

METACHROMATICS: APPLIED COLOR ACROSS MEDIA IN THE AGE OF  
COMPOSITE PICTURES (1839–1935)

BY

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY IN ENGLISH IN  
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR  
OF PHILOSOPHY, THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

2013

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## ABSTRACT

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Adviser: Professor Wayne Koestenbaum

This dissertation articulates an analytic for observing, measuring, contextualizing, recovering, and re-purposing chromatic fields within and across a variety of media and disciplines. Drawing on recent strategies within visual culture studies, including postclassical narratology, this framework adapts the historical division in aesthetics between color, and line and form, to examine color's differential status within verbal and visual expression and the social formations that its relations reflect, reinforce, or challenge. This enduring theoretical binarization—variously iterated and deployed at least since Antiquity—organizes an “inherent” opposition between color and line and form whose representation, by iconic analogy, has been used to assimilate and naturalize other binarically-construed ontologies, including identity formations, divisions of labor, and social hierarchies. In part because of its phenomenal instability, color within this discourse often functions as an especially receptive space into which constructions of non-figurability, alterity, abstraction, allusion, “essence,” and desire are projected and inscribed. Opposite the indexical line and form of early photography and early cinema before the rise of “natural color” processes (1839–1935), and the “line and form” of narrative according to dominant theories of narratology, chromatic additions can be seen exemplifying this function. This dissertation tests the uses of this analytic within these media, and within considerations of intertexts and critical commentary that include intersections of realist and local color literature, Symbolist theater and painting, ekphrastic poetry, theories of art and sciences of vision, early photo-cinematic color labor, classical and postclassical narrative theory, and experimental methodologies of reading/reception.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without the generous support of faculty and staff at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, who unfortunately cannot be accounted for here in full, this work would not have been possible. I would like to extend special thanks to Wayne Koestenbaum, Anne Humpherys, Alison Griffiths, Mary Ann Caws, Stuart Liebman, Ammiel Alcalay, Geoffrey Batchen, Daniel Gerould, Ira Shor, Heather Hendershot, and Paula Massood, whose expertise, creativity, and professional assistance have contributed in especially meaningful ways to my scholarship and teaching. I also would like to extend appreciation to Jay Barksdale of the Wertheim Study, Lyndsi Barnes of the Berg Collection, and David Lowe of The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs at the Stephen A. Schwarzman building of the New York Public Library. Thanks as well to Eugene Laper at Lehman College of the City University of New York; Charles Silver at the Film Study Center of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Serge Bromberg of Lobster Films; and Jeffrey Masino of Flicker Alley for their invaluable research assistance.

Parts of this dissertation have appeared within publications to whose editors and staff I also wish to express gratitude. Thank you to Sungshin Kim of the University of North George and to fellow contributors to the volume *From Surface to Meaning: Analyzing via Color*, and to North Georgia Press; to Petra Chu and Robert Alvin Adler of *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, and to Anne Humpherys and Patricia Mainardi for their support during publication; to Laurence Petit, Nancy Pedri, and fellow contributors to the volume *The Language of Images*, and to Cambridge Scholars Press.

Discussions with friends and colleagues also contributed significantly to this project. I am thankful to Laurel Harris, Kelley Kawano, and Elizabeth Alsop of the Cinema Studies Group at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York; to Louis Bury and *On-Verge* for the invitation to work together on “John Corbin’s Drift”; and to conference participants for their valuable feedback and insights, especially those at *The Language of Images*, hosted by Central Connecticut State University; Tom Gunning and students from the University of Chicago at *Colour and the Moving Image: History, Theory, Aesthetics, Archive* at the University of Bristol; and respondents from *Significance of Color in the Humanities and Social Sciences* at North Georgia College and State University. I also would like to thank Steven Kruger, Morris Dickstein, Richard Kaye, and Jane Marcus for their valuable responses to early developments of the dissertation, and Mario DiGangi for his general advisement.

Thank you to Gary Schwartz, Director of Honors Programs at Lehman College of the City University of New York, and to my students in the Lehman Scholars Program for our shared chromatic investigations during the course *Unruly Color Across Media*. I also would like to express appreciation for the support of galleries, art spaces, and sound art publishers who have allowed me to exhibit, perform, and release work that has involved and informed my scholarship on color. These include Richard Foreman’s Ontological-Hysteric Theater, New York; Issue Project Room, Brooklyn; Fotofono, Brooklyn; Melrose Light Space, Los Angeles; Gallery 825, Los Angeles; the exhibition series *The Art of Photography*, San Diego; Ben Owen and Winds Measure Recordings, Brooklyn; and Staalplaat/bake records, Amsterdam. Thanks also to my early chromatic collaborators in “lowercase sound” and phonography. Technical assistance with digital editing was provided by Dennis Viera of Viera Photographics, for which I also am deeply grateful.

Lastly, I wish to express my sincerest gratitude to my family, to Emily Bickle; and to Irene Williams, who in many ways, started things, and made them happen.

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## INTRODUCTION

[The role of color] is to tell us what agitates the heart, while drawing shows us what passes in the mind . . . . Color is a mobile, vague, intangible element, while form . . . is precise, limited, palpable, and constant . . . . Drawing is [thus] the masculine side of art, color the feminine. —Charles Blanc (1874, 146)

Color is enslaved by the line that becomes writing. —Yves Klein ([1954] 2008, 119)

Since as early as Book Six of Aristotle’s *Poetics*, which regards color as a superfluous and potentially insidious element of imaging, systems of representation have theorized color use and methods for its interpretation by differentiating a hermeneutics of color from one of line and form.<sup>1</sup> Despite historical shifts in modes of representation and valuation, this notion of chromatics as a discourse separate and opposite from line and form has remained durable across the arts, both fine and applied, visual and verbal. Its relations thus constitute a range of symbolic and socioeconomic antagonisms, accommodations, and displaced desires—within a broad scope of cultural productions, both generative and symptomatic—which attention to this structuration reveals.

Through this classical binarization of elements, aesthetic traditions historically have identified and reinscribed in line and form the authority and privilege that accompany the control of boundaries, definition, and narrative. Within this binary and according to this logic, color typically has been consigned to a deferential position, adding and circulating “intangibles” such as vitality and allure within media such as sculpture, etching, drawing, painting, prints, photography, cinema, and verbal description, whose ontologies line and form most frequently have been used to essentialize. This dualistic structure of relations, which offers a pretense of rhetorical balance, stability, and harmony to contrasted and hierarchized terms, has invited similarly articulated social relationships and cultural values to be reinforced or contested by aesthetic analogy.

Charles Blanc’s influential nineteenth-century aesthetic primer (above), designed to equip art’s practitioners and audiences with a “grammar” for production and “appreciation,” provides a salient example from the history of art and visuality of the susceptibilities of this model to ideology.

Klein's ([1954] 2008, 119) martialization of its terms nearly a century later suggests, in stark relief, broader implications, and the transmedial dynamics of this enduring formalism and its contentious meta-relations. It is, for example, in part how social critics such as Nisard (1834) were able to link “over-attention” to color to imagination taking over reason (a symptom of decadence); why Adorno ([1970] 1997; 1978) regarded color as escapist spectacle or “mere” folk expression; why Le Corbusier and Ozenfant ([1920] 1965) experienced color as destabilizing volume; and why color throughout history has been the site of so many “chromophobic” displacements, described by Batchelor (2000), as well as utopian idealizations.

The historical effectiveness with which this binary has been used to enlist normalized relations, from disparate fields, to reinscribe power relations, essentialist constructions of identity and experience, and the epistemological presumptions of binarism itself within critical methodology suggests the value of investigating its structural dynamics—and its ruptures—within and between modes of representation more broadly.

This project will seek to provide a framework through which to identify and recuperate such dynamics and sites of exchange, which it will then test within a periodization (1839–1935) that this analytic will help to illuminate. To accomplish this goal, it will adapt a variety of recent strategies within visual culture studies, philosophies of color, inter-art analysis, transmedial narratology, and a strain of “activist” new formalism that in making a continuum with new historicism has called for renewed attention to “the processes and structures of mediation through which particular discourses and whole classes of discourses . . . come to represent the real . . . [at] the eclipse or exclusion of other contenders for that title” (Levinson 2007, 561).<sup>2</sup> As a working definition, “metachromatics” names this approach, which investigates an historical “aboutness” of color co-constituted through its opposition to line/form (hereafter color – line/form).

## Method

Generally speaking, methodologies for investigating relations between verbal and visual artifacts often involve comparisons of objects that bear related subject matter, or that appear to tell similar stories. In this case, we can consider specific cinematic adaptations of novels and paintings; pictorial versions of poems; and poetic/ekphrastic versions of pictures.<sup>3</sup> Broader interart comparisons also have provided significant historical and generic insight into the mutual reinforcement or antagonism of “sister arts,” understood by scholars such as Mitchell (1986) as a struggle for dominance between images and words; or by Gaudreault and Philippe (2005) as an historiographical process by which new media come into being.<sup>4</sup>

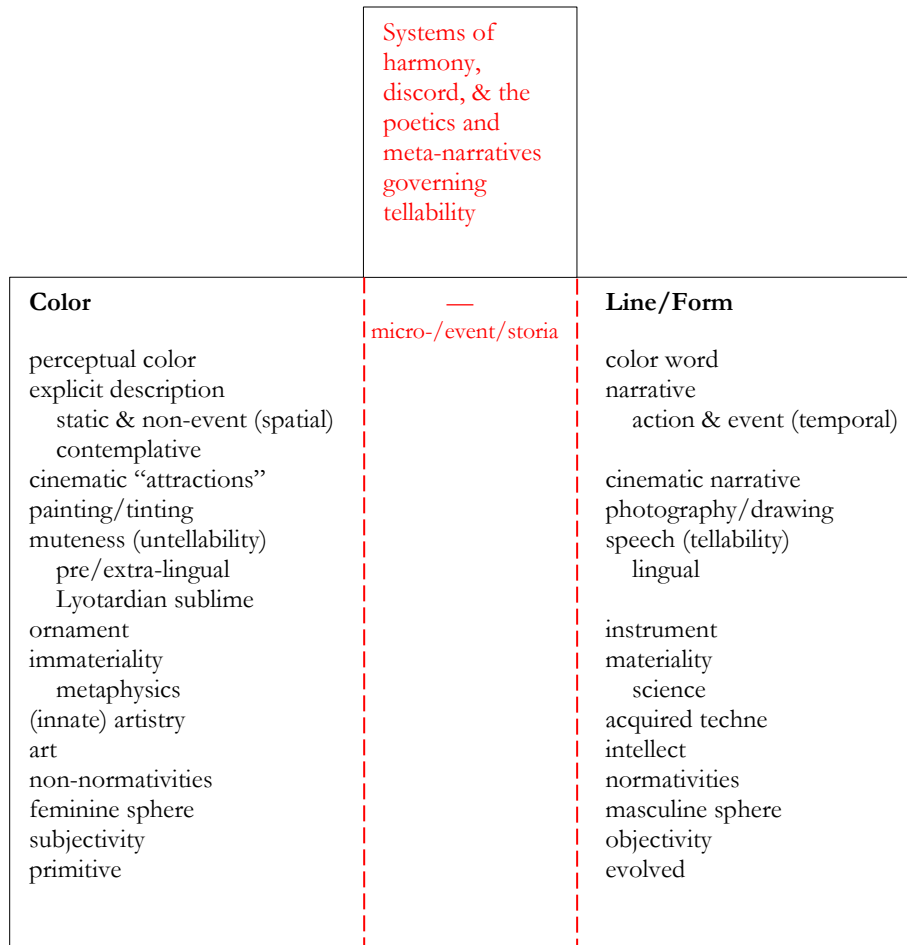
Other foundational approaches, however, have sought to problematize the very essentialization and differentiation of media itself by locating common structural ground between them. Studies such as Frank’s “Idea of Spatial Form” ([1945] 1991) in literature;<sup>5</sup> Steiner’s (1982) likening of painting and literature; Mitchell’s (2005) theorization of the transmedial mobile image; and more recently, postclassical narratology’s transmediation of description and the relocation of narrativity from artifact to “cognitive frame” (Wolf 2011; Nünning 2007), invite audiences to “view” verbal texts spatially, to “read” pictorial elements as grammatically articulated verbal signs,<sup>6</sup> or to follow disembodied images across artifacts, which they are said to inhabit or trigger in the mind.<sup>7</sup> These approaches contest the very notion of essential medial difference now commonly traced to Lessing’s ([1766] 1984) eighteenth-century revisionist aesthetics.

My interest here is not to privilege any one of these approaches, to diminish or reassert material differences between media, or to reclaim objects for any particular discipline; but rather, to suggest a mechanism that might be deployed as an application within any number of approaches and fields that investigate the production, distribution, reception, and uses of representation—broadly construed—and the discourses that maintain or disrupt them.

Mary Louise Pratt's (2007) post-colonial concept of the "contact zone" serves as a useful model for consideration within this context. Pratt is especially interested in colonial frontiers: specifically, the co-constitution of colonizing and colonized subjects through their various forms of contact—their interactions, mutual understandings, practices, etc.—which, in her study, can be located within modes of European travel writing. For Pratt, the process of subject formation within these transactional spaces is determined not by a separateness of colonizer and colonized, nor by unidirectional flows of power, but by their articulations—the ways in which subjects absorb, repel, and use each other.

Without suggesting a moral or formal equality of terms between, for example, pictorial uses of color and actual colonized subjects, the investigation of color across disciplines benefits from recognition of a similar historical "zone" of contact between color and iterations of line and form—one that continues to influence determinations of identity, intelligibility, socio-cultural associations and value, theoretical engagement as well as normative reading/reception patterns, and even, spheres of labor (both metaphorical and literal). This flux of absorption, resistance, and mutual reinforcement—and possibilities for the (re)configuration of identities and relations of power in light of it—are central to the purposes of this investigation.

A diagrammatic representation of this zone of contact, and of binaric relations whose alignments the discourse of color – line/form historically has been used to mediate, offers here a schematic that might add clarification, facilitate elaboration, and encourage conceptual permutation within the study of color. Neither comprehensive nor fixed in its terms, it provides a system through which to chart and to compare sets of concepts and relations to power, whose mediation by color – line/form can be understood ultimately as "eventful" and "narratable" (an argument discussed more below).<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 0.1** Metachromatics, and the orientation of concepts according to the mediation of color – line/form. Examples here will be discussed below and throughout.

As a way to begin to discuss this strategy and its promise for addressing problematics within color studies broadly across media, this dissertation will allow the details and workings of theory to emerge from contexts of possible application. In keeping with this critical goal, instead of undertaking an enhanced treatment of any one area of interest, foremost this approach will seek to further color as a critical lens by foregrounding ways in which color and line and form, “twin abstractions” assembled by humans, explained Baudelaire ([1863] 1964, 51), often are put to work in the service of other abstractions and the ideologies that give rise to them (see fig. 0.1). Of particular interest will be the relation of the discourse of color – line/form to an often over-looked area of

historiography (1839–1935) in which conspicuously colored “black-and-white” photography and cinema existed as a popular iteration of composite representation.

For many, this composite, which married the “unmediated” realism of monochrome photography, and the chromatic insight, fantasy, and “artistry” of painting, reflected an aesthetic paradigm of harmonious representation. The rhetorical and visual persuasiveness of this model—a powerful expression of the relation between color – line/form—found practical and theoretical application within other fields of representation whose “comparable” divisions it could characterize by analogy. Experiences and theories of aesthetics, narrative, media, genre, as well as socio-cultural relations and constructions of identity, were part of this discursive exchange. Recognition of the prevalence of this composite form of representation, of its influence as a conceptual paradigm of realism/fantasy, and of its discursive association with color – line/form, allows for valuable reconsiderations of aesthetics and culture broadly during this period.

