries without breaking them, like the sound waves landing on ears, alerting them to an immaterial, intimate *presence*. So, too, the subject and object circuitously remediating one another in an electric circuit exchange elements of their presence without negating subjecthood and objecthood. When subjects circuitously connected to networks of objects encounter other subjects circuitously connected to networks of objects—and objects connected to subjects—new forms of intersubjective and interobjective connection are possible, to be discussed in the next chapter.



Figure 1. The Clock and Dial
Ménilmontant. Dir. Dimitri Kirsanoff, 1926. Film.

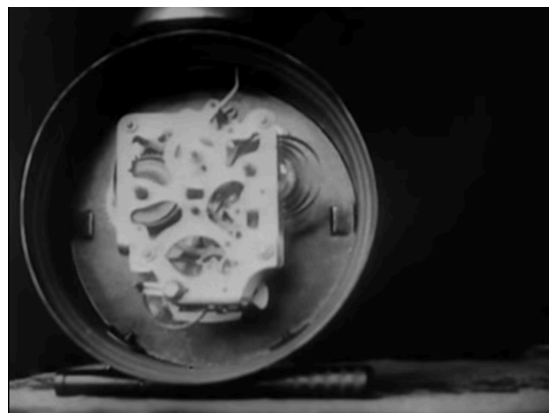


Figure 4. Clock Gears
Ménilmontant. Dir. Dimitri Kirsanoff, 1926. Film.



Figure 2. Close-up of the Young Woman Meeting her Lover
Ménilmontant. Dir. Dimitri Kirsanoff, 1926. Film

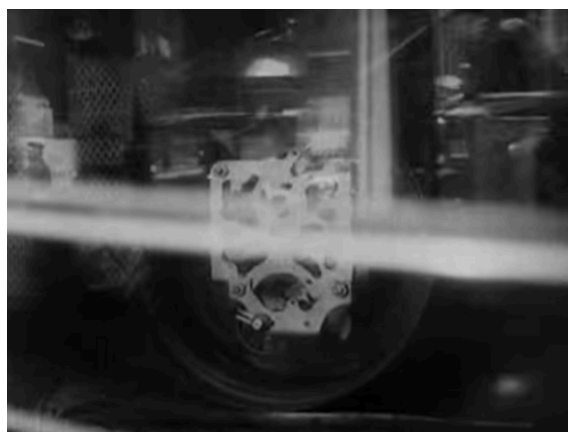


Figure 5. The Clock Enmeshed with the World
Ménilmontant. Dir. Dimitri Kirsanoff, 1926. Film.



Figure 3. Close-up of the Young Woman After Meeting her Lover
Ménilmontant. Dir. Dimitri Kirsanoff, 1926. Film.



Figure 6. The Lovers' Bodies Enmeshed with the World
Ménilmontant. Dir. Dimitri Kirsanoff, 1926. Film.



Figure 7. Putrescent Goop and Flowers.
Ménilmontant. Dir. Dimitri Kirsanoff, 1926. Film.



Figure 8. Shoes on the Street
Ménilmontant. Dir. Dimitri Kirsanoff, 1926. Film.



Figure 9. Shoes on the Garbage Pile
Ménilmontant. Dir. Dimitri Kirsanoff, 1926. Film.

CHAPTER TWO:

COMPLETING THE CIRCUIT: RECIPROCITY IN SUBJECT-OBJECT RELATIONSHIPS

The Inadequacy of Verbal Communication and the Necessity of Things

Chapter One traced the lineage of an idea: society's horror and fascination with subjects becoming objects and objects becoming subjects in the early twentieth century. It acknowledged the Marxist tendency to frame humans and objects in an oppositional relationship and offered an alternative mode of viewing the relationship between subject and object as an electrical circuit in which one reconstitutes the other, a mode exemplified by the manner in which subjects relate to enchanted objects in film and poetry from this era. From there, the discussion turned to the relationship between these enchanted objects and the magic show, detailing how this relationship at times plunges into the abject as the self becomes entangled with a sentient, at times invasive, world of objects. Radio and the electrical circuits that govern it offer a framework for understanding subject-object relationship, playing a sylleptical role in the cultural conscious, invoking the abject to foster intersubjective and interobjective connections via technology.

Chapter Two invokes thing theory and the writings of French Impressionist theorists to bring all of this to bear on intersubjectivity and interobjectivity. T.S. Eliot, Dimitri Kirsanoff, and Jean Epstein were part of a cultural impetus that sought to understand the subject through the object and vice versa, and we see how they use enchanted objects and bodies as objects to bring the audience into the subject's world as the audience remediates the object as well. Examining not

only the reciprocal relationship between subject and object but also invoking vital materialist Jane Bennett's conception of "assemblages" allows us to theorize what we can and cannot know about the other, as well as how to gain this understanding. Furthermore, Vivian Sobchack's understanding of *intersubjective* and *interobjective* relationships provides a framework for expressing how elements within and between assemblages might approach each other. She emphasizes the capacity for the subject to experience itself as an object, writing that our ability to recognize the fact we are both *objective subjects* (a subject who senses its status as object) and *subjective objects* (an object capable of subjectivity). Sobchack connects "sense-ability", or sensory awareness (especially of the self as object), to "sensitivity," an aesthetic awareness linked to passion (290). She conversely emphasizes the subject is "response-able," a characteristic that "allows us the possibility of appreciating—and caring for—the form and substance of 'things' external to ourselves," which makes the subject "responsible" for these things (290).

This notion of the assemblage also frames our understanding of how subjects and enchanted objects relate to one another (and subjects relate to one another, and objects relate to one another). In *Vibrant Matter*, Bennett conceives of the relationships between individual bodies, be they subjects or objects, as "assemblages." She comes across a pile of debris on a morning walk, consisting of items like dead rats and plastic gloves and remarks on its singularity. The items in such an assemblage appear "as vivid entities not reducible to the contexts in which (human) subjects set them, never entirely exhausted by their semiotics" (5). In short, she sees the objects as beautiful because of how they are set in relation with one another, an *assemblage* wherein each actant's existence is not predetermined by human judgments concerning, for instance, its usefulness or role to humans. Bennett extends this argument by naming the ways in which

“inorganic matter can ‘self-organize,’” making the case that objects have a sort of agency in these assemblages (6). She writes of an “energetic vitality” they share, which she later frames as “live presence” (5). Some immaterial life force connects the items in the assemblage without discounting their material existence.