Section I of this dissertation, which consists of Chapters 1–3, introduces the overdetermined and problematic history of conceptual division between color and line/form, and its influence within Renaissance painting, early photography, early cinema, local color literature, and their theorization. “Verbal coloration,” for example, identified historically as an aspect of description set in subordinate opposition to the “line” of plot and narrative—or as little more than “icing on the narrative cake” (Riffaterre 1986, 281)—is suggested as a provocative area for analogous reconsideration within contexts such as comparative media studies, the pragmatics of visualization and aesthetic response, and the constitution of narrativity as a category of experience.<sup>9</sup>

Section II, which consists of Chapters 4–7, extends this historical and methodological treatment of metachromatics to a more detailed investigation of multi-mediation within realist, Symbolist, and modernist aesthetics, which includes reconsiderations of canonical literature such as Harold Frederic’s *The Damnation of Theron Ware, or, Illumination* (1896); a theorization of “color

space” within Symbolist painting and theater; the intersection of historical theories of chromatic polarization, color psychology, and the dynamics of “blue” and “yellow” within Olive Schreiner’s “New Woman” novel *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) and D. H. Lawrence’s primitivist “The Woman Who Rode Away” ([1928] 1998); and a queer reclamation of William Carlos Williams’s “lost” ekphrastic poem “The Hothouse plant” (1923), and its original chromatic context within the short-lived little magazine *Secession* (1922–24).

A two-part “coda” provides an alternative conclusion to the dissertation, which to some extent responds to Klein’s assertion ([1954] 2008, 119) of “color’s enslavement by the line that becomes writing.” This coda extends the consideration of metachromatics beyond “The Age of Composite Pictures” (1839–1935), and tests the boundaries of “interpretive” and theoretical validity as determined by conventions, strategies, and the politics of reading/reception influenced by the discourse of color – line/form. Part one of this coda investigates the relation of color to the line/form of “grid” within Mona Hatoum’s *Untitled (hair grid with knots 3)* (2001). Part two reproduces excerpts from my artist book *Lining* (2013), details of its methodology and conceptual approach, and a performance of reading/reception that foregrounds the “contact zone” of engagement as always both presumptive and emergent, rule-governed, effacing as well as extractive, and inexhaustive.

### **Periodization**

This project supplements contemporary historical and theoretical accounts of color in relation to photo-indexical developments within nineteenth and twentieth visual culture, such as Misek’s (2010) retheorization of “film color,” Yumibe’s (2012) contextualization of cinematic “moving color” within mass culture, and North’s (2005) reconsideration of photography’s influence on literary modernism, by articulating the often-overlooked era of the photo-painterly composite (1839–1935) and the mechanisms of its visual paradigm. This composite, which featured

conspicuous and often vibrant chromatic flourishes that filled-in or covered-over photographic line and form, extended earlier traditions of coloration within miniature painting, illustration, and screen media (in lantern slides, etc.), including this labor's coding often according to gender. It gained popularity immediately with the announcement of photography in 1839, and maintained its cultural currency—not without controversy among media purists and social commentators concerned about the moral effects of color's expanding cultural presence—well into the 1930s in technologically more advanced forms.

This periodization, founded on the cultural prevalence of this photo-painterly composite, does not ignore monochrome photography's rich conceptual "pre-history," its technological development prior to the announcement of photography by Louis Daguerre in 1839, aesthetic differences between technological iterations, black-and-white photography's continuing cultural presence, or earlier developments of viable (but commercially-limited) "natural" color films, such as Autochrome (photography) and Kinemacolor (cinema) established by 1908.<sup>10</sup> These dates instead reflect a period marked by the realization of two emergent types of indexicality within dominant culture: the presumed objective line/form of monochromatic photography (1839), and the commercial realization of "objective" color cinema through the first feature-length three-strip Technicolor film, *Becky Sharp* (1935).<sup>11</sup>

This historicization intends to add further dimensionality to influential historical accounts of photography, such as Mirzoeff's (1999, 65) broader periodization of the Age of Photography (1839–1982), by foregrounding the popular status of photographic representation (1839–1935) as a composite discourse frequently likened to drawing and painting. Charles Martel (1860, 121), for example, expressed a common sentiment in his construal of photographic representation as a two-part process consisting of black-and-white "drawing" and "transparent local colours" applied "in their proper places." Coloration in this sense was "necessary to complete" a black-and-white

photograph, just as it was for “Dutch painters” proceeding from “monochromous [sic] chiar-oscuro” to finished colored pictures.

As Needham (1884, 83) explained, “Photography plays the part which the pencil or the brush does in the studies of artists.”

Similar expressions can be found later even within promotional accounts of so-called natural color cinema, in which light-and-shade and color remained divided, complementary phenomena (fig. 0.2).

Also common was Martel’s insistence that decisions regarding color choice and application required attention to the effects of chromatic interactions: to “modifications resulting from [the] mutual reflections” of colors according to spatial context. This interest in perceptual effects derived from optical “mixing”—phenomena such as “simultaneous contrast” discussed widely since Goethe (1810) and Chevreul ([1839] 1967)—underscored color’s shifting, contingent nature, and embodiment as an element of its always subjective realism. It also spoke to the dynamic independence of color relations, and the (often mysterious) “laws” said to govern the aesthetic events of their interaction irrespective of any line/form that might “contain” them.

To neglect or underestimate the influence of this prevalent, and debated, construction of photographic representation is to overlook a significant dimension of material culture during this period; the often contentious politics, sets of relations, and histories involved in its labor; as well as the legacy of metaphorical extensions that this aesthetic model of realism/fantasy was able to reconstitute and perpetuate as part of the long history of aesthetic division between color and line/form.<sup>12</sup> Popular technological metaphors for cognition and perception based on still and moving “photography,” for example (such as those discussed in chapter four) assume a far more

## *Berlin Deutsche Warte*

Light and shade are beautifully presented, as well as the most delicate tints of color.

**Figure 0.2** *Berlin Deutsche Warte*, Review of Kinemacolor (c. 1908). From *Kinemacolor: Nature Reproduced in Motion Picture* (page 4 of 4). Courtesy of the Redpath Chautauqua Collection. University of Iowa Libraries Special Collections Department.

complicated ontological status when “photography” is recognized as an often composite discursive space involving mediated and selective applications of color. Genres of realism likened or contrasted to (moving) photography across visual and verbal media during this period—as well as anti-mimetic genres positioned against them—suggest different functions, layers of signification, reception experiences for historical audiences, etc. when this composite model is given consideration.<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 0.3** *amNew York*, Reproduction of Emanuel Leutze, *Washington crossing the Delaware* (detail) ([1851] 2012). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of John Stewart Kennedy, 1897. (Jan. 13–15): 10.

Reinforcing the saliency of this relation between selectively-applied color and black-and-white photo-cinematic indexicality during this period was the notably expanding availability of color throughout popular forms of print, screen culture, and spectacle. These “masses of color,” which *The Nation* (1867, 438–39) argued fulfilled salacious “want” instead of “what the people need and ought to admire,” would include conspicuous additions of color to newspapers,

magazines, literary journals, comics, and pulps (masses of color found even today; see fig. 0.3); to product ephemera such as labels and advertising cards; to “garish” chromolithographic art; to light shows and cinematic “attractions” (discussed more below); to genres of realist (“local color”) and symbolist literary imagery; and to new theories and vocabularies of color across the arts and sciences that reflected the weakening “hold” of line/form over color, conceptually, as well as visually.

Together such expressions of chromatic differentiation, organization, and effect—construed opposite iterations of line/form—contributed to late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century experiences of chromatic signification and its relation to modes of chromatic abstraction and realism across media.<sup>14</sup> Attention to this binarization as a prevalent condition of intelligibility during this

period, which was often exploited by transgressive or restrictive uses of color, provides essential context to studies of color across visual culture, as well as to considerations of aesthetic modernism and its relation to color within popular culture.<sup>15</sup>

## CHAPTER ONE

### *Disegno-colore: Origin Story Points to the Rule*

Discussions of the historical division in aesthetics between color and line/form most often begin with accounts of the debate between Venetian and Florentine approaches to painting within the history of Renaissance art. Instances of vibrant and self-referential color within figurative settings are said to have been favored by the so-called colorists of Venice, while Florentines instead insisted on the primacy of drawing and the tighter restriction of color to mimetic supplementation.<sup>16</sup> According to Philip Ball, this competition for the prioritization of *colore* or *disegno* within academies of art generally lasted until the beginning of the seventeenth century.<sup>17</sup> By this time, as Ball (2003, 129) recounts, “Vasari and the scholars of Italian academies largely secured the superiority of *disegno* over *colore* . . . and a muted palette [once spread to France] became the predominant style of European art.”

Paintings often discussed as representative of this aesthetic divergence during the sixteenth century—such as those by Titian and Michelangelo—do not however exactly support such clear delineation. As Ball’s study suggests, at times Michelangelo’s use of color, for example, can appear just as bright and self-reflexive as color deployed by Titian. Their mutual attention to drawing and to perspective also challenges claims of their partisanship based on strictly differing approaches to line/form. For Ball, such similarities lend support to the view that the history of this factionalization derives from additional sources: namely, from a problematic historiography. He argues that conceptions of the rivalry in painting between Venice and Florence, construed according to practices that uniformly favored either color or line/form, reflect to an appreciable extent a “nineteenth century fiction,” which originates with Vasari (1568).

With his *Lives of the Artists*, Vasari promoted the view that the brightened colors of Titian merely compensated for, or distracted from, poor draftsmanship. For Vasari, instances of chromatic

conspicuousness within paintings by Titian and others entailed a weak grasp of line/form (among other deficiencies) and the questionable loosening of its authority. Vasari's recourse to this binary, despite perhaps contradictory visual evidence, followed historical precedent. As a Florentine advocating for Florence within an aesthetic-municipal rivalry, Vasari invoked a then familiar bias against color(ation) and its legacy of associations, such as the authority of design over color within academic art theory based on a distinction between "immutable qualities attributed to the mind and the deceptive, transient, changeable body" (Woodall 1997, 4). In doing so, he was able to reinforce the institutional values of the academy and those that it empowered. His treatment of color as a secondary practice (for which, not incidentally, training was limited) also allowed him to identify with a position of power far more symbolically extensive than pictorial aesthetics.

Ball's critical rereading of this now frequently retold story of origins, just briefly introduced here, highlights the rhetorical utility of this politicized construct and its ability to frame and to institutionalize allegiances in reduced and oppositional terms.<sup>18</sup> Without discounting genuine differences represented by, in this case, the aesthetic schools of Venice and Florence and their respective painters, this history underscores color – line/form as a discursive mechanism able to help found and to perpetuate the very notion of opposing "schools," even despite, if Ball is right, empirical observation that might suggest otherwise. It emphasizes the degree to which perception involves the mediation of values and frameworks for interpretation.<sup>19</sup> It also typifies a process by which aesthetic systems are able to constitute and naturalize values and frameworks diachronically as well as within contemporaneous fields.

Arguments describing the perceptual impossibility of even separating line/form from color make this point even clearer. As the early twentieth-century English art critic Clive Bell ([1914] 1990, 82) explained, for example, "The distinction . . . is an unreal one; you cannot conceive of a colourless line or a colourless space; neither can you conceive a formless relation of colours"—an

observation on which Josef Albers (1920 [2006]) would later elaborate through experiments on the influence of shape, size, and number on chromatic identity and interaction. This paradox of common visual experience is just one among many involved in the perception of color, its cognition, and related determinations of cultural value and meaning.

It reminds us, for example, that monochromatic visual arrays, as in “black and white” photography and engraving, are able to constitute “achromatic” pictures that might be considered acceptable representations of the world. Beyond “acceptability,” such pictures also have been understood as not inherently incongruous with “a high state of intellectual and aesthetic cultivation” (Rood [1879] 1973, 305). This paradox also points to a variety of areas of chromatic interest that have occupied the sciences and humanities for millennia. These include questions regarding where color resides; how it is identified, measured, and represented using languages and systems of harmony and organization; and what it might mean, for whom, and according to which processes of production, reception, and transmission. Factoring into these contexts as well should be the history of the discursive application of color – line/form and its uses in representing, rationalizing, and naturalizing other dichotomous notions of inherent difference and relation.

Roger Fry (1909, 54), for example, like others before him whose aesthetics responded to the rhetorical effectiveness of this discourse, demonstrated its value within a formalist schema that also reinscribed problematic ideological positions. According to his hierarchized “emotional elements of design,” which implicated earlier aesthetic and philosophical suspicions of color as mere *qualia*,<sup>20</sup> color represented “the only element [among line, mass, space, light] not of critical or universal importance to life . . . .” While Fry’s idealization here might at worst seem to exemplify a dated or specious formulation within a circumscribed area of aesthetic history, his familiar assertion of color’s superfluity, and line’s authority, bears wider political signification. In fact, it exemplifies a broader

tradition in aesthetics in which existing social hierarchies and relations of power have been able appropriate additional cultural influence through favorable codification.

Charles Blanc (1874, 4–5) provides another example from this tradition. According to this influential nineteenth-century critic, color was “the peculiar characteristic [only] of the lower forms of nature.” Channeling neoclassical notions of the great chain of being, Blanc explained “the higher we rise in the scale of being . . . drawing becomes the medium of expression, more and more dominant.” In fact, when painting attends to “higher” forms, it can, at times, for Blanc even “dispense with color” altogether. Slippery terms of value such as “high” and “low,” and color as a marker of opprobrium within conceptions of divinity, morality, reason, or even representability itself, lend themselves to other traditions that regard (subjects of) color as base. Nineteenth-century photographic portraiture, for example, and manuals for tinting—which most often assumed the white skin of sitters and provided only rare instruction for photographing or chromatically treating complexions of color (to be discussed more below)—underscore the vulnerability of aesthetic theory and practice to the politics of identity.

A pattern of similar examples, from across the arts and artistic periods, reflect the prevalence of color’s association with “low” or ignoble constructions/subjects and its subordination to line/form and those identified with it. With this in mind, we can consider other cultural extensions of *disegno e colore* beyond its seventeenth-century “resolution” within Italian academies, especially those whose ubiquity might raise the stakes.

### **The Chromophobic/Chromophilic Dilemma**

Colour is less important than form, but casts over it a peculiar charm. If form is wrongly seen or falsely represented, we feel as though ‘the foundations were shaken’; if the colour is bad, we are simply disgusted. —Ogden Rood ([1879] 1973, 306)

The history of what Bachelor (2000, 102) has called “chromophobia”—loosely defined as the fear of, or prejudice against, color and its threats of “corruption”—is extensive. Bachelor’s book

of the same title offers a variety of examples from across the arts, cinema, literature, and philosophy since Plato, which speaks to this “condition’s” range of influence. For Batchelor, *disegno-colore* plays a critical role in the manifestation of chromophobia and its transmission. Through it, color has come to stand in for, or to be indicative of, for example, the inessential, the subjective, the fleeting, the vulgar, the emotional, the infantile, the primitive, the feminine, the queer, etc.

Especially relevant to my focus here is that the political response to chromophobia, through “chromophilia” (its opposite), rarely gets beyond an affirmation of chromophobic terms, which suggests a chromatic and political bind. In fact, as Batchelor explains, rather than establishing its own terms of value, chromophilia tends to embrace and to concentrate the terms of chromophobia: through it “color remains other; in fact, it often remains more other than before” (71). The implications of this pejorative othering, however, have been left relatively unexplored.

The tendency for color to be enlisted as a stand-in for alterity—an “other” *shaped*, muted, and marginalized by centered notions of line/form and its values—suggests a key hegemonic functionality of the discourse of color – line/form.<sup>21</sup> The presence of the authority of line/form, even within celebrations of color, suggests its claim on normativity (and reach of power) through determinations of difference that limit power. “Chromatic” associations such as inessentiality, infantilism, and emotionality, for example, are familiar terms of gender-based marginalization found throughout history.

Within eighteenth century treatises on character, for example, color was understood as more appropriate to the representation of women—than the line and form of design prioritized for men—because femininity presumed a lack of “interiority” afforded to the “dualistic” male subjectivity (Woodall 1997, 11). In keeping with such assumptions, even an empowered or so-called chromophilic “feminine” subjectivity, expressed through fashion, etc. seems vulnerable to these and

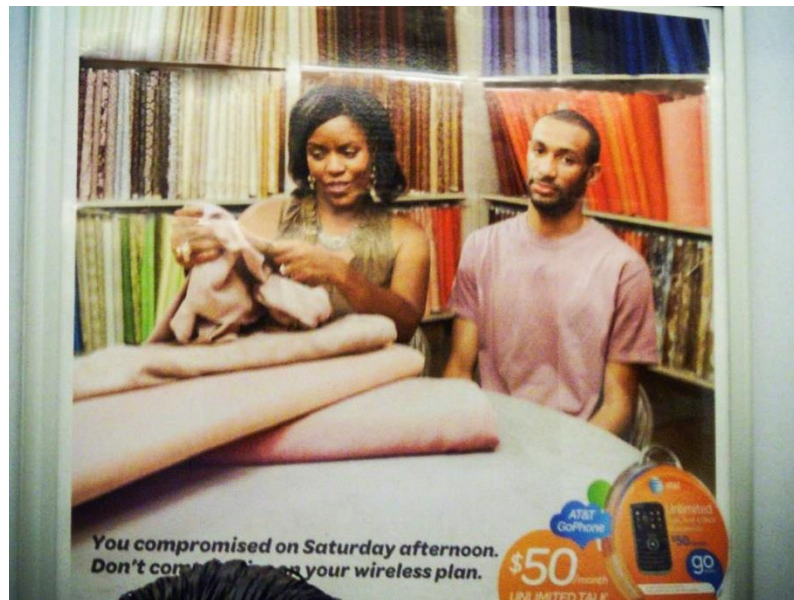
other dominant chromophobic associations. Color in this sense can other, or “out,” as a stain or restrictive mark, and thus jeopardize access to institutions of power.

This chromophobic/philic dilemma suggests real-world limitations that can be compounded by its naturalization.<sup>22</sup> The consensus of powerful black or “achromatic” navy suits, for example, which might be said to dominate Wall Street, “Western” courtrooms, stages of political debate, etc. hints at a nexus of authority that (a)chromatic coding can reinforce and perpetuate.<sup>23</sup> As Baudrillard ([1968] 2005, 31) argued, for example, whatever “registers zero on the color scale (such as white, black, gray)” is “correspondingly paradigmatic of dignity, repression, and moral standing” according to the traditional treatment of color, which is perceived as a “threat to inwardness.” Sartorial preference among the “serious” for dark or achromatic colors also points for many to the ink (and perhaps line/form) of literary/literate culture since the printing press, or to other references to modernity.<sup>24</sup> It also, however, suggests a pathway of association through which color can stand in for and conflate illiteracy, frivolity, lawlessness, political marginality, femininity, etc. and other qualities based on heteronormative or related assumptions.<sup>25</sup>

A recent photograph of an advertisement from the New York City subway, featuring a domestic couple “of color,” provides a specific example of this dilemma for consideration (fig. 1.0). In many ways, it serves as an allegory or cautionary tale of the chromophobic/philic dilemma in action. It also speaks to the continuing relevance of color – line/form to constructions of identity and power, as well as the acceptability of its premises, within everyday public spaces.

The text, somewhat obscured by the male passenger in front of it, reads: “You compromised on your Saturday afternoon. / Don’t compromise on your wireless plan. / \$50 Unlimited Talk.” Although the advertisement’s direct address only communicates the nature of this compromise implicitly, it appears to solicit identification with a heteronormative male subject’s chromophobic and domestic suffering (his pink shirt, slack and effete, in this case looks *picked out for* him and part

of the imposition conveyed by his return glance rather than indicating any chromatic complicity). An expressive reading of this collaboration of word and image might be summarized in this way:



**Figure 1.0** Advertisement for the AT&T GoPhone. Digital photograph by author from the New York City Subway (2012).

**You**

like the male in this picture: trapped, reduced, and weakened by feminization and domestication (represented here, in part, by a suffocating profusion of color)

**compromised**

a fool's bargain that showcases your emasculation

**on your Saturday afternoon.**

Saturday afternoon suggests natural activities outdoors, perhaps with “the guys,” not time indoors, with your domestic partner, feigning subtle and chromatic discriminations for which you are not naturally equipped as a male. Moreover, Saturday afternoon is the only day/time of the week that is really “yours,” with Sunday anticipating the work of Monday, and Friday bearing its residue.

**Don't**

be similarly trapped, reduced, feminized, unnatural, and illogical like this man, and **compromise on your wireless plan.**

a compromise, on evidence, that your female partner likely would make.

**\$50 Unlimited Talk.**

“Fifty” and “unlimited” in their respective lack of decimalization and qualification are decisive and without nuance. Half of \$100, \$50 also suggests a welcome return to (masculine) logic and fairness. Together these signs offer a propitious contract much different from your previous compromise. They also provide an oasis in which to experience autonomy (talking on the phone) without temporal restriction. With “\$50 Unlimited Talk,” the GoPhone takes a stand against female domination and its irrational preoccupations: conditions from what your partner “naturally” suffers, and makes you suffer through, when unchecked.

A closer look at this advertisement reveals the ways in which the discourse of color – line/form provides a structure for this reading and its problematic assumptions. The female’s association with color in the image, and the thrall of this relation, as we know draws on a long history of chromatic gendering tied to misogynist essentialization. In addition, the very crux of the “pregnant moment,” captured here by photography, in part turns on its representation of the chromophobic/philic dilemma.<sup>26</sup>

The female in this picture faces colored fabric and is photographed mid-speech. This reinforces a sense of her chromophilic “communication” (visual and verbal) with the colored material itself. The male in this scenario, similarly registering a gendered predilection, looks at us (“men”) and not the chromatic choices on display (or her). His refusal to respond to her apparent gesture of rhetorical enthusiasm (Isn’t it good?) resists both her and color’s dominance over space and “his” afternoon. It also allows for an interpretation that his response is not required, which reinforces the misogynistic illogic of the compromise.

Although the female might shift her attention from the colorful fabric to his dismissive glance (a possibility that adds narrative/dramatic suspense), naturalized assumptions about her female and chromophilic “nature” make her continued “distraction” more likely. The fixity and apparent endlessness of this (over)attention, compounded through photography’s temporal suspension, reinforces this notion. It also allows for, or even promotes, analogical extensions that might reinscribe other typological assumptions, such as she/he/domesticity/“nature” never changes. His similarly unwavering return glance seeks comparable pity for this (misogynistic take on) inescapable reality.

On a variety of levels, color within this picture can be understood as overwhelming a sense of masculine order. For example, colors organized along the walls and protruding into the foreground dominate the image with an uncertain and “alternative” chromatic systemization of

space. Ambiguities in this color system of course speak to general challenges that are often involved in chromatic discrimination and vocabulary. Irregularities, however, within and between color sections along the walls, also suggest an order founded only on pretense.

Criteria frequently used to categorize color, such as hue, brightness, and saturation, appear to shift in priority and without justification within this “order.” As a result, this “system,” aligned with “feminine” proclivity, in a sense seems unable to make up its mind. Its feminized chromatic grammar “lines” the space to suggest an incomprehensible or capricious (seizure of) authority, which arguably plays on stereotypes of black or African American femininity as “domineering.” It also encroaches on viewers to warn of the more general creep of feminization and to suggest the necessity of its regulation: the feminization of your Saturday and of wireless phone plans typifies greater threats to power and order.

These chromophobic assumptions, as with the hierarchies of Fry, Blanc, or even those of later “progressive” aesthetics such as the constructivism of Rodchenko ([1921] 1979, 128), which upheld “line” as “the path of advancement” and “the first and last thing . . . in painting and any construction . . . or organism,” might seem perhaps circumscribed or harmless enough. They bear meaningfully, however, on constructions of identity and on the structuring of relations between people.

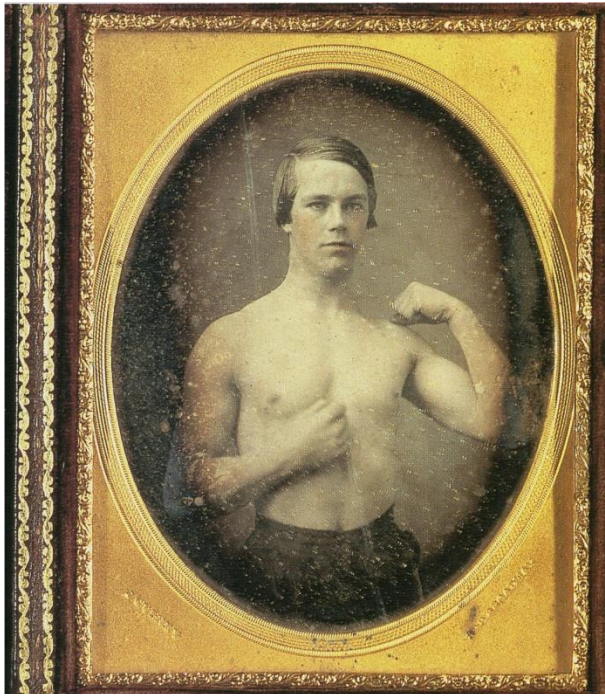
Within the advertisement, it is she who selects the tint of drapery for whatever perhaps dismissible reason (aesthetic criteria can appear vague); but his shirt of the same tint also then appears to fall within her sphere of influence. The subtext is that female authority over “trivial” aesthetics can quickly advance to more significant areas of life. This threat of “unnatural” domination and loss of self, an every-man’s take on domestication, warns of what happens when women/“others”/chromophilics/colors usurp heteronormative masculine authority. The solution, proposed by the ad, is to publically underscore male authority over important decisions (such as

financial matters) and the brazen address of only a particular masculinist consumer. Unconditioned public sexism, like the blunt terms of the contract, is part of this masculine relief and return to “order.”

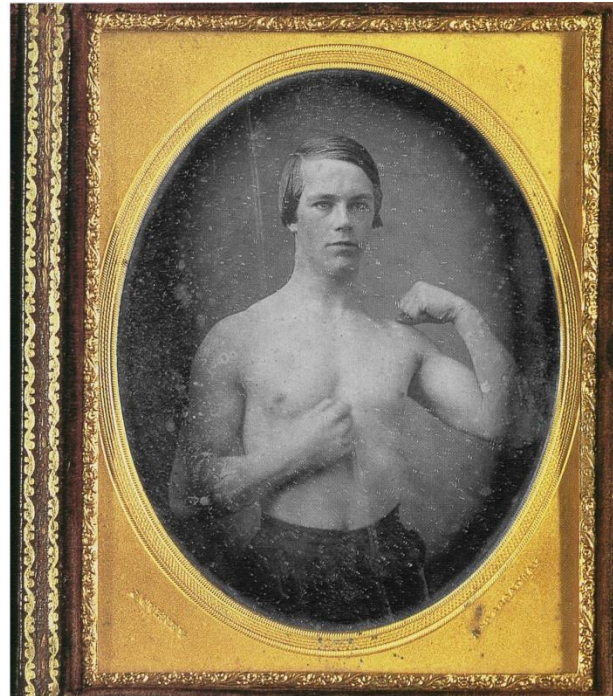
These implicit narratives, which color – line/form helps to organize here within the context of everyday social space and ephemera, suggest the continuing relevance of this discourse to identity, distributions of power, and the processes of naturalization. Such stories also raise questions about the influence of color – line/form within other possible domains. Iterations of classical narrative theory, for example, which draw on metaphor to construe plot as “line” and description as (mere) added “color,” hint at the politics of metanarratives perhaps embedded within dominant theories of telling. As we will see, this thread leads to problems in the conceptualization of narrativity itself, not only within theories of verbal representation, but within visual fields such as cinema, and its origins within nineteenth-century photography.

## CHAPTER TWO

## The Politics of Applied Color in Early Photography



**Figure 2.0** Jeremiah Gurney, *Untitled* (1850s). Daguerreotype, quarter Plate. Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum. Reproduced from Wood (1991, 241).



**Figure 2.1** *Untitled*, grayscale by author.

This is Young America, strong and proud, flexing its muscle, and on the way. It is a vision right out of *Leaves of Grass*. This is Whitman’s America—virile and beautiful . . . Each of us can read what we each see into this image: youth, drive, work, sweat, love, passion . . . Looking at an image like this, the very metaphor for America, one can only be saddened . . . that this is not still the face of Young America. —John Wood (1991, 241)

Based on available evidence, this mid-nineteenth-century tinted daguerreotype of an apparently young male pugilist (fig. 2.0) was taken by Jeremiah Gurney, and is now owned by the Getty Museum. Beyond the material clues that are offered by its format and casing; beyond the iconography of its subject’s costuming and pose; and beyond what we might infer from its contextualization within Gurney’s oeuvre, the image remains remarkably open to interpretation. As Wood’s description above reveals, a viewer inclined to an idealized and nationalistic appraisal of the portrait can narrativize or “read into” the image the subject’s “drive, work, sweat, love, [and]

passion” and then use these terms, as if inscribed into the figure, to metaphorize antebellum America. Despite this rhetorical move, different historical reactions to this image are, of course, endlessly imaginable. Displaced Native Americans, black slaves, Chinese laborers, disenfranchised women, etc., might not have read into this picture of a young white man’s body, fist clenched above his center, the same benign face of “Young America.”

Wood’s seductive conjunction of word and image demonstrates the now familiar susceptibility of photography to the naturalization of symbolism in the production of knowledge—something that Barthes (1981, 45) theorized in ethical terms as the medium’s faculty to “[render] innocent the semantic artifice of connotation.” Photography’s indexicality reveals itself as insidiously available both to underwrite the fictions of its subjects and “evidence” the ideological claims of its viewers.<sup>27</sup> Rendering Gurney’s tinted image in grayscale (fig. 2.1), however, dramatically suggests another set of signs whose complicity in this illusionism often escapes critical attention.<sup>28</sup> Without the application of conspicuous red paint to the subject’s cheeks and lips, does the image as readily convey the notions of “drive, work, love, sweat, [and] passion”? Is beautiful “Young America” as easily derived from this unblemished figure without the artful addition of polished white skin? Who is the colorist responsible for these painterly effects? Are we meant to credit Gurney? The portrait’s museum label remains ambiguous, or fails to register the colorist’s identity. This apparent oversight is indicative of the larger institutional neglect of these chromatic investments and their artists.

Although authorship of colored daguerreotypes frequently is attributed only to daguerreotypists, coloration was not always performed by them.<sup>29</sup> In fact, conspicuous painterly artificiality as a separate discourse, often indicative of a division of labor, was used to intervene as a corrective to “unmediated” daguerreotypic representation, and all that absent mediation represents.<sup>30</sup> This representational interplay between science and metaphysics, masculine and feminine, technical and vernacular, modern and pre-modern, rural and urban, upper and middle class, etc., constituted

desires that met but did not integrate. Metachromatic acknowledgement of the separate discourses that divided daguerreotypy and coloration attends to the power dynamics imputed to these composite media, and the spheres of influence that fueled debates over their signification and valuation. The missing history of coloration's practitioners, many of whom were likely women; the class and gender issues underpinning the aesthetic negotiation of color's deployment and reception; and the relatively overlooked history of the subordinate and often contentious semiotic of coloration within composite photographic representation, become critical issues for further investigation in the history of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century representation.