The assemblage is an essential concept because it points to a concept of non-identity. For instance, the dead rat in Bennett’s assemblage is known to most human subjects as one sort of thing—an undesirable carrier of filth and pestilence. But placed in that assemblage, it circumvents that false identity. It is a dead rat unlike any other, occupying this space and time alongside other items that also inform the human perception of the rat, forming what Bennett terms a “contingent tableau” (5). A dead rat on a metal table in a science lab would be part of a different set of relationships. Therefore, the rat—or the glove, the bottle cap, the stick—are presented as not already known to the human subject, and their coming together is likewise a singular assemblage. Bennett connects this understanding of the singularity of things to Theodor Adorno’s claim that, “it was not possible to ‘unseal’ or parse a concept into its constituent parts: one could only ‘circle’ around a concept, perhaps until one gets dizzy or arrives at the point at which nonidentity with the real can no longer be ignored” (31). Adorno is emphasizing the impossibility of perfect, immediate communication of a concept; ideas cannot be “unsealed” in this manner, but instead must be described until the recipient of the communication understands that there is no knowable center of subjecthood and he or she can only approach intersubjectivity and interobjectivity by approximations.

For Bennett, this means that agency is distributive rather than belonging to any single agent in an assemblage. Our attempts to “get at” the individual subject or object are futile—

instead, attention to the rest of the assemblage is revelatory of the subject and object (without fostering the illusion that everything can be revealed). The kaleidoscopic object worlds of Eliot, Kirsanoff, and Epstein provide us with such a circumlocution. The communicative objects surrounding their speakers and characters acknowledge the impossibility of true and full knowledge of and through these subjects and objects. Instead they offer us a mode for seeking self-disclosure and knowledge of the other. In looking at the assemblages of subjects and objects, we know something about these characters and their worlds—and that something shows us that there is still much we do not know.

An understanding of how assemblages support a concept of nonidentity. This transforms our reading of *Prufrock*, changing him from a subject who operates in a mechanized world, struggling to assert himself, to a figure who reveals the impossibility of true immediacy in communication. Nonetheless, he conveys a complex assemblage of objects that “‘circle’ around a concept” of his being. In the examples under discussion in this paper—*Prufrock*, *Coeur Fidele*, *Ménilmontant*, *The Chute de la maison Usher*, *The Wasteland*—love and its abuses reappear as a context in which inadequate personal expression gives rise to dislocation of the subject and relocation in the object world. This may be because the experience of romantic love gives rise to bodily desire for another person, and that desire reminds the subject of her own body. Rejection from the beloved furthermore reminds the subject of distance, of the lack of connection between bodies and subjectivities.

Sobchack views another sense of the word “passion”—both its devotion and suffering components—as the catalyst that provokes one to examine the apparent boundaries between subject and object, as the subject “seeks to actively grasp both a concrete sense of one’s own self as

immanently material and a concrete sense of how some of the world's objects may also be subjects" (290). It allows the subject to experience itself as an object (in Prufrock's case, one he fears is undesirable), and therefore opens up modes of intersubjective and interobjective encounter for which verbal communication alone is inadequate.

What Prufrock lacks, and craves, is the ability to convey his interior world to another person. His attempts to build interpersonal connection through language have been insufficient, underscored by the contrast between the simplicity of the poem's dialog and the abstraction of Prufrock's internal musings, which indicates his vast interior world is far from externalized. He imagines the women responding to his romantic advances with a dismissive, "That is not it at all,/That is not what I meant, at all" (109-110). What "it" refers to, what they actually meant in the first place, is ambiguous in its brevity. Prufrock cannot express himself either. He compares the difficulty of putting a question into words to "[squeezing] the universe into a ball" (93). Variations of the two questions, "How should I begin?" and "How should I presume?" occur throughout the poem. At one point, Prufrock considers a possible response: "Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets/And watched the smoke that rises from the pipe/Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves leaning out of windows?..." (70-71). This image evokes Prufrock's loneliness and fear of remaining among these lonely men, but his actual phraseology is attentive to the objects present in the scene: the narrow streets, the smoke, the pipes, the shirtsleeves, the windows. Each of these objects conveys the particulars of Prufrock's mental state—pipe smoke escaping through open windows is a much more multi-layered mood than "lonely." Thus, the object-laden associations that actually form Prufrock's inner workings clash with the imprecise but socially acceptable words he could use to express himself. He cannot achieve intersubjectivity or

interobjectivity through language, but he can experience himself in an assemblage with these objects and mix up his own identity with the object world, aware of his status as a subjective object and objective subject. Thus he conveys the whole of his assemblage to readers, inviting us to understand him intersubjectively and interobjectively.

Prufrock's greatest fear is being "[fixed] in a formulated phrase," which he likens to being "pinned and wriggling on the wall" by a sea of eyes (56, 58). Bennett, too, warns against our tendency to pin down the subject as one thing or another, rather than viewing him or her as entangled in an assemblage. But as Bennett observes, we cannot simply negate our tendency to conceptualize subjects. Instead, she writes, "The goal here is to become more cognizant that conceptualization automatically obscures the inadequacy of its concepts...we must develop a *concept* of nonidentity to cure the hubris of conceptualization" (15). In calling for a "*concept* of nonidentity," Bennett recognizes that we seek the solidity of conceptualization as opposed to the vacuum of nonidentity. Without concepts of another's subjectivity to anchor our experience of them, we can only conceive of Prufrock as an unknowable, black hole of identity. On the other extreme, when our conceptualization hubristically claims, "We have accessed the core of this subject's personhood!" we fail to acknowledge the inadequacy of this understanding. So Bennett offers us another mode: the assemblage. We look at the objects around Prufrock that circuitously constitute his subjectivity as his subjectivity constitutes them, and as we watch the exchange happening in the circuit we can glimpse fleeting strands of Prufrock without presuming to grasp his whole.

T.S. Eliot was self-aware of his use of objects in his poetry to represent the interior worlds of characters, and he wrote about these subject-object relationships in essays such as "Knowledge

and Experience” (1964). As William Skaff notes, Eliot criticized the use of emotion words in poetry and instead advocated the utility of objects to convey the interior states of subjects, hence his notion of the objective correlative (which, recall from the introduction, is Eliot’s theory that a group of objects can serve as a formula for a given emotion). Just as Prufrock grapples with the inadequacy of language, Skaff paraphrases Eliot in saying, “[Philosophy and poetry that are ‘verbal’] treat emotions as objects in themselves and rely upon the use of such abstractions of the excitation of the *indefinite* emotion rather than for the expression of *precise* emotion stirred by a particular sensory experience” (Skaff 158). According to Eliot, the mind has a tendency to separate the component parts of emotional encounters with objects into descriptions of the emotions produced in these moments. These emotion words then become objects in their own right and lose their resonance with the original encounter.

Eliot’s understanding of subject-object relationships has some overlap with my own circuitous formulation of that experience. In “Knowledge and Experience,” Eliot notes how a subject viewing an emotionally moving painting experiences that painting as “a constituent of [their] consciousness or [their] soul” (Skaff 159). This subject’s “‘whole of feeling’ tends to ‘expand into object’” (Skaff 159). In many ways this is analogous to my notion of the circuit linking subjects and objects: both feature subjects and objects reaching into one another and reconstituting each other. However, Eliot believes there is a finite center to the subject and object as they unite. Eliot suggests a more radical coupling of subject and object, which Skaff explains as “that unity of sensory experience, logic, and emotion,” and Eliot believed such a dynamic would give poetry the illusion of life (159). I, instead, wish to emphasize that subjecthood has no such center, and instead the subject may only be known through its relationships with other agents in

assemblages. In this model, Prufrock is in an assemblage with his enchanted objects, an assemblage in which subjects and objects reconstitute one another without becoming one and the same entity.