### **Early Photography and Added Color**

Although tinting in daguerreotypic portraiture reached its apogee in the 1850s and 1860s, the year of Daguerre's famous announcement of photography (1839) also marked Johann Baptist Isenring's successful introduction of applied color to the genre. Isenring formulated his use of color in daguerreotypy as:

an additional invention [that] contributed significantly to the solution of that difficult problem, namely whether and how the (through necessity) cold, dead, and stiff photographic imprint can, through the intervention of free-hand art, and by its help, be somehow transformed into a beautiful artistic entity. (quoted in Henisch and Henisch 1996, 22)

In his critique of photography's absent vitality, Isenring was not alone.

Edwards (2003, 33) perhaps overstates in suggesting that "Whatever else they might have disagreed about, most nineteenth-century commentators on photography conceded that it had at least one significant drawback: It lacked colour." Remarks on daguerreotypy's inability to register color were, however, common. In fact, as Newhall (1961, 96) explains, "When Daguerre first showed his daguerreotypes in 1839, the public regretted that the colors of nature were not recorded in the wonderfully autographic manner that light and shade was reproduced." Many viewers saw

death, cold science, or the body stripped of its essence in daguerreotypy's reproductions. The restricted postures and impassive expressions that flickered uncannily from the medium's metal surface made the first daguerreotypes, in Emerson's words, "grim things" (quoted in Trachtenberg 1992, 184).

Antoine François Claudet, the first photographer to purchase a license from Daguerre, immediately recognized the need to supplement these images with color. To accomplish this, he enlisted the art of miniature painting (Henisch and Henisch 1996, 20). Carl Ferdinand Stelzer, Claudet's German contemporary, and another pioneer of coloration, also turned to this earlier medium. As Henisch briefly mentions, Stelzer "enjoyed the advantage of being actually married to a painter of miniatures; . . . [and] once it had taken root, the coloring business proved to be encouragingly lucrative" (ibid., 21). Stelzer's colorist, and her lucrative practice, however, are not discussed further in this history of the painted photograph.<sup>31</sup> Notwithstanding the economic profits and symbolic values associated with applied coloration, and the technical difficulty of the work, attention to this field remains curiously ancillary and cursory. One often learns of the daguerreotypists, but rarely of "their" colorists.

Although insufficient research makes uncertain the actual number of female colorists employed during the rise of coloration in daguerreotypy, historically-common references to female colorists, and coloration as gendered work, suggest that the figure was meaningful. As Elizabeth Eastlake argued, by 1857 it was standard for photographic establishments to staff artists to finish pictures (Hannavy 2008, 1:1189). Many of these artists were former painters of miniatures adapting their skills to meet new employment opportunities offered by photography's rising popularity (ibid).

Miniature painting, considered a lesser genre of painting, had been a field in art especially open to women. In fact, *L'Artiste* (1836, 275), the principle art journal in France in the 1830s, argued in "Les dames artistes" that women so excelled at miniature painting that it "should be reserved for

they alone.” This praise, however, followed a philosophical tradition in which women were assumed to lack “the ability to abstract (a rational pursuit), required in history painting” (Woodall 1979, 147), a genre of painting commanding greater respect.

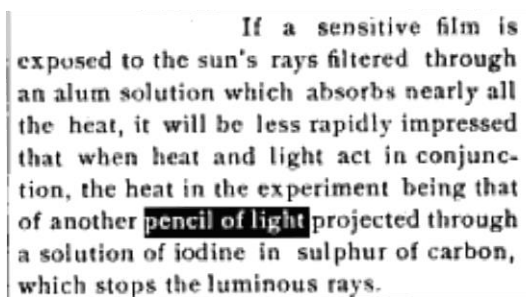
Burns (1995, 49), addressing colored US tintype portraiture (a photographic process that displaced the daguerreotype), also suggests that “women, in particular, found easy employment as colorists.” According to Burns, “The new industry had not yet established conventions excluding [them],” and thus “it is likely that a significant portion of colored photographs were painted by women.” Also, in France, between the years of 1855–68, women are believed to have colored the bulk of illegal erotic images (Pellerin 2000, 91). In fact, it seems that the most intact records of colorists satisfying the widespread desire for the coloration of photography were first amassed not by art history, but as evidence by the State.<sup>32</sup>

### **Gendering the Pencil of Nature**

Despite the common appeal and economic value of applied color in photography, not everyone supported its painterly mediation. For many theorists persuaded by the long-perceived provenance of drawing as a masculine mode of expression dominant over coloration’s “innate” femininity, photography suggested a medium that could be restricted according to essentialist notions of work.<sup>33</sup> Either as distinct masculine and feminine energies channeled by artists, or as actual men and women laboring at different tasks, the history of line/form and color as separate discourses, each with their own epistemologies and metanarratives, informed debates over early photography’s conception of itself as a medium.

In part for this reason, throughout the nineteenth century photography was formulated as an unmediated process of “natural” graphic inscription, or so-called light-writing. “In photography,” as Martell (1860, 121) explained, “the *drawing* is mathematically accurate” (italics mine). This designation, following in the tradition of earlier drawing technologies, such as the camera lucida,

provided for its practitioners and their emerging field an aesthetic link to the historical privilege of graphic art's masculinist domain. The title of William Henry Fox Talbot's *The Pencil of Nature* (1844–1846), one of the first commercially published books to feature photographs (as calotype prints), as well as M. A. Root's *The Camera and the Pencil: or, The Heliographic Art*, published two decades later, expressed this discursive



If a sensitive film is exposed to the sun's rays filtered through an alum solution which absorbs nearly all the heat, it will be less rapidly impressed than when heat and light act in conjunction, the heat in the experiment being that of another pencil of light projected through a solution of iodine in sulphur of carbon, which stops the luminous rays.

**Figure 2.2** P. C. Duchochois, “On the Action of Light Upon Photographic Silver Compounds” (1894, 287). Coloration mine.

identification of photography with line and drawing, which can be found even within scientific writing on light and chemistry (fig. 2.2). This implicit conceptualization of technology and aesthetic, according to a historically gendered sphere of power, allowed for a new claim to form and truth by patriarchy. It also enhanced theoretical control over other discourses that might have been dependent on, or associated with, these concepts.

As discussed above, the gendered division between color and line/form, which photography inflects, extends well beyond the historical and conceptual limits of daguerreotypy. The privileging of line/form over color goes back at least to Aristotle, as does its alignment with rationality, empiricism, and other prevalent discourses imputed to traditional masculinity. As such, color has long suggested a feminine domain of signification, which also has accommodated other subjectivities and discourses marginalized by dominant power structures.

According to this doctrine of separate spheres and the related aesthetics upheld by medium specificity, any application of color might interfere with, or corrupt, daguerreotypy's celebrated empirical objectivity (and its masculinity). Also problematic for its detractors, coloration could allow folk painting miniaturists to make truth claims, often in an expressive vernacular, within a field previously restricted for a privileged, male, scientific discourse. Although there were many attempts

throughout the first century of photography to find photo-chemical or electric means to generate autographic (natural) color, and thus to obviate the mediation and practitioners of coloration from the sphere of the empirical, none proved especially viable until the Lumières' development of Autochrome by the early twentieth century.<sup>34</sup>

Still, the critics of applied coloration eagerly anticipated chromatic advancements to the photographic process that would both enhance its realism and allow photography to maintain its discursive privileges. After all, as Levi Hill ([1850] 1973, 9) explained in his *Treatise on Daguerreotype*, no matter which color process is employed, “it is the *person* who heightens the effect, *improves* the tone, and *adds* to the life-likeness of his pictures by the skillful combination and use of colors, who is entitled to the credit” (italics mine). Photography's reliance on applied coloration risked ceding this credit, and perhaps photography's ontology, to women, “lesser” artists, and their rival discourses by association.

Although many technical purists impugned applied color for its garishness or compromise of indexical guarantee, these critiques often read as fraught with opposition to the relative democratization of gender and class that widespread coloration seemed at times able to embody. As is evident in the picture of Gurney's boxer above, applied color within the sphere of photography can appear to interject itself between line/form and the viewer.<sup>35</sup> In a sense, it can wrest authority from the “colorless” plate of photography, and in doing so, appear to disrespect media hierarchies and spheres of power, which those boundaries for many represented.

Wood's reading demonstrates, for example, that pictorial tropes of color can be appropriated metaphorically as positivistic indicators. In other words, chromatic illusions are capable of displacing photography's representation of physiognomic determinants (its own source of illusions) underwritten by “objective” measurement of line/form. This obstruction or obviation of scientific approach, whose measurement of “symptomatic” exteriors could authenticate claims of knowledge

about ambiguous or hidden interiors, also might be understood as having threatened a much longer tradition of epistemology governed by men, such as Lavater's (1789–92) essays on physiognomy, and their inspiration by ancient science.<sup>36</sup>

### **The Naturalization of Separate Spheres: Technical Manuals and Conduct Books**

As the popularity of colored photographs increased throughout the 1850s—along with the purchasing power of the burgeoning middle classes—books and manuals on photography and coloration became more substantial (Hannavy 2008, 1:178–79). The enhanced detail of these publications reflected the desire to capitalize on a growing consumer niche and a maturing technology. It also, however, suggested the desire to codify and thus control emerging color practices that interfered with the authority and academicism associated with achromatic daguerreotypian aesthetics. Books such as Henry Hunt Snelling's *The History and Practice of the Art of Photography; or The Production of Pictures, Through the Agency of Light. Containing all the Instructions Necessary for the Complete Practice of the Daguerrean and Photogenic Art, Both on Metallic Plates and on Paper* ([1849] 1953) were, in part, a reaction to the challenge mounted by “incompetent” or “excessive” colorists.<sup>37</sup>

Snelling's disparagement of the typical colorist's insufficiencies was not in defense of medium specificity. Rather, his perception of a lack of “talent for *drawing*—taste—due discriminations of effect—strict observance of the characteristic points in the features of the subject—quick perception of the beautiful, and a knowledge of the art of mixing colors and blending tints” ([1849] 1953, 76) in part responded to the increasing acceptance and popularity of “coarsely” painted products.<sup>38</sup> His attack reflected his academic taste and apparent disdain for certain elements of popular culture, prefiguring, to some extent, Baudelaire's ([1859] 1980) famous critique a decade later. Neither Baudelaire nor Snelling, however, likely would have bothered with such commentary or prescriptions had they not sensed the rise of the middle class and its attendant threats to enshrined taste, culture, values, and privileges.

It is thus, in part, to the growing power of the colorist's interjection that both men objected. From this perspective, the often absent signature of the colorist's popular (and populist) interjection might be understood as bearing a shadowy, synecdochical warning. The absence of attribution, within a growing body of colored pictures, suggested the rising "faceless" middle class feared by Baudelaire and others. Snelling's ([1849] 1953) reference to "incapable" drawing also tacitly registered a gendered critique of women's presence as colorists within this profession. In seeking to contain color practices whose eccentricities or clumsiness jeopardized the aesthetics and empiricism of photography, his book also reasserted normalized codes of representation that reinforced gendered stereotypes that modernity's social transitions threatened to destabilize.

For example, as Snelling explains,

in coloring the heads of men it will be necessary to use the darker tints with more freedom . . . . For women, the warmer tints should predominate, and in order to give that transparency so universal with the softer sex—and which gives so much loveliness and beauty to the face—a little white may be judiciously intermingled with the red tints about the lighter portions of the face. . . . The female chin is the same color as the cheeks in most glowing parts. (137–38)

Without addressing all of the obvious implications of this manual's gendered chromatic coding, it is useful to note "female transparency" as an especially problematic assumption. The passive "glow" of the "softer sex," opposite darker pigments that substantialize masculinity and suggest the integrity of its agency and intellect, reinscribe gendered notions of function and limitation according to a masculinist hierarchy.

Not surprisingly, many who celebrated the composite status of photography advanced this position by recognizing the phallogentricity of light-writing and coloration as its gendered "complement." Borrowing metaphors from biology, for example, arguments coupled "feminine

touch” with the “pencil” of nature to characterize the productive wholeness of composite media. Wall’s (1861) theorization of the painted photograph exemplifies such an attempt to incorporate coloration and daguerreotypy by drawing on popular aesthetic divisions that reinforced and perpetuated notions of patriarchy.

According to Wall (1861), the painted photograph combined the best and highest qualities of both photography and art. The camera provided “truthfulness” and “faithfulness of “drawing . . . and chiaroscuro”; and the colorist, the “beauty” and “loveliness” of painting. He continued:

Unity is strength, and the beautiful can have no better *mate* than the truthful. Let the *scientific man* of the camera, and the tasteful *son* of the palette . . . combine their efforts for the production of works valuable both for fidelity to nature and for artistic merit. (3–4)

Although Wall’s idealized division of aesthetics and epistemology feels very much of its time, such formulations continue to make their way into contemporary argumentation. Matthew Isenberg’s (1989) description of mid-nineteenth-century photography performs a remarkably similar theoretical procedure:

A good operator was not merely an artisan going about his craft, but rather an artist [whose domain was composition] . . . a scientist who constantly worked to improve and perfect his process, and often a miniaturist who could breathe life into his sitters through the skill of his tinting. (13)

It is the scientist (or scientific side of an operator) that “works” to “improve and perfect” his “process.” The miniaturist, on the other hand, somehow “breathes life” into images using a skill that is considered neither work, nor a process, nor a practice that is perfected. This magical, “feminine,” “transparent” operation is couched in supra-rational, emotional, and maternal terms. And, as

discussed above within the context of the treatment of applied color within studies of daguerreotypy, sufficient historical information about colorists here is not provided.<sup>39</sup>



**Figure 2.3** Anonymous (French) (c. 1852). Stereoscopic half plate, 59 x 70 mm, overall dimensions 171 x 83 mm. Public domain.

Within this anonymous stereoscopic daguerreotype, produced in France in the early 1850s (fig. 2.3), we can again recognize social and discursive transactions that suggest the typification of essence, enactment of power, and shaping of knowledge by the relation of color to photo-indexicality.<sup>40</sup> Like Gurney’s boxer, the subject in this composition appears posed and revealed to convince viewers of her visual appeal. Also like the boxer, her cheeks might be interpreted as flush with youth and passion (or have they been rouged for us? Privately in both images we get to decide). Her hair and pose, like his, reflect a formality (stylized for us), and her body is whitened and reddened in an effort to guide attention and reading.

Within this stereoscopic image, however, tinting renders the subject’s skin unnaturally and suggestively “pink” all over (while still disguising vulgarity through possible reference to similar paintings of Venus by Titian, Velázquez, etc.). The relative evenness of her “cooked” pink flesh appears displayed for consumption, and viewers seem encouraged to determine for themselves how



**Figure 2.4** Anonymous (French) (c. 1852). Grayscale mine.

they wish to read and “use” this woman’s unnatural body. The effects of stereoscopy also work toward this effect. Its three-dimensional illusions interact with the subject’s playfully “direct” visual address to underscore an apparent permission to enter her room (her “space”) as you wish.

Alternating coloration within the portrait of the boxer, however, seems to encourage an alternating focus on color’s respective symbolisms. Through contrast, our attention, for example, might easily pass from his white chest, or his heart framed by his fists, to his red cheeks angled in three-quarter’s address toward infinity. The relative uniformity of pink applied to the female subject, however, does not encourage a balanced or rhythmic alternation (between “passion” and “intellect,” for example). This perhaps recalls historical assumptions, discussed above, of the “dualistic” constitution of masculinity, and of femininity’s lack of “interiority.”

This philosophical context enhances Batchen’s (2004, 17) observation that the stiffness of early photographs “was not softened by the addition of paint.” In fact, applied color does not serve primarily to soften, but to argue. Here, “unnatural” coloration helps to transform a subject’s body into a flat character, or artificial object. A shameless return glance also accentuates complicity in this exhibition, and suggests acceptance of this rhetorical use of color.

Reading this picture without its tint, of course, renders it less life-like (fig. 2.4). More significantly, however, it reveals a different discourse. The black-and-white daguerreotypic portrait,

absent the separate sphere and labor of coloration, suggests (among other things) the more unidirectional power relation of science (in which photography was first situated) that controls and studies its subjects. The grayscale image appears to deplete from the erotic image the complicity of its female subject, and in doing so, reveals color's ability to register this complicity and to facilitate the naturalization of an existing hierarchy. The black-and-white "oppressiveness" of science entails the possibility of revolt; complicit subjects, however, harbor no such threat.

As we perhaps imagine a woman, empowered by employment, coloring an image in which a female uses a mirror not to address herself, and thus in a sense define herself, but to consent to the "masculine" subject position of a gaze,<sup>41</sup> we experience another method by which power and knowledge can be harnessed to perpetuate an existing order. Color applied to a daguerreotypic portrait not only vivifies an image, it can naturalize (endorse by hand) the social and discursive codes enacted by a subject's pose, form, address, accoutrements, or other representative elements used to convey meaning and status within pictures.

Insofar as many of early-photography's colorists were women, who were largely unable to be photographers until the late nineteenth century, the discursive role of coloration and the gender-specific connotations of this labor could be used to reinforce women's sphere of power. The "supportive" role of added color within early photography—a form of knowledge and knowledge-forming technology initiated and controlled by men—rehearsed femininity's familiar role in patriarchy. This adds urgency to Batchen's (2004, 31) argument that "tinted photographs . . . invite us to imagine the touch of the brush that animated that surface."

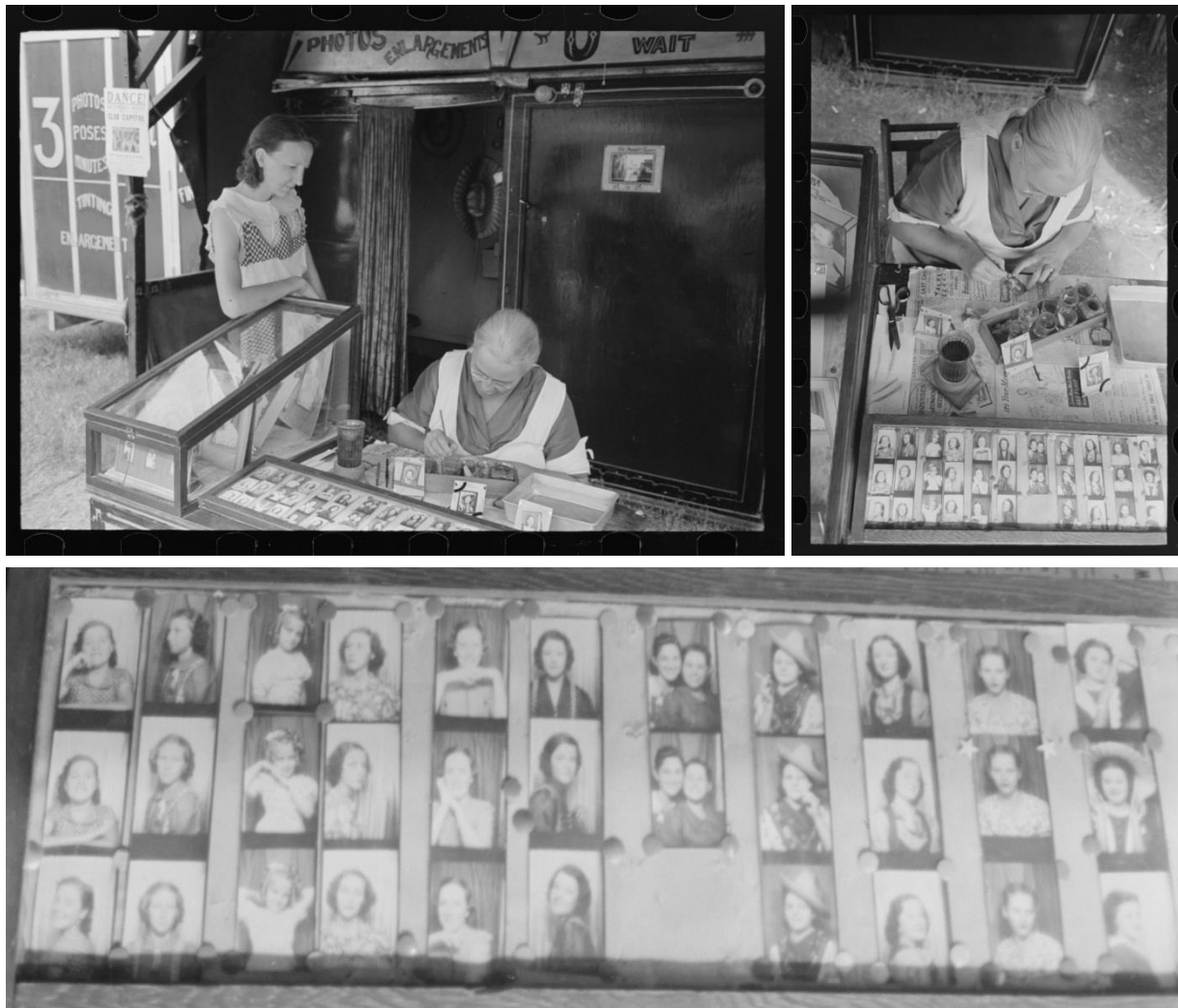
Within the context of modernity's rising industrial revolution, which distanced men from households and reduced their capacity to monitor women, self-regulating codes for women gained increased significance. By 1820, for example, notions of "true" womanhood and "the cult of domesticity," reinforced within popular magazines such as *Godey's Lady's Book* by the 1830s,

articulated women's spheres of influence, which delimited their power. Submissiveness, piety, and purity—performed through the duties restricted to the home—were not only dictated by men, but reinforced by female authors “empowered” to teach other women. This was in keeping with a longer tradition of female authorship of conduct books, such as *The Whole Duty of a Woman: or A Guide to the Female Sex* (1701), attributed only to “A Lady.” The subtitle of *The Whole Duty* suggests the reach of such books, and the extent to which theories of division between color and line/form may have resonated with other gendered cultural divisions: *From the Age of Sixteen to Sixty, &c. Being Directions, How Women of all Qualities and Conditions, Ought to Behave Themselves in the Various Circumstances of This Life, for Their Obtaining Not Only Present, but Future Happiness.*<sup>42</sup>

Contemporary with Snelling's codification of proper technique for colorists, the arguments of Catherine Esther Beecher (1846) attempted to systematize the occupation of domestic service for wives, “empowering” a separate sphere assigned to women. Within the framework of metachromatics, a section from Beecher's chapter, “Words of Comfort for a Discouraged Housekeeper,” is worth reading here in full. To women in 1846 she explained:

You are training young minds whose plastic texture will receive and retain every impression you make, who will imitate your feelings, tastes, habits, and opinions, and who will transmit what they receive from you to the next generation, and then to the next, until a whole nation will have received its character and destiny from your hands! No imperial queen ever stood in a more sublime and responsible position than you now occupy . . . Remember, then, you have a Father in heaven, who sympathizes in all your cares, pities your griefs, makes allowances for your defects, and is endeavoring by trials, as well as by blessings, to fit you for the right fulfillment of your high and holy calling. (279–80)

The scientist, the Father, the photographer, the manual writer, line/form itself, etc. align as a discourse capable of imposing knowledge and enacting power by defining, reinforcing, and



**Figure 2.5** *Top*: Russell Lee, *Wife of Traveling Photographer Tinting Small Portraits, National Rice Festival, Crowley, Louisiana* (October, 1938). Black-and-white print from 35 mm nitrate negative. Courtesy of Library of Congress: *Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black-and-White Negatives*.

**Figure 2.6** *Bottom*: Detail by author.

perpetuating systems whose boundaries not only maintain hierarchies, but provide spaces that foster hegemonic complicity and reinforcement. As the composite status of photography within the age of composite pictures is better historicized, the functions, socio-economic relations, and symbolic valences involved in its coloration become more fully understood. The politics of this coloration also become foregrounded as part of a broader network of power relations, bearing implications.

## Conclusion

Chromatic encoding and class aspirations embodied in conspicuous consumption (or simply its depiction), for example, become a locus of critical intersection during the 1850s and 1860s in the US when color in portraits appears to be at its brightest. The relation of color to gender within the concomitant rise of the Arts & Crafts movement, which popularized the notion of “home” as expressive of individuality, also becomes increasingly salient. In recognizing coloration as a symbolic process that also functioned to help “naturalize” the empiricism of daguerreotypy by “feminizing” it, color’s ability to reinscribe feminization itself more broadly in the service of patriarchy suggests an additional area requiring further research. Leach’s (1993, 9) investigation of modernity’s “commercial aesthetic,” in which “color . . . and light” served as the fundamental “visual materials of desire,” suggests the intersection of consumerism, gender, coloration, and its political implications.

The gendered “harmony” of chromatic symbolism and photographic iconicity, which underpinned the symbolic economy of composite photography, was to be further developed within the late-nineteenth century by the composite pictures of cinema. The gendering of color labor within early cinema, and within other industries throughout the twentieth century (and even today) (figs. 2.5–2.6), reflects a legacy of problematic constructions of femininity and association.<sup>43</sup> With this in mind, we are left to further investigate the chromatic “naturalization” or reification of other “objects” and discursive systems. For example, Ruskin’s ([1857] 1865, 22) (favorable) association of color with the “*innocence of the eye*” and “childish perception,” Spengler’s ([1918] 1926, 246) categorization of “the crowd, children, women, and savages” according to their attraction to intense color—color, which for Jung ([1934] 1981, 294), also attracted the unconscious, for Nordau (1895), could hasten the “degeneration” of culture, or for advertisement today (e.g., AT&T GoPhone, 2012), can still warn of feminine irrationality, suggest color’s enduring ability to be drawn into discursive matrices, and suggest critical work to be done.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Narrativity and The (Added) Color Problem in Early Cinema

From 1895–1930 (in particular 1908–1921) it is estimated that 85% of all film is non-black-and-white. —Giovanna Fossati (1996, 12)<sup>44</sup>

[After watching archived colored nitrate prints for over five years] . . . I could find no recipe, no hidden theory, no codes that applied to all the films I saw. This was very disturbing because we're always looking for logic, for codes, but I simply couldn't find any. —Peter Delpout (1996, 23)

Non-photographic color in silent cinema was seldom mentioned in contemporary film reviews, and when color was mentioned, it was seldom discussed beyond general descriptions like “pretty,” “true,” “effective,” and other generalizations. —Eirik Hanssen (2006, 13)

Responding to questions regarding the readability of color in cinema during its first decades, scholars within the last decade-and-a-half have grown increasingly attentive to the problematics of color within cinematic expression, especially as it pertains to narrative. Faced with objects of study and methodologies that have been newly destabilized by missing and perhaps irrecoverable chromatic effects lost in the transitory aniline dyes of early colored films; the possible infidelity (or omission) of color in test prints long held to be reliable “copies” of film “originals”; and challenges to aesthetic restoration such as the obsolescence of early nitrate film stock and the greater light intensity of early projection apparatuses, film scholars have begun to work through many of the reconfigurations that the color problem poses.<sup>45</sup>

As the above excerpts taken together suggest, the decoding of color in early cinema is a challenge for a variety of reasons. Usai (2000) continues:

Much as we know that a certain color once existed in a silent film, we must also acknowledge that it is now impossible to experience its actual rendering on the screen. As time goes by, the entity slowly mutates into an imaginary object, a creation of the mind. We collect the few surviving fragments, the apparatus, the chemical formulas, the memoirs of the technicians who designed the systems, the opinions of those who saw them at work. (40)

In order to avoid what Usai fears might be the “empty exercise” or “false consciousness”

of extracting meaning from corrupt or unstable prints, not to mention that often different cuts and chromatic treatments of the same film exist, Uricchio (1995, 268) in his study of Griffith's *The Lonedale Operator* (1911), posits a heuristic whereby the instability of early color may be circumvented “by focusing on the discourse *about* color”; that is, on “evidence regarding its reception and promotion.”

As Hanssen (2006, 13) above explains, however, accounts of color's meaning—and the meanings of individual colors—within early cinema thus far have been relatively difficult to locate.<sup>46</sup> This is true not only of cinema before its institutional expansion during the “nickelodeon boom” in the US (1905–1909),<sup>47</sup> but even, as Patalas (1996, 21) has noted, during applied color's “final decade” [in the 1920s] during which it is still “rare to find any reflections on tinting and toning.”<sup>48</sup> According to Patalas, even “in the reviews of the twenties color is rarely mentioned at all.”

Gunning (1995) offers a point of departure that helps to address this bind. His intervention also perhaps suggests an area for clarification and elaboration within the context of metachromatics.

### **Color as Attraction**

As we watch a film, the continuous act of recognition in which we are involved is like a strip of memory unrolling beneath the image of the film itself, to form the invisible underlayer of an implicit double exposure. —Maya Deren (1960, 153–54)

Color within films produced during cinema's first decades, irrespective of coloration process (for the most part), stands in stark relief from the line/form of the black-and-white media to which it was added (see figs. 3.7–3.8, discussed more below). As Gunning (1995, 250) explains, color “appears as something superadded to the more dominant form of reproduction, an extra-sensual intensity which draws itself significance at least in part from its difference to black and white.” He contextualizes this observation with other additions of color to black-and-white print media that he locates within popular culture during the last half of the nineteenth century in the US (in comics, pulps, etc.). From these intertexts, he shows that such color mostly “announced sensational content”

and “endow[ed] . . . surplus to . . . use value” rather than adding in any restrictive metaphorical sense to narrative content (252). Color serves as a loose sign, in part of defiance, which “existed in opposition to black and white” (253). For Gunning, these conditions then absorb color into a broader typology within cinema referred to as the “pure attraction,” which in many respects reflects distinctions born by historical designations of “description.”

Briefly summarized, within the cinematic “attraction,” display or “showing” takes precedence over diegetic “telling,” temporal progression, and “narrative absorption” (Gunning 1986).<sup>49</sup> According to this idea, “the desire to display may *interact* with the desire to tell a story” but the two remain ontologically separate (Gunning [1993] 2004, 43, emphasis mine). As “pure presence,” “pure curiosity,” and “pure instance” (48), a strict construction of Gunning’s attraction appears to oppose the implicit “impurity” of narrative; an opposition that recalls, within the context of narrative/description theory, the “need to define ‘the other’ of narrative” and “to assign the representation of objects to a distinct mode of writing” shaped by “theoretical interests” (Ronen 1997, 283–84). Attention to color given this formulation suggests perhaps a problematic alignment that we might articulate this way:

color/formlessness/sensuality/purity/non-narrative showing

vs.

black and white/line and form/non-sensuality/impurity/narrative telling

Gunning certainly recognizes that color, within early cinema and its larger cultural contexts, “communicates” to audiences. He also allows that in one sense the cinematic attraction does in fact “speak,” but is mostly limited to: “here it is, look at it!” ([1993] 2004, 44). This apparent conceptual dissonance, which seems to diminish from the attraction, and thus color, the politically powerful

qualities of legibility, story, voice, etc. through a celebration of the purity and sensuality of display, recalls by now a fraught division.

This model of the attraction, reinforced by contemporary revisions and extensions, has been said, for example, to “liberate the analysis of film from the hegemony of narratology, . . . [and] enable us to focus . . . on *the event* of appearing as itself as a legitimate aesthetic category” (Røssaak 2006, 322, emphasis mine). As is evident within other chromatic contexts, however, this articulation invokes problematic terms familiar to the chromophobic/philic dilemma. Røssaak’s position against (classical) “narratology” and thus narrative (as if monolithic) also moves us closer to a central difficulty that is traceable to notions derived from classical narrative theory.