Eliot points to the inadequacy of the formulated phrase, and I contend the assemblage—and our recognition of it—is the antidote to the limitations of language. When Prufrock exclaims at last, “It is impossible to say just what I mean!/ But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen,” he recognizes something about the filmic world that holds the answer to his conundrum of self-expression (104-105). That something is the visual quality of film and its attention to the object world. Film can map out Prufrock’s metaphorical neural network through assemblages of objects representing the diffuse, ambiguous associations that constitute subjecthood and objecthood. Eliot’s filmic poem, also visual, associative, and object-laden, uses the same method.

The poem’s filmic qualities are furthermore revealed through the manner in which Eliot directs readers to view these objects in association with one another. This builds on the assertions of critics like David Trotter, who notes the importance of the close-up in Eliot’s poems. Trotter cites the moment when Prufrock describes the women’s arms, noting, “The circle of illumination within which the light brown hair on a white arm appears in alluring close-up might make us think of the cinema. Such close-ups...played in an important part in some of the earliest narrative films” (Trotter 244). The close-up is indeed filmic, and the manner in which Eliot’s many close-ups are connected in assemblages is also filmic. One example of such an assemblage appears when Prufrock considers descending the stair, and he feeds us a succession of images: “With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—/(They will say: “How his hair is growing thin!”)/My morning coat, my

collar mounting firmly to the chin, my necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin—” (40-43). The poem insistently directs readers to look at one object at a time, as if watching a montage. The objects are generally proximate to one another, suggesting a camera is roving over one at a time, perhaps flickering between hair, coat, necktie, and pin with enough overlap between the images so we maintain a sense of contiguity. Establishing this proximity is important to film, but it is not as important to poetry, which can jump around the objects of a room without the same risk of disorientation. Thus, roving over the particulars of spotlighted area invokes a filmic mode.

Eliot’s movement between objects furthermore brings to mind the Kuleshov Effect, a film theory stating that audiences naturally link two images shown in succession, conveying a message that supersedes the individual images. Indeed, the montage of Prufrock’s formal wear produces messages like, “Prufrock is getting ready, Prufrock is insecure” through its juxtapositions. It is a montage but also an assemblage. Jean Epstein would likely agree, writing in *The Intelligence of a Machine*, “A cell is certainly a being, but a soul emerges only through a colony of cells” (“Intelligence 62). Appropriately, he also invokes the mechanized, object world, writing of “a community of gears and pistons.” Epstein declares, “The soul is everywhere in humans, and nowhere in particular. It results from the whole organic function. Similarly, the personal character of a motor does not dwell exclusively in this or that part” (“Intelligence” 63). Even the structure of film itself carries out this theme, as Epstein suggests in “Magnification and Other Writings”: the individual slides come together to form something more *alive* than the sum of its parts when viewed by the subject, and the essence of film is in the space between frames (22-23).

Several critics have compared the rhythm of *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* to a waltz, and I would add that it is a waltz from a music box. This is revelatory in our context because music boxes form auditory assemblages. When a music box plays, the contrast between tone and silence is more sharply distinguished than with many other instruments because of the clarity of the chimes. The notes are staggered so that a succession of individual notes is punctuated by a chord, and in listening to a music box, one follows a clear melody but is surprised by these harmonizing notes. Often the tones that form a chord are slightly offset from each other, intensifying the effect. Eliot's rhymes resemble these punctuating chords, with distinctly separate notes functioning in harmony in a manner that recalls an assemblage or montage, producing an effect greater than the sum of its parts. Rhymes reminiscent of these chores form an assemblage in the opening three lines, "Let us go then, you and I,/When the evening is spread out against the sky/Like a patient etherized upon a table," link *I, sky*, and *etherized*. This third (and internal) rhyme produces an unexpected harmony that seems vaguely out of place; it is brief, like an additional chime, but this arrangement emphasizes the separateness of each note/rhyme. Predictable couplets, on the other hand, produce a more blended tone and cadence. Throughout the poem, a third rhyme often drops into place, often within a line or forming a slant rhyme, calling to mind the assemblage of musical notes.

Other structures within the poem intensify the music box association. When Eliot's stanzas end without resolution, as in the repetition of "how should I presume," it is as if the music box has been prematurely closed before finishing its musical phrase. Towards the end of the poem, we even hear the music box's unwinding become slow and labored. Cacophonous tongue twisters in the final stanzas impede the pace of the poem, especially when read aloud. Lines such

as, “I have seen them riding seaward on the waves/Combing the white hair of the waves blown back/When the wind blows the water white and black” and phrases like “sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown” require careful enunciation (126-128, 130). We hear the music box slowing with the same melancholy inconclusiveness in terms of sound effects and thematic content that actual music boxes call to mind in the tinkling of their final notes.

The music box association is pertinent here also because it is a quintessential enchanted object: it moves on its own at prompting of mechanical gears, which are often visible and showcased beneath the glass. These gears remind us of the box’s objecthood, but when the apparatus produces music, not only does it move (as if it is alive), but also produces music, implying the box possesses sensibilities towards beauty and emotion (as if it is human). The music box therefore emphasizes both the mechanical and emotive qualities that Prufrock himself conjoins. The moments of silence between notes in a music box are like the gaps between subjects and objects, across which reaches a sense of *presence* akin to the still echoing music notes in the music box and still resonant rhymes in the poem.

These gaps are essential. There is a temptation to view living matter as either simply imbued with an immaterial life force or simply a material body, but this is a false dichotomy that denies the presence of gaps. It is a fault akin to misrepresenting Prufrock as merely at the mercy of mechanical forces, an incomplete perspective discussed in Chapter One. Bennett’s approaching to mediating these two extremes is useful here. In Bennett’s chapter titled “Neither Vitalism nor Mechanism,” she criticizes the faulty dichotomy that would potentially see Prufrock in strictly mechanical or emotive terms, a split between the belief in vitalism (the belief that the spark of life was something completely outside the mechanical world of cells and bodies), and an emphasis on

the purely mechanical functioning of organisms that views matter as passive. Bennett takes the best elements of the two approaches and conjoins them as a vital materialist, emphasizing the intersubjective and interobjective movement of this presence through the material objects in play.