Classical narrative theory generally reduces narrative to a series of causally- and logically-related events able to be organized into a plot (Prince 1973, 183).<sup>50</sup> According to this theory, the dynamics and distribution of these events, and their states, also generally must follow the pattern of equilibrium, disequilibrium, and equilibrium restored. This determination of narrative, essentialized by a restrictive conceptualization of “event,” obtains even within many recent postclassical revisions.<sup>51</sup>

Elements said to be “outside” of the events of narrative, such as description construed as material inassimilable by plot, are generally considered gaps or pauses that “interrupt the *line* of fabula” (Bal 1997, 37, emphasis mine). (Fabula can be understood as the essential constituents of narrative reassembled by readers/audiences from the *sjuzet*: those constituents assembled by the text in any order.) Elements extraneous to this “line,” while often considered important to the conveyance of plot or aspects of its motivation, by this understanding are suppressed or marginalized as adjunctive, “supportive” (Hopper 1979, 216), or “relief-giving” (Wolf 2007, 56): an ontological function also historically attributed to color. It recalls, for example, a general notion of color as “pure mood” relieving “intellect” (Benjamin’s ([1914–15] 1996, 51); or, specific to photo-

The gas lamps had just been lit and the two great **red** furniture vans with impossible landscapes on their sides rolled and plunged slowly along the street. Each was drawn by four horses, and each almost touched the roaring elevated road above. They were on the uptown track of the surface road — indeed the street was so narrow that they must be on one track or the other.

They tossed and pitched and proceeded slowly, and a horse car with a **red** light came up behind. The car was **red**, and the bullseye light was **red** and the driver's hair was **red**. He blew his whistle shrilly and slapped the horse's lines impatiently. Then he whistled again. Then he pounded on the **red** dash board with his car-hook till the **red** light trembled. Then a car with a **green** light crept up behind the car with the **red** light; and the **green** driver blew his whistle and pounded on his dash board; and the conductor of the **red** car seized his strap from his position on the rear platform and rung such a rattling tattoo on the gong over the **red** driver's head that the **red** driver became frantic and stood up on his toes and puffed out his cheeks as if he were playing the trombone in a German street-band and blew his whistle till an imaginative person could see slivers flying from it, and pounded his **red** dash board till the metal was dented in and the car-hook was bent. And just as the driver of a newly-come car with a **blue** light began to blow his whistle and pound his dash board and the **green** conductor began to ring his bell like a demon which drove the **green** driver mad and made him rise up and blow and pound as no man ever blew and pounded before, which made the **red** conductor lose the last vestige of control of himself and caused him to bounce up and down on his bell strap as he grasped it with both hands in a wild, maniacal dance, which of course served to drive uncertain Reason from her tottering throne in the **red** driver, who dropped his whistle and his hook and began to yell, and ki-yi, and whoop harder than the worst personal devil encountered by the sternest of Scotch Presbyterians ever yelled and ki-yied and whooped on the darkest night after the good man had drunk the most hot Scotch whiskey; just then the left-hand forward wheel on the rear van fell off and the axle went down. The van gave a mighty lurch and then swayed

**Figure 3.0** Anonymous [Stephen Crane],  
“Travels in New York / The Broken-Down  
Van” (1892) (Hagemann 1966, 3–4).  
Coloration mine.

“local color literature”—color’s marginalization according to the schema of classical narrative theory cannot effectively account for the experiential “event” of the explicit eruption and interaction of color within the “achromatic” or tacitly-colored spaces of diegesis and discourse, nor the “narrativity” that might accompany its processing. Chromatic addition, in this case, through a profusion of color words, or what H. G. Wells (1900) called “chromatic splashes” in Crane’s writing, not only serves to adjectivize or qualify proximal existents (characters and setting) through which actions of plot might be motivated.<sup>52</sup>

cinematic composites, Talbot’s ([1912] 1970, 299) explanation of “a common practice to *relieve* the monotonous black-and-white by the introduction of colouring effects” (italics mine).

As Lukács ([1936] 1970, 131) warned (with chromatic flourish), when description, construed as supplement, relief, etc. becomes autonomous from the line/form of plot, “the peripheral begins to bloom everywhere.” Within the context of metachromatics, this chromatically-charged warning, and narrative “line” construed in opposition to supplemental description, again raises red flags.

As we can see, for example, within a section of text from Stephen Crane’s city sketch “Travels in New York” (fig. 3.0)—part of the realist genre of

As a separate register that oscillates between embodied descriptor and self-referencing material, color on some level resists incorporation and determination by the line/form of existents and plot, and asserts itself as “facture” and within constellations of meaning awaiting narrativization. Such color, as Melville (1997, 45) explains within the context of the visual arts, but which can be applied more broadly, “is not only contained [within painting],” but can “assign frames” [of meaning, experience, etc.] even while “conceal[ing] itself within this assignment.” The relation of these frames of meaning to concepts of narrative and description, and their inflection of the discourse of color – line/form, is of central concern to metachromatic investigation.

### **Description versus Narrative**

What the people want and admire are not the dry bones or the *syntax* of art, but . . . the bloom and brilliancy of nature . . . —Louis Prang (1867, 438, italics mine)

The concept of explicit and tacit description, articulated by Chatman (1990), offers here a useful framework for understanding relations between colored and non-colored space, description and narrative, and color – line/form. Challenging classical assumptions that delineate distinct boundaries between description and narrative, Genette ([1966] 1982, 137), Riffaterre (1986, 281), and Copley (1986, 397) have argued that such clear a distinction cannot be made. For these theorists and others, any narrative is difficult to imagine without the co-presence of a descriptive element.

As Chatman (1990, 38) explains within the narratological contexts of film and literature studies, because “even the name of a person or object is in some sense descriptive . . . most sentences contain tacit descripta” (the same is true for the appearance of anything on film). Such sentences and films, which only “tacitly” describe, “direct our primary attention to something else—in the case of Narrative, to the story events; the properties of characters, objects, or ideas are communicated secondarily.” Sentences and films that “explicitly” describe, on the other hand, “are cast so as to focus on or even assert the properties of whatever they describe.”

A similar argument can be made regarding instances of tacit and explicit coloration within both verbal and cinematic description, as well as the perceptual saliency of such coloration especially during the era in which composite photo-cinematic media served as a culturally prevalent aesthetic model, and when commentary such as Prang's (above) found apt comparison between the line/form of colorless representations of art and "syntax" lacking (chromatic) "bloom" and "brilliance."<sup>53</sup> Through the explicit assertion of chromatic properties, color words, as well as conspicuous additions of colored paint or dye, are able to draw primary attention to "whatever" they describe. Following Wittgenstein ([1950–51] 1970) (discussed below), this description includes the meta-narratives of color schemas involved in the (linguistic) translation of color experience, as well as color's self-reflexivity.

Against the achromatic "ground" of black-and-white photo-cinematic pictures, for example, color applied to a face, to a dress, to an explosion, etc. (figs. 3.7–3.8) always bears a measure of resistance to the line/ form of photo-indexical realism (or realistic effects) (Barthes [1968] 1986) and its socio-cultural associations. Color vacillates between its function as an embodied descriptor within a diegesis, and a self-referencing material able to resist incorporation by the photo-indexical medium—a quality that recalls a differentiation made by Katz (1935, 7–8) between disembodied "film color," and "surface color" that appears unified with a base. This experience of coupling and uncoupling, resistance and unification, underscores color's differential status within an ambivalent signifying context, a consequence of which, as Rood ([1879] 1973, 310) explained, can remind viewers of the primary "dullness" of the monochrome ground that color penetrates (for him, a reason to avoid additions of color all together, which can "let people down"). Melville (1997, 45), writing on painting and deconstructivism a century later, expresses a similar conviction: Where color "breaks free," it "awakens questions of frame and support."

As Rood's comment suggests, the experience of composite media requires processing by readers/viewers. This processing entails the mediation of aesthetic theory, notions of realism and fantasy, conceptions of narrative, description, and genre, socio-cultural valuations and constructions of identity, etc. that inform patterns of reception. Within the nomenclature of behavioral and brain science, such cultural beliefs (as part of linguistic background, etc.) can be understood to impinge upon the very categorizations of color itself, with "trivial" constraints difficult to locate.<sup>54</sup> As we have seen, the discursive reinscription of color's historical positioning opposite line/form, and broader socio-cultural meanings that it can incorporate, perpetuate, or challenge, factor into this matrix of convention.

Wittgenstein's *Remarks on Colour* ([1950–51] 1970) articulates awareness of a similar vacillation in his discussion of color words themselves. As Wittgenstein explains, the grammars of ordinary "language games," which help to structure dominant methods of thinking and linguistic expression, tend to describe the colors of objects in the world based on prevailing systems of color (such as geometric color wheels, etc.).<sup>55</sup> These idealized structures fail to represent color's perceived embodiment and contextualization within everyday experience (a problem addressed earlier by Goethe and others). As a result, color language most often belies chromatic complexity and ascribes colors to things not as we actually experience them, but heuristically, in limited, two dimensional, determinate, monochrome "patches." Color words, in addition to more experiential or subjective evocations, also invoke idealized and self-reflexive correspondences, such as "here is yellow" (flat, prismatic, "pure")—which regimes of representation (through qualification, etc.) repress or make conspicuous to different degrees. Color words, like flat additions of paint to photo-indexical media, thus vacillate between descriptors within a diegesis able to be embodied, and schematic self-referential materials.

The explicit “application” of color to an achromatic (or tacitly-colored) and resistant “ground” also promotes the invocation of coloration as a separate discourse, and the narratives, or micro-events, and micro-stories (to be discussed below) associated with its labor. Tacit coloration, on the other hand, might be understood as denoting only the implied presence of color within iterations of line/form whose constitutions may entail or suggest it. For example, just as photo-cinematic media may tacitly signify the brown of a tree that it represents in black-and-white, so may “tree” tacitly implicate brownness within an utterance.

Here it is important to note that while theorists, such as Genette ([1966] 1982, 133), have found it difficult to imagine a narrative text free of descriptive elements, a “purely” descriptive text, one “outside any event and . . . temporal dimension” of narrative has been construed as possible. As discussed above, this conviction also obtains within the context of cinematic “attractions,” whose theorization of display and color as part of that display it recalls. It similarly prevails even within contemporary approaches to narrative theory that posit the relation of narrative to description as a matter of degree. For example, Wolf’s (2007, 15) approach is typical in its articulation of description as a text type able to “inform us about the existence of something and its specific appearance and quality” without significant consideration of the tacit narratives (and arguments) that subtend any orientation to “existence,” “appearance,” and “quality.”

While it makes sense to recognize a text, or a segment of a text, or a genre of film as devoted by degree to explicit description or display—understood as the ascription of qualities to objects, things, etc. and their presentation—any description or display reinscribes (by tacit argumentation) the values and narratives that constitute a given orientation to representation. Such reinscription seems more productively categorized not as the “subdominance” (Wolf 2007) of argumentation within a text, but rather as the projection of normativity and hegemony the dominance of whose argumentation remains “unnarrated” (as matter of course). Similarly, narrative seems better

articulated in terms of tacit and explicit modalities, which promote more equal attention to narrated and “unnarrated” narratives, as well as the meta-narratives and mediating discourses that inform their “tellability.”

### **Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology**

Mary E. Wilkins Freeman’s chromatically-conspicuous short story “A New England Nun,” also part of the “local color” genre of literature like Crane’s “Travels,” provides another example for consideration (fig. 3.4). At its conclusion, the unqualified (flat) explicit descriptor “yellow” erupts into an achromatic (or tacitly-colored) “space” of diegesis and discourse: space understood here respective to the framing boundaries of the page, and its materiality.<sup>56</sup> While the demarcation of page of course does not necessarily limit the boundaries of space within a story world, the constitution of a page influences the pacing and contextualization of detail, action, etc. according to which a story world develops, which in turn shapes the experience of its “revelation” or concretization.

In this case, the appearance on the page of the single color word “yellow” affects a sense of chromatic/achromatic contrast, an opposition that slips with that of color – line/form much in the same way that the appearance of multiple proximal color words within “Travels” suggest effects derived from their localized constellation in contrast to “non-colored” line/form. The invocation of divisions between color and line/form within “local color” literature also invokes “local color” as a (lower) genre (allied with genre painting) historically available to women writers (Donovan 1983), and thus associated with female spheres of expertise and concern, such as, historically, color and coloration. Coloration thus constitutes a practice that might be understood historically as a type of “micro-event” suggestive of any number of “micro-storie” invoked by its application.

As Ankersmit (2005, 327–28) explains, “micro-storie” (plural, from the Italian, “storia”) consist of apparently insignificant historical events, which, however, might exemplify “essential tensions, frictions, or conflicts of a period.” Typically, micro-storie are considered minor, aberrant

events. Here, however, the concept of micro-storia can be adapted to encompass the aberrance of explicit and self-reflexive chromatic appearance, the relative historical insignificance of color labor(ers), and color's broader subordination to line/form. Inasmuch as classic, as well as revised definitions of "event" and "event-types" designate a "time- and place-specific transition from source state to target state" (Herman 2005) necessary for "narrativity" to obtain, "micro-events" might more broadly constitute changes in state without regard for restrictions of time and place. Events (generally construed), or the event-type "moves" (Ryan 1991), also typically imply high-priority, high-risk, and conflict-solving actions considered central to a narrative (Ryan 1991).

Micro-events, however, and the micro-storie that they invoke within or beyond the diegesis, might designate changes in state more easily overlooked because of their apparent low-priority, low-risk, habituality, or lack of centrality to plot. The micro-eventhood of coloration, of color's relation to the line/form, "ground," or existents that it modifies, of its relation to other colors, to aesthetic notions of harmony and discord, to conventions of genre, constructions of realism, etc.—a type of eventhood in need of further attention and elaboration—suggests itself as central to metachromatic analysis. Whereas theories of narrative, such as Lopes (1995, 22), would argue that attention to description on a such a micro- (or sentence-) level "can only be of interest as it relates to overall recurrent patterns," such a perspective defers to naturalized patterns of reception, which within the context of art or imaginative literature, apply this consideration arbitrarily. Just as a reader might choose to pass quickly through a description so as to focus on events of plot, another reader might prioritize instead micro-events of description and skip events of plot altogether.

The "sudden" appearance of explicit coloration at the end of "A New England Nun" (fig. 3.4), for example, whose degree of perceptual saliency relates inversely to the absence of explicit color within the surrounding space of the page, invites any number of questions. These involve metonymic relations between the explicitly-colored object, the architecture of the room,

geography of the scene, its characters, other objects, and their (a)chromatic dispositions according to degree of narration and focalization; the relevance of color to story on an explanatory and symbolic level (Genette [1966] 1982) (why might this yellow—defined in part according to which chromatic measures of hue, brightness and saturation, understood in conjunction with which determinative or “metameric” atmospheric conditions of the diegesis, such as lighting—be applied to this object, at this point in the discourse, by this narratorial consciousness, and does it matter?);<sup>57</sup> medial, meta-medial, and narratorial considerations, associations, and possibilities (through which “medium” is this scene pictured or picturable? How does yellow “interact” with surrounding colors and non-colors, and according to which theories of harmony, discord, mixing, philosophies of description [Riffaterre 1986, 281] etc., irrespective of the line/form of existents that color qualifies but exceeds as an aspect of visual phenomena?) Which narrative agency might be suggested or responsible for this addition of color? That is, can the sudden and selective addition of color constitute a form of metaleptic intrusion (Genette 1980, 234–37) into the story world by way of its association with a distinct sphere of influence or “labor” that might implicate a separate category, or dialogic “voice” (Bakhtin 1981), of extradiegetic narration? How might this chromatic voice, enfolded into “description,” relate to other determinations of narration and narrative?<sup>58</sup>

Within “A New England Nun,” the introduction of yellow into an otherwise (at most) tacitly-colored proximal space accords thematically with the alarm raised by the yellow bird who senses the intrusive approach of Joe Dagget, the estranged fiancée of the chromatically-eccentric protagonist Louisa Ellis. For ambiguous reasons, Ellis prefers not to marry Joe, or apparently any man, despite her advancing years for which she gives no consideration (suspicious within nineteenth-century culture). Within this story, considered a “masterpiece of ambiguity” based on various possible readings of its protagonist’s buried sexuality, “rejection of life,” obsessive artistic disposition, prioritization of womanly “order” (Reichardt 1992, 91), etc., coding this preference in

**In about half an hour Joe Dagget came. She heard his heavy step on the walk, and rose and took off her pink-and-white apron. Under that was still another—white linen with a little cambric edging on the bottom ; that was Louisa’s company apron. She never wore it without her calico sewing apron over it unless she had a guest. She had barely folded the pink and white one with methodical haste and laid it in a table-drawer when the door opened and Joe Dagget entered.**

**Figure 3.1** Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, “A New England Nun” (1891, 3). Coloration mine.

part is Louisa’s queer relation to color, and color’s relation to heteronormative men (Joe), male violations of “space” (fig. 3.1), and the shared unease of her yellow “bird”: a word also used historically to designate “maiden” or “bride” (OED), which reinforces gendered chromatic associations.