By extension, Prufrock is properly viewed in relation to his assemblage of enchanted objects, and following Bennett, one then recognizes that “the task becomes to identify the contours of the swarm and the kind of relations that obtain between its bits” (32). In the case of Prufrock, the swarm is the universe Prufrock attempts to squeeze into a ball, composed of enchanted objects that in their lifelike qualities take center stage and prevent the reader from formulating Prufrock. Each time we reach inwards to say, “Prufrock is”—seeking some articulation of his identity, we are flung back outwards again into teacups and neckties and peaches. This motion brings to mind an image in *The Wasteland*, the whirlpool in section four, “Death by Water.” *The Wasteland* self-consciously throws readers into a whirlpool of signification. The image of a whirlpool is the logical extension of the metaphor of seepage and barrier-crossing, both abject images, previously associated with the dislocated self reaching beyond the body. Self and world, subject and object, appear to blend together, but the focus on the material components of these objects maintains a degree of separation.

This blending does not actually negate the boundaries between items in the assemblage if considered with the framework of radio mentioned in the aforementioned chapter: subjects and objects in an assemblage share a sense of presence, akin to radio waves, sound waves, or electricity, that can pass through the material without denying the distinction between actants. This distinction is comparable to the semipermeable membrane of a cell wall: Prufrock shares some essential qualities of himself with the objects in his immediate proximity and they with him, the

quality Richard Abel calls an “astral body” (Abel 21), and what Bennett calls “an energetic vitality,” “live presence,” and “thing power” (4, 3). At the same time, separation of self from world is crucial for the existence of life. On the cellular level, nuclei, mitochondria, etc. must be encased by a semipermeable membrane. In the case of cells and assemblages, if there is no membrane, there is no life. The problem is not the existence of separation but the denial of it. Things are revealed to have a central unknowability when they are properly viewed as situated within their assemblages, and recognition of the unknowability leads to a more honest and ethical form of intersubjectivity and interobjectivity because it admits a sense of non-identity.

Eliot’s depiction of a speaker who laments the inadequacy of language brings to mind Antonin Artaud’s assertion that cinema emerged just when language was losing symbolic power in the early twentieth century. He writes, “La pensée claire ne nous suffit pas. Elle situe un monde usé jusqu’à l’écoeurement. Ce qui est clair est ce qui est immédiatement accessible, mais l’immédiatement accessible est ce qui sert d’écorce à la vie” (Artaud). (“Clear thought will not suffice. It situates us in a world worn out to the point of nausea. What is clear is what is immediately accessible, but the immediately accessible is what serves to strip life.”)¹ Clear, direct, literal language aims to tell us the facts of the world, or of a person, in simple terms, but its very simplicity strips away the actual texture of life formed in these complex assemblages.

What film offers us is a concept of nonidentity through its objectivity, allowing us to see all the objects in relation to one another in the same instant – an objectivity that necessarily blurs humans and objects. Such objectivity can seem mechanistic, making subjects feel as if their own bodies are objects because of how they function on screen. As Chapter One elucidated, Epstein argued that film could dislocate us from our secure notions of time and scale through its

¹ My translation.

mechanical elements, like the ability to play time forwards and backwards. For instance, a person can demolish a wall on film, appearing to have mastery of the wall, but running the film backwards estranges the audience from the worker's movements and makes these motions seem not so different from the movements of the inanimate, demolished wall that suddenly springs back into one block. So, too, in *Prufrock*, elements like passive voice and a tinkling rhyme scheme seem depersonalized and mechanistic, like an unwinding a music box, but they evoke an assemblage of associations.

Eliot, among other modernist poets, returns readers to the visceral realities of human bodies not simply for the sake of estrangement but, as Sobchack puts it, to make these bodies into "sense-making sites" (190). French Impressionist filmmakers had their own techniques for remanding viewers to the characters' physical bodies and the subjectivities that inhabit them. These films draw the audience into the characters' inner worlds through the immediacy of the close-up. Relatively static figures, shot from the shoulders up, compel audiences to attend to minute facial movements. Epstein himself wrote, "The close-up is the soul of the cinema. It can be brief. ...Even more beautiful than a laugh is the face preparing for it" ("Magnification" 9). The close-up's capacity to direct attention to details—the crinkling eyes before the laugh—sensitizes us. It is as if the volume on a stereo has been turned up all the way so the sound of crickets chirping deafens the ears. Seeing a face filling a whole movie screen already evokes a sense of the character expanding, an experience that is a sympathetic cousin to the horror we feel when watching a film like "The Big Swallow." We are attentive to the slightest bodily movements, allowing us to depart from focus on narrative to delve deeply into the character. Richard Abel writes of French Impressionism, "Here the cinema served as a medium for the expression of the *subjective*, the

interior life of a character, as an integral part of the narrative,” and the close-up foregrounded that interior life (20). Yet the presence of the character on screen expands further through a series of objects that extend that character’s consciousness. Using these methods, French Impressionist filmmakers were able to invite audiences into the character’s inner world.

In the medium of the silent film, not only was language inadequate—it was impossible. The only recourse for a linguistically inclined director was the use of intertitles, but otherwise all sentiments had to be conveyed through bodies and assemblages. Kirsanoff presents the narrative of *Ménilmontant* largely through close-ups of characters’ faces intercut with shots of enchanted objects, and one scene comes to mind as a moment when verbal communication would be inadequate even if the sound technology were available. Kirsanoff furthermore chose to omit intertitles, meaning the narrative must be constructed through these facial expressions. After the younger sister has been betrayed by her lover and sister, she sits on a park bench with her infant and thinks of the comforts of home, imagining water filling a bathtub, the warm bathwater contrasting with the stream of condensation coming from her mouth. A man sits beside her, eating bread and sausage with downcast eyes. Throughout the entirety of their interaction, the two remain in separate frames. They no doubt exist in an assemblage with one another, but one that intentionally cuts them off from one another through visual cues. There are two exceptions: the immaterial condensation of their breath that passes between the frames and a single mediating enchanted object, the bread and meat the man passes to the young woman. Because his face is obscured by his moustache and hat, she is all the more spotlighted. No verbal communication is necessary: The infant in her arms conveys her situation, and the meal on his lap conveys his. He eats his meal on a newspaper and carves his scanty portion of meat with a pocketknife. She steals

glances, looks ashamed, looks back again, then buries her hand between the buttons of her coat front, as if trying to touch and lessen her hunger. First he sets the bread between them. She does not respond. Then he adds a slice of meat. She takes a deep breath, eyes contracting in grief and appreciation, before her hand enters the frame his has already vacated. He continues eating, face obscured by his hat and moustache. She looks at her meal's benefactor out of the side of her eyes, defensive that she should be in such a position, poignantly grateful, and once more saddened by the gratitude because it points to her destitution. Just when she is least able to communicate, the interposition of a meal points to the intersubjective forces connecting the young woman to the stranger on the bench, an interaction that is the product of the bodily response of facial expressions and the enchanted object between them.

The importance of the close-up in this scene and elsewhere highlights the body's role as an intermediary between the centrally unknowable subject and the rest of the world. This interplay between the body and enchanted objects is further explored in the section that follows.