Throughout the story, instances of explicit coloration appear motivated by the idiosyncratic Ellis, who is presented as fastidious in her chromatic orientation despite her solitude (her display of color is calculated, but not to attract men or fulfill social expectation). For example, to pick currants [tacitly red?] she wears a green apron, green ribbon, and carries a blue bowl—colors that also reflect the so-called additive primaries (red, green, blue) from which, according to a theory popular since the discoveries of Maxwell in the 1850s, all other colors can be derived. The nature of her selectiveness, however, remains ambiguous. Readers are not provided with explicit psychological insight into the rules that govern her chromatic systematicity, nor any categorized expressions of specific aesthetic pleasure.

Her “mysterious” chromatic organization instead appears to be simply an aspect of a different but quite “natural” order, something that she experiences as matter of course rather than attributable to aesthetic deliberation. This distinguishes her chromatic sensibility from other literary “bachelors” of the period, such as Des Esseintes of Huysmans’s *À rebours* (1884), whose aesthetic “over-attention” more thematically reflects the performance of decadence in revolt “against nature.” Within “A New England Nun,” Ellis’s private attention to “superfluous” chromatic detail seems



**Figure 3.2** Video still from Thomas Edison and Edwin Porter, *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) (Kino 2002). Hand coloration, anonymous.

Louisa drank the milk and crept into the sitting-room. It was warm and close there, so she opened the front door and sat down on the step. The twilight was deep, but there was a clear yellow glow in the west. One great star had come out in the midst of it. A dewy coolness was spreading over everything. The air was full of bird calls and children's voices. Now and then there was a shout of laughter. Louisa leaned her head against the door-post.

16

## A NEW ENGLAND NUN.

"Well, I never shrank, Louisa," said Dagget. "I'm going to be honest enough to say that I think maybe it's better this way; but if you'd wanted to keep on, I'd have stuck to you till my dying day. I hope you know that."

"Yes, I do," said she.

That night she and Joe parted more tenderly than they had done for a long time. Standing in the door, holding each other's hands, a last great wave of regretful memory swept over them.

"Well, this ain't the way we've thought it was all going to end, is it, Louisa?" said Joe.

She shook her head. There was a little quiver on her placid face.

"You let me know if there's ever anything I can do for you," said he. "I ain't ever going to forget you, Louisa." Then he kissed her, and went down the path.

Louisa, all alone by herself that night, wept a little, she hardly knew why; but the next morning, on waking, she felt like a queen who, after fearing lest her domain be wrested away from her, sees it firmly insured in her possession.

Now the tall weeds and grasses might cluster around Cæsar's little hermit hut, the snow might fall on its roof year in and year out, but he never would go on a rampage through the unguarded village. Now the little canary might turn itself into a peaceful yellow ball night after night, and have no need to wake and flutter with wild terror against its bars. Louisa could sew linen seams, and distil roses, and dust and polish and fold away in lavender, as long as she listed. That afternoon she sat with her needle-work at the window, and felt fairly steeped in peace. Lily Dyer, tall and erect and blooming, went past; but she felt no

**Figure 3.3** Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, "Louisa" (1891, 406). Coloration mine.

**Figure 3.4** Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, "A New England Nun" (1891, 16). Coloration mine.

instead counterpoised only to heteronormative expectation, irreducible, for example, to theological devotion, despite the title of the story, which serves more as generic cover.

The gendered addition of yellow and the answered call of "birds" found at the end of "A New England Nun" also can be found within with another story by Freeman whose female protagonist (of the same first name) similarly demonstrates ambiguous sexual orientation. The explicit use of "yellow" within "Louisa" (1891) also helps to demarcate a "safe" space from heteronormative obligation, especially when the two stories are considered together (shared thematic concerns and character names reinforce such comparison) (figs. 3.3–3.4).<sup>59</sup> In both stories, plot

resolution might be understood as involving the successful defense of female “spaces” from heteronormative male intrusions (sexual connotations accompany this dynamic, with the “long-featured and long-necked” qualities of Louisa Britton’s suitor Jonathan being especially disagreeable to her). Both resolutions also feature instances of explicit coloration, as part of their metaphorization, which outstrip any adjectival reduction to the qualification of line/form. A blissful “yellow glow” and “peaceful yellow ball” (figs. 3.3–3.4) (respectively) characterize the relief experienced upon the preservation of these female-determined orders and spaces (architectural, and implicitly, physical).

As demonstrated above, such associations of color with issues of gender and sexuality, reinforced by their representation opposite iterations of line/form, also might be contextualized more broadly with composite media found throughout this period. Within *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) (fig. 3.2) by Edison and Porter, for example, the explicit and sudden addition of yellow pigment to a female dancing within a saloon also vibrantly distinguishes her for reception. Her enthusiasm for the similarly sudden appearance of a “yellow” report, issued from the pistol of a male with whom she dances, reinforces their chromatically-encoded likeness.

Beyond yellow’s contribution to any sense of added mimetic illusionism within the scene, which to some extent its selective use and exteriority to the photo-cinematic medium undermines, yellow here characterizes a wild time, which conflates (complicit) female sexual allure, glamorized danger, and an explosive release (fig. 3.2). Distinct from the line/form of photo-cinematic indexicality, yellow also promotes the “switching effect” familiar to the reception of composite pictures by which the boundaries of realism and fantasy alternate and slip. Through suspension of disbelief, yellow both qualifies the line/form of the diegetic world, which it “covers,” while retaining its separate register as self-referencing artifice and ambiguous symbol able to accommodate any number of semantic projections.<sup>60</sup>

Building on early systematic approaches to description (such as Lopes [1995]), including theoretical extensions of the concepts of narrative and description beyond (exclusively) verbal media (such as Chatman [1978 and 1990]), recent narrative theory has offered elaborate typologies and poetics of description—as well as attention to its range of functions and sources of narrative motivation—which help to address such intermedial references and experiences. Nünning’s (2007, 110–11) analytical framework for description, which articulates levels of inquiry that allow for “intratextual and intertextual/intermedial” aspects of description, as well as “degree of self-reflexivity,” systematically underscores a valuable area of development common to most postclassical approaches to description.<sup>61</sup>

Contemporary analyses of description involving self-reflexive metanarrative commentary, as well as intermediality, however, often are localized to genres of avant-garde or postmodern fiction, such as those undertaken by the recent valuable “unnatural narratologies” of Brian Richardson and the Hamburg narratologists.<sup>62</sup> Or, they have been restricted to comparative analyses of artifacts bearing related content, such as those discussed above (adaptations of novels, paintings, poems, etc). Within this context, the topic of remediation: “the process by which media absorb each other as they evolve” (Petho 2011, 1), has been given less attention. Pragmatic assumptions underpinning contemporary iterations of transmedial narrative theory—informed by cognitive approaches to narrativity and story worlds—in part seem to account for this disparity.

According to dominant cognitive approaches, formulated through the influential work of theorists such as Herman (2011; 2002) and Ryan (2005b; 1991), and the “natural” narratology of Fludernik (1996), narratives generally are understood as projections of “possible worlds” derived inherently from readers’ knowledge of actual worlds that they inhabit. Ryan (1991, 51), for example, explains this pragmatic/semantic interaction through a “principle of minimal departure” by which readers make “*only* the adjustments” to real-world projections as “dictated by the text” (*italics mine*).

Questions regarding the virtual *medium* or *media* of which a story world might be constituted during the process of reading of visual experience, however, appear to factor less into the pragmatics of this scenario; unless a narrative in some way directs or cues readers to concretize a story world through, for example, the elements of painting (by way, perhaps, of ekphrasis), the possible worlds visualized by readers are assumed to take the apriori form of a more-or-less transparent or unmediated version of “reality.”

Based on “extra”-textual generic and aesthetic conventions, dominant forms of visual culture, the decisions of readers or what Gombrich ([1960] 1977) called “the beholder’s share,” etc., story worlds however might be constituted by any number and combination of media (such as drama, painting, photography, cinema, etc.), which may not be explicitly triggered by a text.<sup>63</sup> Clinical approaches to the study of visualization and reader response suggest, for example, that socio-cultural situation is significantly determinative of both the nature and likelihood of visualization during reading.<sup>64</sup> By way of Horace’s ([c.40–9 BCE] 1991) famous *ut picture poesis*, or nineteenth-century arguments linking realist literature to photography or painting, photography to painting, and cinema to literature, readers during this era, for example, were encouraged to experience or “enact” (Collins 1991) verbal pictures and narratives according to a variety of medial options, including paintings, monochrome (moving) photographs, or composites.<sup>65</sup> Readers also, of course, could choose to uphold practices based on notions of medium-specificity. The experience of (moving) photography also was influenced by such medial options, comparisons, and debates over their restriction.

Within this context, writers, painters, photographers, and early film makers also can be understood as attempting to reinforce specifically-mediated experiences of story worlds through various semiotic effects. While cognitive and “natural” models of narrative theory account for cultural dimensions that may inform these aspects of production and reception, a more media-conscious narratology might allow for further reconstructions of historical modes of visualization

(or non-visualization), and better account for the always emergent dimensions of reading/viewing, which recourse to story worlds as unmediated may overlook or render as aberrant.

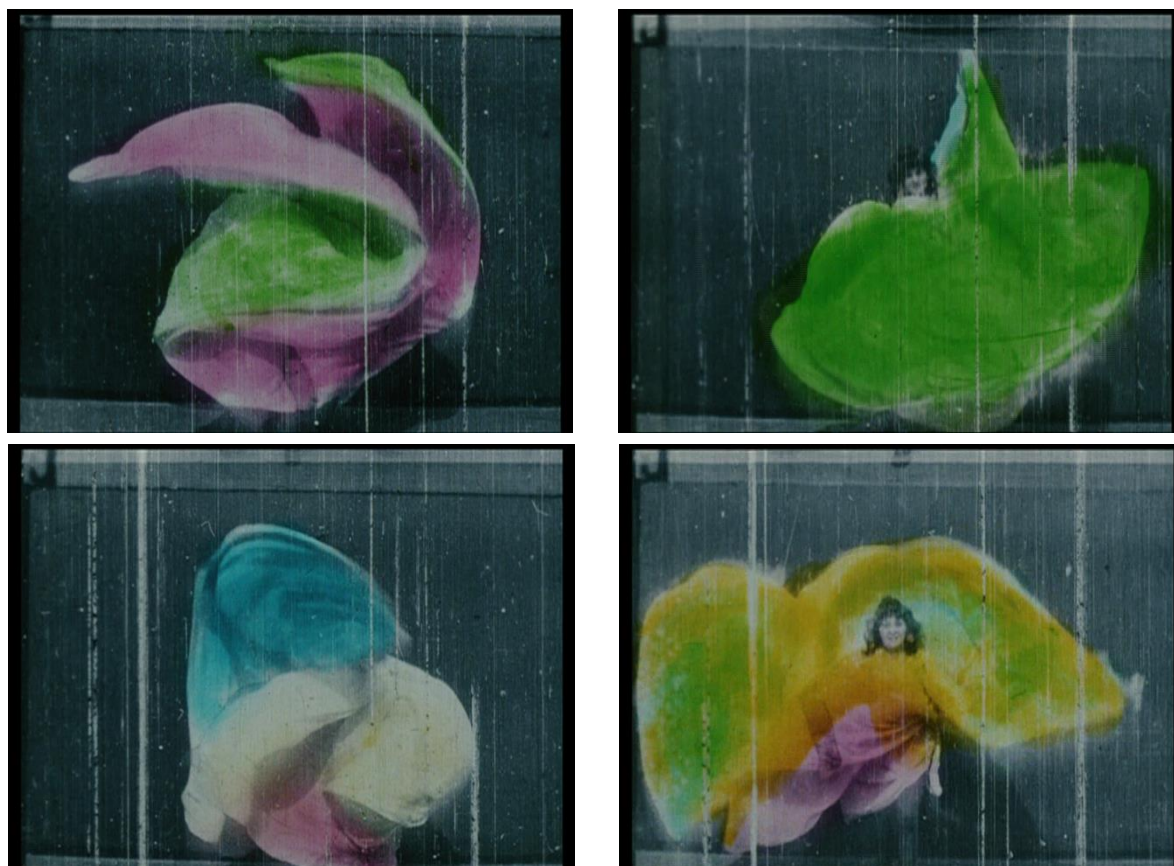
By the mid-1890s, for example, the mediated “truth” value of painting, capable of distilling essence, still rivaled photography, early cinema, and “reality itself” for “realistic” primacy—factors that should be taken into consideration within a media-conscious narratology. The novel’s uncertain cultural status, which led naturalists, realists, veritists, and impressionists such as Émile Zola (1893), William Dean Howells ([1892] 1959), Henry James ([1884] 1899), Hamlin Garland ([1894] 1960) (respectively) and others to assert differing theoretical alignments between the novel and other forms of “realistic” representation—such as photography and painting—also underscored the uncertain ontology of verbal pictures/picturing during this era. Zola (1893, 7), for example, argued that the naturalist writer should be like a “photographer” who records facts and then “interprets” “phenomena”; James (1884, 378) expressed the “analogy between the art of the painter and the art of the novelist” as “complete”; Howells (1892, 11) suggested that the realist should be “more photographic than painterly”; and Garland (1884, 104), in his veritism often aligned with impressionism, advocated for a more contextual realism inflected by the “perceptive power of the human eye”—an ethos often also attributed to Crane and his use of color words throughout his fiction and non-fiction.

Recent transmedial approaches to narrativity, which arguably might best serve to articulate these medial possibilities, also seem to reflect limitations based on similar pragmatic assumptions grounded in cognitive theory. Wolf’s (2011) useful synthesis and refinement of recent models, for example, argues for “a transmedial, cognitive and prototypical reconceptualization of narrativity and the use of a flexible concept of ‘medium.’”<sup>66</sup> His emphasis on “the transmedial nature of narrativity as a cognitive frame”—rather than as a feature restricted to particular artifacts—arguably provides access to narratives within “ever ‘remoter’ media and genres.” The mediation of story worlds

according to culturally-specific notions of media and their configurations, however, is a topic in need of further elaboration, as is the persistent notion of description as “recreational pause” (Genette [1966] 1982, 135) or “architectural relief” from narrative (Wolf 2007, 56), which correlates with ontological assumptions and functions also frequently assigned to color constituted in relation to line/form.