Bodies: Communicative and Communicable

If language dissociates, subjecthood is a whirlpool, and objects consistently point us back to nonidentity, what role does a subject's own body play in mediating the relationship between self and world? Is the body a channel for communication? Is it an extension of immaterial subjecthood? Is it just another object? In her book *Carnal Thoughts*, Vivian Sobchack addresses the ambiguities of bodily locatedness, particularly in her chapter "Is Any Body Home?" Sobchack appears to agree with Marx that our bodies are "increasingly lived as 'things' to be seen, managed, and mastered" (182). According to Sobchack, the more we see our bodies, the less we feel ourselves as present in them—we treat them like objects to be taken care of the same way we take

care of our homes. The increased availability of printed materials, proliferation of travel logs and sources other global, and, of course, the eventual rise of cinema created a visual culture in the latter half of the nineteenth century that Jean-Louis Comolli called “the frenzy of the visible,” a term which Sobchack likewise references (Comolli 122). Sobchack recognizes that this visible frenzy taught the subject to conceive of his body as a visible entity rather than a felt entity.

Sobchack responds to this frenzy with the suggestion that society does not need to stop the images from multiplying but instead needs to recognize their non-visible substance, a vitality like the one Bennett describes that is rooted in material existence but is not simply material. Sobchack recounts how her own experience of having a leg amputated made her more aware of her body, such as when she had to relearn how to walk and felt a sense of *méconnaissance* with the body she saw struggling in the mirror, an object that confronted her with the image of her body so her body itself felt more distant. The only way she could relearn how to walk was by pulling back from the image in the mirror and actively feeling herself within own body. She posits, “In a paradoxical way, then, we are most ‘at home’ in our bodies when we are most absent from them—that is, when they ground us in the world as a transparent capacity for significant action and sensible meaning” (189). Sobchack builds on Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s statement, “My body is the fabric into which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my ‘comprehension’” to name bodies as “sense-making sites” (190). In this statement, both Sobchack (and Merleau-Ponty) underscore that situatedness in one’s own body comes from a recognition of its materiality and how it materially encounters objects and subjects, and not simply on a visual plane.

In the poems and films under discussion, physical distortion or distorted views of bodies frequently estrange characters and audiences from their own bodies. This principle applies to the close-ups of communicative hands from *Ménilmontant* discussed in Chapter One, as well as literal disfigurement or suffering, which can also indicate the body becoming an object. In these works, women especially appear as silenced figures who must communicate through other, often supernatural, means, which frequently has a bodily dimension. T.S. Eliot invokes the haunting story of Philomela, originally from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, several times throughout *The Wasteland*. In this myth, Philomela is raped by her sister's husband, the king Tereus, who also cuts out her tongue so she cannot tell her sister what happened. But Philomela is able to communicate what happened through objects by weaving a tapestry to tell the story. In the end, Philomela and her sister punish Tereus by killing his son and serving the boy to the king for dinner before all three are transformed into birds. Philomela becomes a nightingale, which Eliot references by peppering poem with the onomatopoeia "Jug Jug," an Elizabethan representation of the bird's song.

This paper will consider the Philomela motif in relative isolation, although it is worth noting the broader gendered components of the works under discussion. Many of these texts specifically feature women whose bodies are treated as objects, whose dislocated consciousnesses reach outside their bodies to communicate, who suffer the violence of language when that language lacks a concept of non-identity. Furthermore, the experience of the abject is particularly associated with the female body and the act of child bearing, suggesting that there is a reason why these suffering female figures emerge in the discourse on subject-object barrier crossings. Though such a discussion is a logical extension of the topics addressed in this paper, it lies beyond the

scope of this work and invites further consideration at a later date. For the moment, I will confine the discussion to an examination of Philomela.

Rape, the removal of a tongue, cannibalism, and transfiguration constitute four serious bodily violations in this myth, each an experience of the abject, and *The Wasteland* is populated with characters who are raped, silenced, or whose mouths have been deformed. For instance, Part III, "The Fire Sermon," tells the gruesome details of a woman's rape through the perspective of the mythological Tiresias, whose own body was violated in being changed from man to woman. And in the section before, we meet two women who suffer from different bodily disfigurements that result from inadequate self-expression.

In Part II of *The Wasteland*, "A Game of Chess," two women's stories are united by allusions to Philomela, and in these allusions, Eliot foregrounds the manner in which these women become estranged from their bodies as objects. The first story critiques the opulence of high society as lavish substances invade a woman's body, while her own stifled, desperate message literally emerges through that same body, but we never get to actually read what it says. In the second, a woman's body is metaphorically disfigured by local gossip and literally disfigured by unwanted pregnancies.

At the opening of "A Game of Chess," a woman sits on a chair like a "burnished throne" in a room filled with gold, jewels, and candelabra (77). It is the epitome of modern luxury in an aptly suffocating way. A cloud of "strange synthetic perfumes,/Unguent, powdered, or liquid—troubled, confused,/And drowned the sense in odours" (87-89). This cloud of perfume troubling, confusing, drowning bystanders is a symbol of decadence, bringing to mind the refined opulence of modernity which becomes disgusting in its synthetic refinement, suffocating and intoxicating all

at once. She, too, is dripping in jewels, decorated just like her house. Above her is a “coffered ceiling” of “laquearia,” a fascinating word that refers to both decorative patterns made of wood and copper but also a fungus (93, 92). Therefore this object conjoins wealth, status, and beauty with decay, invasion, and sickness.

To cement the association between this woman and Philomela, a tapestry on the mantel depicts “the change of Philomel, by the barbarous king/So rudely forced” (99-100). Enchanted objects like this one, referred to as “other withered stumps of time” (104) sympathize with the woman’s inability to communicate, and they seem so attentive to her that they “leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed” while ominous footsteps resound on the staircase (106). At this moment, “her hair/Spread out in fiery points/Glowed into words, then would be savagely still” (110). Communication has passed between the woman’s body and her enchanted objects, which on one level suffocate her and on another sympathize with her. We, however, do not get to read the words her flaming hair spells. We can guess that it might be the sound of the nightingale, “Jug Jug,” from earlier in the stanza, which would link her more closely with Philomela, but rather than knowing, we remain an outside observer to the silent conversation between the woman and her room of watchful objects (103). We can infer, however, from the woman’s (and the tapestry’s) fear of the figure mounting the staircase that some sort of reenacting of Philomela’s story has taken place in that room.

A second figure carries out the Philomela motif of bodily disfigurement at the hands of love-related violence, likewise estranged from her own body as an object. Her name is Lil, and she is mentioned towards the end of “A Game of Chess,” as at least two women in a bar gossip about her. (We only hear one speaker, but it is implied that the other woman or women listens

attentively in agreement.) Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the scene is how the trauma Lil has endured is mediated by the disdain and cruelty of the speaker. First, we learn that Lil's husband Albert has given her money to "get [her]self some teeth," a task the speaker phrases in the terms one might use for grocery shopping (144). Her continued use of pronouns and slang is unsettling: Albert supposedly said, "You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set/He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you" (145-146). The casual air the speaker ascribes to the act of removing and replacing teeth—"have them all out"—and the manner in which she implies the husband's suffering at having to look at ugly teeth is worse than Lil's, makes Lil's body sound like the sort of house project of which Sobchack writes. The body is an object to be beautified, not an extension of a person to be understood, contradicting with the "response-able" notion of care Sobchack would advocate.

The woman then reveals that Lil's teeth most likely turned black from medicine she took to induce a miscarriage, which is an understandable measure since she nearly died in childbirth from her fifth child. The parallels to Philomela come into focus: Lil has suffered a mouth deformity, which seems to be a direct result of unwanted sex. The speaker, however, shrugs off Lil's suffering by saying, "What you get married for if you dont want children?" and insinuates she could take Albert off Lil's hands (164). Lil is also like Philomela in that she cannot speak for herself in this passage, as we receive all this information through an unkind secondary source. The additional verbal violence Lil suffers at the hands of these women—compounding her profound physical trauma—is a realization of Prufrock's fear of being "[fixed] in a formulated phrase" (56). Lil has been formulated, but the haunting images of her objectified body—the black teeth to be replaced like light bulbs in a house, the reproductive organs these other women believe she is

obligated to use—communicate a figure for whom we can feel great empathy despite the limiting language of these gossiping bystanders.

Antonin Artaud claimed that cinema's primary function was not storytelling but rather exploring the depths of human consciousness, and in defending this position, he emphasized its capacity to reveal the "occult life" of human consciousness. In his 1927 "Sorcellerie et Cinéma," he writes, "Le cinéma est essentiellement révélateur de toute une vie occulte avec laquelle il nous met directement en relation...Mais cette vie occulte, il faut savoir la deviner. Il y a beaucoup mieux que par un jeu de surimpressions à faire deviner les secrets qui s'agitent dans le fond d'une conscience." ("Cinema essentially reveals a whole occult life, with which it puts us directly in connection. ... But one must know how to perceive that occult life. It is so much better to understand the secrets that act at the bottom of a consciousness by way of a game of superimpositions.")² Artaud does not claim that film creates a fictitious occult life but rather that it reveals a magical dimension already existent. This magic, in his view, is much more about understanding a character's interior world than it is about speculating about the existence of spirits.

However, parallels between the study of subjectivity and that of magic go deep. It is a short step from contemplating the unseen forces of the brain to speculating about other unseen forces, and the metaphors that already exist in disciplines related to magic lend a vocabulary and a mode of visualization to those who wish to study the human mind. The magic show became an outlet for participants to think metaphorically, associatively, and imagistically. The popularity of cultural forms like the séance and the circus in the early twentieth century evidences an interest in the immaterial and (in)visible, in both the extension of one's own body and the potential for contact

² My translation.

with other dislocated bodies (ghosts, astral projections, etc.). For filmmakers like Jean Epstein, literal magic was a convenient vehicle for depicting the immaterial on film. Richard Abel likewise touches on this idea, stating, “The camera turned certain actors, for instance, into ‘astral bodies’ whose essence was delivered up to the spectator in a direct, intimate, and profound encounter” (21). The phrase “astral bodies” brings to mind the supernatural feat of *astral projection*, and thus the discipline of magic provides a vocabulary for the discussion of subjecthood. These astral bodies on film are conveyed through a Comollian frenzy of visible images, but their materiality points to the immaterial, astral qualities that Sobchack underscores.

In Epstein’s *La Chute de la maison Usher*, the pretext of supernatural happenings allows Epstein to simultaneously address how the “astral,” dislocated subject circuitously inhabits objects in magic and in film. This happens most clearly in the scene when Roderick Usher unintentionally transfers his sister and lover Madeline’s life to his two-dimensional painting. The painted image attains a curious lifelike quality, while the flesh and blood Madeline wanes behind him, eventually falling dead (or so Roderick believes). The sequence is captured by a series of close-ups, alternating between the obsessive Roderick and increasingly insubstantial Madeline, and her relatively static expression of agony is magnified by a set of enchanted objects—the candles the portrait, the curtains—surrounding her, objects that in which her dislocated subjecthood relocates.

Madeline is caught up in these objects as she occupies several metaphorical in-between zones: Is she Roderick’s lover or sister? Is she alive or is she dead? Is she in her body or in the painting? As her head lolls upwards at the beginning of the sequence, her dress and posture blend in with the drooping curtains in the background. She appears ghostly behind the bright white candles, the tilt of her head angled like the semi-transparent candle flames. It is as if she, too, is a

candle, burning shorter and shorter, until her half her substance has escaped into the air (her immaterial self) and half is spent in a pool on the ground (her body). The way her head swings around like a flame and her shoulders become round as if melting completes the visual resonance. There is an absolute excess of candle wax cascading off the pedestal in beaded lines, the low-angle shot making the lines appear to cling to the edges like skeletal fingers, as if Madeline is clinging to life. She has been so thoroughly transubstantiated by these objects, which expand on the subtle facial communication of her close-up, that even when Madeline is not in the frame we see the candles and think Madeline (Figure 10).

Not only is Madeline represented by objects, but also her own body begins to blur in a series of superimpositions, calling to mind Artaud's praising of "[understanding] the secrets that act at the bottom of a consciousness by way of a game of superimpositions." She wears a watch on her necklace, and the pendular motion of her manifold, superimposed heads in Figure 11, makes both body and object synchronously gesture to the passage of time, a motif that later in the film seems to suggest Roderick's immanent doom. At one moment, a statue of Madeline is also layered over her living face (Figure 12), eventually to replace it entirely (Figure 13) as if she has calcified into stone. Clearly, Epstein is suggesting she Madeline is sinking into death.

Many visual details complement this suggestion of death, but more unsettling are the reminders of Madeline's abject state *between* life and death. The greasy texture of the globular oil paint seems all the more repulsive on the black and white film, appearing to be a palette of indistinguishable tar reminiscent of the putrescent black goop from *Ménilmontant* in Figure 7. Such details return the audience to Kristeva's notion of the abject, reminding them of the unpleasant barrier-crossings that can happen when the dislocated subject blurs self and world, and

there is a vague suggestion of unnatural preservation through the tar-like paint. The very medium of paint is evocative of the “blurriness” of selfhood, as the painted figure slowly emerges on the canvas, and the solvents used to thin paint are cousins of those used in the embalming of bodies. This gesturing towards death, and towards a state between life and death, is an outcropping of subject-object relationships. The fear of death is the fear of becoming an object. In death, the body literally becomes a thing, not a person, and the thought of this complete violation of the body it is the root of all other fears of contamination.

In this scene, Madeline is relocated in all sorts of objects—candles, clocks, curtains—that point towards death, but in death, Madeline does not simply become the typical notion of an object. Instead, as her *body* appears to become an object, she is uncannily relocated in another object that is now brought to life. Within her portrait, Madeline is still alive, although the exact quality of this life is unclear. The intertitles explain, “A chaque coup le portrait s’animait d’avantage, mais Madeline pâissait plus. La jeune femme semblait donner à l’image peinte les forces qu’elle perdait.” (“At each stroke the portrait became more alive, but Madeline grew paler. The young woman seemed to give to the painted image the forces that she lost.”)³ There is a transfer of some sort of “force,” which does not escape into the ether but rather is fixed on the canvas, which in some moments is swapped out with an actual mirror. The two-dimensional Madeline watches the candle flames that flicker nearby, the shape of the flames blending into the shape of the picture frame. She even blinks at the stubby candles, and we sense the transfer is complete. Madeline has become relocated in this assemblage of objects.

While in this moment Madeline seems utterly powerless, wasting away at the hand of the mad painter who transfers her life to the canvas, she is, in other regards, oddly powerful because

³ My translation.

there is strength in her interobjectivity. It calls to mind what Bill Brown suggests about a child and his toy dummy: objects can “ventriloquize us” (“How to do Things” 947). It is not merely the subject that constitutes the object, but the object, in turn, reconstitutes the subject. Our perception of the real life Madeline is indeed remediated by the object in which she is relocated, and in a manner that contrasts her supernatural self with her apparent passivity. She begins the scene as Roderick’s model, an object to be gazed on, and Roderick petitions her to keep fulfilling this role even when she is in physical agony. It is almost comical how long it takes Roderick to notice Madeline has collapsed on the floor in back of him, evidence of his disregard for her health. He only sees her when his foot eventually stumbles on her body as he steps back to admire his work. But once her essence resides in the mirror-like painting, she gets to watch the people who think they are watching her. Furthermore, Madeline is not simply trapped in the painting, as she also seems connected to the candles outside the picture frame, and as her portrait blinks confidently we can assume supernatural forces are at work.

As her coffin is carried to its tomb, a long white veil trails behind, suggesting Madeline is not fully contained within. The superimposition of candles over the faces of the pallbearers, some of whom look around agitatedly, signifies that Madeline is still present. After the funeral, a terrifying storm heralds Madeline’s eventual reappearance. When she finally returns from the grave her presence is magnified by the blowing white veil around streaming from her head, which blends into the eerie smoke and flames that enclose Roderick and his visitor, as she as subject and the enchanted objects that surround her cyclically intensify one another. This Madeline does not appear fully alive, with her lurching movements and closed eyes, but the unusual position she

occupies between life and death transfixes Roderick the way her portrait did earlier. She seems less knowable and therefore more powerful.

Figures like Madeline, the opulent woman in “A Game of Chess,” and even the mythological Philomela grow stronger and gain the ability to communicate after suffering bodily disfigurements. Like Sobchack’s amputation experience, their estrangement from their bodies positions them to experience their own bodies as objects, breeding a sense of interobjectivity that reimagines the object world as able to communicate on their behalf even when they cannot.

Implications for Intersubjectivity and Interobjectivity

When the subject’s own body is experienced as object with material and (in)visible qualities, human bodies can thus serve as intersections between self and world, and at their best they function as Sobchack’s “sense-making sites.” It is like Eliot’s opulent woman who sits upon her burnished throne takes in the noxious perfumes and expels flaming words through her hair. The body is not clearly separate from the circuit that connects dislocated subject and object, but rather it is an often-significant locus for this intersection. Eliot, Kirsanoff, and Epstein dramatize how the immaterial subject, once dislocated, can become rerooted in objects. And this object can, counter-intuitively, be the subject’s own body. It is when the body is reminded of its objecthood that the dislocated self returns to it as an object to inhabit. As such it provides an intersection between self and world: It can be acted upon by the object world, but it can also make manifest the immaterial subject within, breeding forms of intersubjective and interobjective “sense-abilities” and “response-abilities” that foster a new notion of aesthetics and care.

This is not to diminish the extent to which external objects can be constitutive of subjecthood, and Bill Brown notes how objects can perform a distinct bodily role. In “How to do

Things with Things,” he quotes Gaston Bachelard’s argument on *hybrid objects*, which resemble my enchanted objects in that they seem part object and part subject, but they ultimately lack autonomy and function as *prosthetic* placeholders that anchor our interior worlds. He writes, “Drawers and chests and wardrobes exist as ‘veritable organs of the secret psychological life,’ how they serve as a kind of phenomenological prosthesis, providing ‘images of intimacy’ without which ‘our intimate life would lack a model’” (“How to do Things” 942). Yes, objects can provide temporary “images of intimacy,” but the extent to which these are prosthetic and the extent to which they are living organs of the human system for establishing intimacy is an important distinction.

The associations we build with objects around us cultivate a certain intimacy that makes our world seem more meaningful. The things around us watch our lives, and if we treat them with the same spirit as the child hugging each of her toys at night, we are rewarded with the feeling that the things around us have some sort of stake in our existence. The isolated Prufrock walking through the streets needs to see the yellow fog as a friendly animal affectionately curling up around the houses because otherwise sustaining empathy with no reciprocating object would be impossible, and he certainly finds no reciprocating object in his human world. Brown likewise recognizes that often “psychic survival depends on saturating the object world with significance” because the physical world anchors our past, our identity, and our understanding of the world (Brown 941). Brown pushes further to emphasize that things “come to have everyday lives of their own” (“How to do Things 945). In harmony with Brown’s assertions, Prufrock’s fog is not merely a means towards psychic survival for a desperate man. Instead, it is a more ambiguous object whose exact construction hints at how Prufrock himself feels. The fact that it is yellow, which

seems vaguely poisonous or at least unhealthily industrial, suggests a feeling of suffocation. He sees the fog “rubbing its back upon the window panes” and perhaps feels himself peering in at the windows, an outsider in the neighborhood (25). For a moment, we lose Prufrock in the stanza altogether, further suggesting that he—and we—are seeing through its eyes. Objects provide an outlet for intimacy, but they also provide actual, other bodies to inhabit.

Once again, it becomes difficult to describe the phenomenon under discussion without invoking supernatural language. Jane Bennett encountered this as well. She acknowledges that her propositions regarding how humans should treat things sound perhaps too anthropomorphic, and she counters, “Maybe it is worth running the risks associated with anthropomorphizing (superstition, the divination of nature, romanticism) because it, oddly enough, works against anthropocentrism” (120). She criticizes hierarchical thinking (generally with humans at the top, organic matter below, and inorganic matter at the bottom) and argues that the oft-cited imperative to “affirm human uniqueness,” going back to Kant, has a terrible history of success (12). Objects are entangled with but not at the command of humans. If we can conceive of objects interacting with each other, we can stop overestimating our own agency (and, by extension, supremacy). This again calls to mind Epstein’s claims about the camera’s ability to offer a philosophical perspective by equalizing the people and objects on screen: When a film alters time or scale, perhaps playing a sequence backwards, the spectator is reminded of the objecthood of the actors. When the hierarchy is flattened, intersubjectivity is extended into interobjectivity. We become aware of how things interact with one another in a way that resembles human interactions, while humans put less faith in their own agency as supreme over the object world and more fully acknowledge their shared objecthood.

Bennett argues we should be open to using the language of anthropomorphosis; I argue we should be open to using the language of enchantment more broadly, with anthropomorphosis as one facet. Enchanted objects certainly have humanlike qualities—they are sentient, watchful, and autonomous—but it is key that the subject observing them in a sense inhabits them. Madeline is, to some extent, in the candles and manifesting through them; Marie is anchored by the tiny, sympathetic automaton; Prufrock views his coffee spoons as measuring out his life and death, and then it seems as if his life really does lie in the contours of a teaspoon. Indulging the notion that objects can be enchanted makes us attentive to a sense of *presence*. We tune in to the (in)visible substance Sobchack argues is obscured by our image culture. This also is key to the frenzied, modern society of the early twentieth century. In a world increasingly crammed with objects and new, dislocative technologies, the subject needed a mode of interacting with the object world beyond the Marxist conception of an oppositional relationship. Instead Prufrock, Marie, Philomela, Madeline, and the rest model a mode of subjective expression that speaks through, remediates, and is remediated by the object world as they also become relocated in their own bodies, which they experience as objects.

Furthermore, an attention to the ways that human identities ebb and flow in circuitous relationships with the objects around them promotes modes of thinking that fosters empathy without assuming we have a full and complete knowledge of the other. When we follow the motion of the circuitous relationship between subject and object, as one reconstitutes the other, we are also caught up in a centrifugal motion away from the subject as understood within the limitations of nonvisual language. We do not conceive of the subject as one thing, but see him or her refracted by the kaleidoscope of enchanted objects. Bennett notes that anthropomorphism is

not such a radical idea because humans already have an inflated, inaccurate conception of their own agency, which is as fanciful as using the language of magic, and the historical relationship between the metaphor of magic and the intersubjective experience corroborates the utility of this vocabulary.

The consequences of this principle have implications for intersubjectivity and interobjectivity. Bennett believes an awareness of assemblages shows people their stake in taking care of things, since everything is caught up in the same web and one part affects all the others. It is also problematic to ascribe agency to individual agents. She writes, "A moralized politics of good and evil, of singular agents who must be made to pay for their sins...becomes unethical to the degree that it legitimates vengeance and elevates violence to the tool of first resort" (38). Taking agents out of assemblages leads to oversimplifications that can turn into finger-pointing, when in reality, assemblages have a collective agency that is not subject to the rhetoric of punishment. Seeing agency as collective furthermore shifts our response from fault-finding to dynamic-defining. J. Alfred Prufrock is not an evil figure, but he does feel victimized by a formulated phrase. To see subjects like Prufrock, whether they exist in literature, in the twentieth-century context, or in everyday life, as a vast assemblage of many objects is to develop a healthy concept of nonidentity.

The manner in which poetry and film responded to, depicted, and reoriented mass culture in the early twentieth century offers us a paradigm for cultivating intersubjectivity and interobjectivity. This circuitous mode in which subjects and objects reconstitute one another allows for a multifaceted understanding of selfhood. The works of Eliot, Kirsanoff, Epstein, and others position the audience for a more profound experience of empathy, providing them with a

magic lantern of sorts, and one that recognizes the limitations of that empathy as the subject is illuminated in patterns on the screen.



Figure 10. Madeline and the Candles
La Chute de la maison Usher. Dir. Jean Epstein. 1928. Film.



Figure 12. Madeline Blurred with the Statue
La Chute de la maison Usher. Dir. Jean Epstein. 1928. Film.



Figure 11. Madeline's Pendular Motion
La Chute de la maison Usher. Dir. Jean Epstein. 1928. Film.

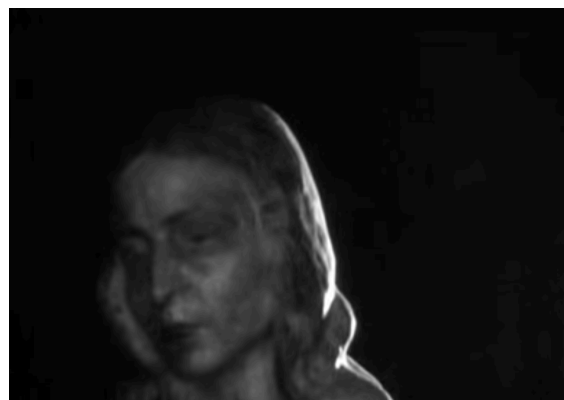


Figure 13. Madeline Becomes the Statue
La Chute de la maison Usher. Dir. Jean Epstein. 1928. Film.

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APPENDIX A

University of South Florida

INSTRUCTIONS

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Class or Project: Masters Thesis

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LeEtta Schmidt, lschmidt@usf.edu and Drew Smith dsmith@usf.edu
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EFFECT ON THE MARKET FOR ORIGINAL

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Overall, the effect on the market for the original supports fair use or does not support fair use.

CONCLUSION

The combined purpose and character of the use, nature of the copyrighted material, amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole and the effect on the market for the original likely supports fair use or likely does not support fair use.

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Cornell University's Checklist for Conducting A Fair use Analysis Before Using Copyrighted Materials:

https://copyright.cornell.edu/policies/docs/Fair_Use_Checklist.pdf

Crews, Kenneth D. (2008) Fair use Checklist. Columbia University Libraries Copyright Advisory Office.

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LeEtta Schmidt, lschmidt@usf.edu and Drew Smith dsmith@usf.edu

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INSTRUCTIONS

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Class or Project: Master's Thesis

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Overall, the nature of the copyrighted material supports fair use or does not support fair use.

AMOUNT AND SUBSTANTIALITY OF MATERIAL USED IN RELATION TO WHOLE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Small amount (using only the amount necessary to accomplish the purpose) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amount is important to favored socially beneficial objective (i.e. educational objectives) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lower quality from original (ex. Lower resolution or bitrate photos, video, and audio)	<input type="checkbox"/> Large portion or whole work <input type="checkbox"/> Portion used is qualitatively substantial (i.e. it is the 'heart of the work') <input type="checkbox"/> Similar or exact quality of original work

Overall, the amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole supports fair use or does not support fair use.

EFFECT ON THE MARKET FOR ORIGINAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No significant effect on the market or potential market for the original <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No similar product marketed by the copyright holder <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> You own a lawfully acquired copy of the material <input type="checkbox"/> The copyright holder is unidentifiable <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of licensing mechanism for the material	<input type="checkbox"/> Replaces sale of copyrighted work <input type="checkbox"/> Significantly impairs market or potential market for the work <input type="checkbox"/> Numerous copies or repeated, long-term use <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Made accessible on Web or to public <input type="checkbox"/> Affordable and reasonably available permissions or licensing

Overall, the effect on the market for the original supports fair use or does not support fair use.

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Smith, Kevin; Macklin, Lisa A.; Gilliland, Anne. A Framework for Analyzing any Copyright Problem. Retrieved from:
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