To return to Crane’s “Travels in New York,” for example, on a diegetic level we can experience a hardly motivated play of color words as colored lights “staged” on a darkened city street. In addition to the possible association of this play with pictorial impressionism (a comparison, however, inadequate or aesthetically parodied, especially given the story’s mischievous inclusion of an “unclassified boy” whose finger “paint” in black automotive grease defaces an “impossible landscape” [3–4]), verbal color here likely suggested other contemporary chromatic entertainments.<sup>67</sup> These included popular serpentine and umbrella dances, such as *Serpentine Dance—Annabelle* (1897) and *Farfale* [sic] (1907) (figs. 3.5–3.6), as well as experiments in “naturally” colored (moving) photography based on emergent theories of “additive mixing.”<sup>68</sup>

According to this phenomenon, popularized (as mentioned above) by James Clerk Maxwell in the mid-1850s, the mixing of red, green, and blue light (additive primaries) produced the “effect” of white light on human vision and thus the illusion of natural color.<sup>69</sup> Crane’s use of colored lights consisting only of additive primaries that “mix” throughout a single sentence that runs (cinematographically) nearly a page long suggests perhaps an early sensational experiment in photo-cinematic synaesthesia within this pseudo-“travelogue”—a popular genre of early cinema also noted for its frequent use of color. The interlacing of references to sound and color within “Travels” also allows for the invocation of contemporary synaesthetic treatises linking harmony and discord in



**Figure 3.5** Thomas Edison, *Serpentine Dance—Annabelle* (c. 1897) (Anthology Film Archives 2005). Hand coloration, anonymous.



**Figure 3.6** Cines, *Farfalle* (“*Butterflies*”) [sic] (1907) (Lange and Bromberg 2007). Hand coloration, anonymous.

music to chromatic arrangement, such as Lady Archibald Campbell's *Rainbow-music* (1886), or technologies such as Alexander Wallace Rimington's *Clavier à Lumières* (or color organ) (1893).<sup>70</sup>

Moreover, the verbal “switching” of emphasis from events constituted by the “line” of plot, to perceptual “events” of chromatic interaction, also reflected a popular mode of generic alternation familiar from other types of composite entertainment during this period derived from conventions of variety and vaudeville—a mode realized within early cinematic programs and their individual “attractions” as well.<sup>71</sup> The “flat” application of “primary” or so-called psychologically-unique color words (red, green, and blue) in Crane's sketch,<sup>72</sup> which at times “escape” from their roles as (mere) modifiers, also can be contextualized with historically-contemporary avant-garde experiments in poetry—such as Rimbaud's ([1873] 1940) chromatic alphabet by which vowels irrespective of word were said to bear color—as well as with other aesthetic-scientific ideas about color dynamics filtering throughout culture during this period.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to psychological studies of “the color sense in literature” (Ellis 1896), individual colors such as “red” (Ellis 1900) and “yellow” (Ellis 1906), and color's interaction with theosophical “thought-forms” (Besant [1896] 1901), the phenomenal effects of color become a widespread topic of interest. Irradiation: the spreading of color to surrounding spaces (discussed by Helmholtz by 1867 [English trans. 1881] and Sutter in 1880); simultaneous contrast: the invocation of complementary colors in the eye (Goethe 1810 [English trans. 1840] through Chevreul 1839 [English trans. 1854]); luster: the visual dissonance or “flickering effect” (Rood [1879] 1973) of color within neo-impressionist paintings (c. 1886–1891); and the “fringing” of early cinematic color processes in which conspicuous halos of red and green momentarily disrupt mimetic illusionism—an “escape” of color from line/form that recalled chromatic slips within earlier hand-painted artifacts (figs. 3.7–3.8), are just a few experiences attributed to color during this period that suggested shifts in its relation to line/form. Crane's figurative light show here invites further



**Figure 3.7** *Left:* Video still from Thomas Edison and Edwin Porter, *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) (Kino 2002). Hand coloration, anonymous.

**Figure 3.8** *Right:* Video still from *Rive del Nilo* (1911). Kinemacolor. Courtesy of Cineteca del Comune di Bologna, Archivio cinematografico Ansaldo, National Film and Television Archive.

consideration of these shifts within the context of literary expression and perhaps an experience of early “multimedia” by readers.

Despite color’s capacity to suggest narratives and metanarratives organized by line/form and its own aspects of mediality,<sup>74</sup> theories of color also have espoused its ability to transcend such signification altogether. The artist Yves Klein ([1959] 2008, 121), for example, once remarked that even the most mimetic uses of color within representational painting “wink” at or mock the dictates of narrative; a defiance that Kristeva ([1972] 1980) would later articulate within the study of Giotto’s painting as part of the “triple register” of color, and what Barthes (1977, 54) more generally would term as escape from the “obvious meaning” of composition’s perceived intentions.<sup>75</sup>

A similar notion of a sublime escape from narrative within early cinematic attractions, despite perhaps the appeal of its sense of liberation, reinforces the question of further theoretical excavation. Although for Gunning “pure” display or “appearance” to some extent restricts narrativity to “Here it is: look at it!”, appearance always happens through *things* and the narratives that they constitute (however prototypical). Even within “prototypical” attractions, for example,

such as a single-shot serpentine dance (fig. 3.5), or a strong man flexing before the camera,<sup>76</sup> content is narrativized according to context and the “situation” of its processing.<sup>77</sup>

Within cinema studies, Aumont (et al.) (1992, 69) points to this idea in his explanation that even the simplest display of an object on film inescapably “carries a whole array of values that it [the object] represents and narrates.” According to this more postclassical and “tacit” sense of narrative, “every figuration and representation in film calls forth narration or an embryonic form of it” (through figure-to-ground relations, socio-historical contextualization, generic intertexts, etc.).<sup>78</sup> Narrative situation in this sense consists in the interactions between framed signs (with framing determined in part by notions of frame, and what is deemed inside/outside of it); embodied viewers/readers situated within historical and social contexts; the pragmatics of goal-driven reading processes and competencies (conscious or not) linked to those context; and individual “backstories” that this narrative situation and its elements trigger for processing (which Maya Deren vividly metaphorizes above).

This conception of narrativity should factor more directly into our understanding of “attractions,” especially in light of the many narratives that (added) color in cinema might be said to call forth. These include those “mute” narratives that seem only to reaffirm normativity as a set of “non-stories” to be taken for granted. In this case we can consider, for example, stories and assumptions underpinning contexts of labor, which (silently) accompanied experiences of “merely” colorful additions.

## The Labor of Color



**Figure 3.9** *Left*: Video still from Louis Lumière, *Card Party* (1895) (Lange and Bromberg 2007). Hand coloration, anonymous.

**Figure 3.10** *Right*: *[Three Unidentified Women in Mourning Dress Reading a Letter]* (c. 1865). Tintype. 3 x 2 3/8 in. Hand coloration, anonymous. Courtesy of the International Center of Photography, *America and the Tintype* (September 19, 2008–January 14, 2009). Gift of Steven Kasher, 2007.

Røssaak’s evocation of an alternative conception of eventhood within cinematic aesthetics reinforces the need for the re-articulation of “event.”<sup>79</sup> Instead of, however, perhaps reifying what we might experience as “the event” of color’s “appearance,” we can involve in its conceptualization the range of cultural practices involved in color’s application and use. Rather than idealizing,<sup>80</sup> we can pursue, for example, a metachromatic historicization of the idealization of color and its labor.

As Fossati (1998, 122) explains, during cinema’s first decades “hand-painting and later stenciling was almost exclusively a women’s job.” In fact, color within one of the earliest Kinetoscope films, Thomas Edison’s *Annabelle* (1894), was applied by the wife of an Edison employee (Edmund Kuhn) in the Edison lab in Llewellyn Park, New Jersey (123). “Ms. Kuhn” [as records describe her] also likely was responsible the coloration of some of the earliest projected films, such the “umbrella” and “serpentine” dances shown during the New York debut of Vitascope at Koster & Bial’s Music Hall, on April 23, 1896 (Musser 1990, 116–17).<sup>81</sup>



**Figure 3.11** Pathé coloring lab, Paris (1912). Reproduced from Talbot (1970, 289).

By the turn of the twentieth century, coloration as a gendered practice within cinema was institutionalized primarily through the work of laborers, frequently referred to as “color girls,” who operated within workshops and factories (often considered sweatshops).<sup>82</sup> Most notable among these was the workshop headed by Elisabeth Thuiller in Paris—now commonly recognized by a picture regularly cited (fig. 3.11). Adding to the list of “wives” linked to the tradition of coloration, Thuiller’s arrangement also initially involved Mme. Florimond, wife of a chief technician at Pathé.<sup>83</sup>

According to Thuiller’s technical guidance and decisions about color, 220 females applied color to films such as Georges Méliès’s *Cendrillon* (1899) and *Jeanne d’Arc* (1900), and films by Pathé. By 1903, as Richard Abel explains, hand-tinted and stencil-color versions of films produced largely by Méliès and the French film company Pathé heightened the popularity of colored films in



**Figure 3.12** *Left: Mrs. Elsie Sellers, Colorist in the US Department of Agriculture, Makes Posters and Lantern Slides for Fairs and Conventions Throughout the Country (August 29, 1922). Silver gelatin print. Courtesy of Library of Congress: National Photo Company Collection.*



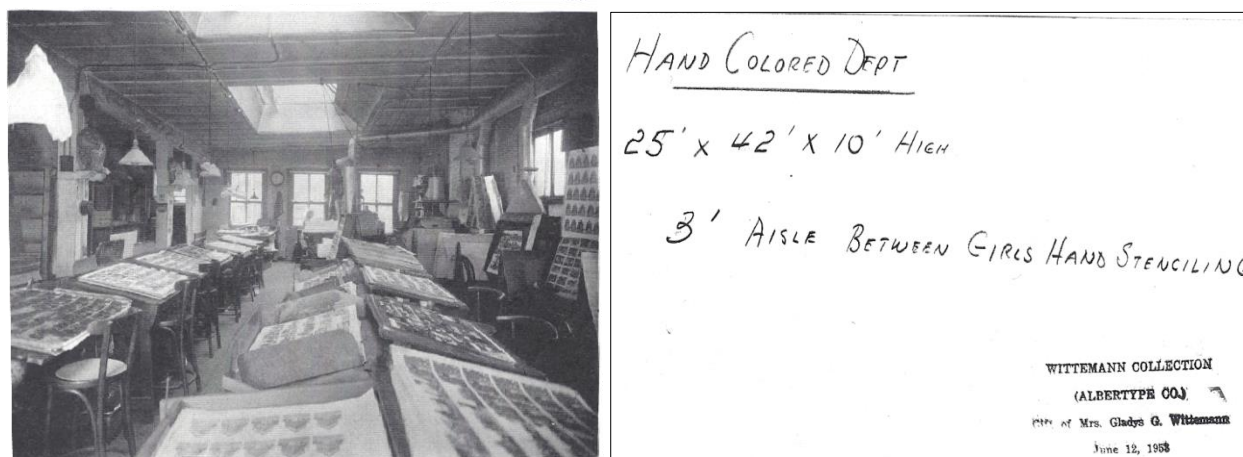
**Figure 3.13** *Right: Harris & Ewing, Inc. Color Expert for Uncle Sam, Washington, D.C. (June 20, 1938). 4 x 5 in. or smaller glass negative. Courtesy of Library of Congress: Harris & Ewing Collection.*

the US, which prompted US manufacturers and sales agents to seize upon the idea as a promotional device. Exemplifying a broader labor structure, Abel (1999, 43–45) notes that by 1906 “in one of the initial issues of *Views and Films Index*, J. A. Berst claimed that his company not only ‘had made a specialty of color films’ (employing at least three hundred women to produce stencil-color prints in Paris) but also ‘had made a great success of it.’”<sup>84</sup> This systemization expanded the profitability of color within early cinema and other forms of screen media, including lantern slides.

The legacy of this physical touch of color applied by women within cinema, however, also can be considered within much later forms of cinematic productions that featured so-called natural color (i.e., productions in which color was not “added”). For example, the majority of color decisions from 1934 to 1949 even within Technicolor productions, the first “real color” cinema to gain wide market exposure, were supervised (made) by Natalie Kalmus, wife of Technicolor founder Herbert

T. Kalmus. As Misek (2010, 36) explains, between 1930s–50s, Natalie Kalmus, as color consultant for Technicolor productions, was *responsible* for most color decisions.<sup>85</sup>

This tradition of gendered labor, which informs the contextualization of color then within cinema during at least its first half-century, adds new resonance to Gunning’s (1995, 253) observation that color within early cinema “existed in opposition to black and white.” It also may explain in part why this aspect of cinema as an extension of domestic/“unskilled” labor within the arts and other technologies (figs. 3.12–3.13) has commanded relatively little critical attention.<sup>86</sup> In addition to governmental positions available within color fields, such as those referenced here, color “girls” staffed factories more broadly within the print industry, such those within the “hand-coloring department” of The Albertype Co. Postcard Factory in Brooklyn, where rows of females stenciled images (separated by 3’ aisles) (The Albertype Co. Postcard Factory) (figs. 3.14–3.15).



**Figure 3.14** Left: [The Albertype Co. Postcard Factory at 250 Adams Street, Brooklyn, NY—hand-coloring department] (1945). Photocopy of photographic print from black-and-white negative. Courtesy of Library of Congress: *Miscellaneous Items in High Demand*.

**Figure 3.15** Right: Detail from back of photograph, enlarged by author.

Richard Misek (2010, 15) argues that the combination of color and black-and-whiteness within cinema, on the other hand, represented a new medium. He notes that until the late-1920s within cinema, there existed a “visual mismatch between the outlines of objects and their colors”

and that “no such cultural construct” (18) had existed prior to it. In this, however, he overlooks the much longer tradition of color – line/form and the history of divided labor that it reinforced.

Moreover, for Misek this differential comprised a relation of “cooperative interaction” (24) rather than “opposition,” which elides historical inequities involved in “cooperation” both symbolically and in terms of actual labor.

As the above comments on dominant labor practices suggest, broader traditions of labor, among other aspects of culture, should be considered within this or any notion of media specificity. In fact, the very history of photo-indexical monochromality, from which the black-and-white of cinema derives, stems in part from conceptions of the so-called “pencil of nature” and the mediation of its line/form by male operators. A painted version of Lumière’s *Card Party* (1895) (fig. 3.9) provides a typical example of the cine-painterly “mismatch” cited by Misek as specific to cinema. Its longer history, however, is immediately recalled when juxtaposed with forms of painted photography that prefigured moving pictures throughout the nineteenth century (figs. 3.9–3.10).<sup>87</sup>

The concept of the cultural series by Gaudreault and Philippe (2005),<sup>88</sup> and Gaudreault’s (2011) observation that early cinema is not in fact “cinema” as we know it but its own genre linked to moving photography (“kine-attractography” [1890–1910]), invite us to trace this “mismatch” of color in cinema, and its relations of gender and labor, more directly to this forbearer in nineteenth-century photography. As Abel (1988, xv) reminds us, prior to 1907 cinema or “moving pictures” often was considered as an extension or derivative form of still photography, just as it had been at the 1900 Universal Exposition in Paris. It also was likened to other forms of optical entertainment, such as to images within optical view boxes from as early as the eighteenth century—in which colors were made to suddenly change as an attraction—as well as to magic lantern projections, whose colorists, including women, also were among the first to be employed to color films (Fossati 1998, 122).

This history can be examined further by recalling that the very year of Daguerre's announcement of photography in 1839 also featured its first successful hand coloration (in the form of painted daguerreotypes) (Henisch and Henisch 1996, 21). In fact, without this added color, the monochromatic line/form of early photography for many was said to lack the "feminine side" of art (recall Blanc's primer) required for successful or faithful representation. Added color within early photo-indexical media—static or moving—thus can be understood as bearing meaningful associations with gender, which should be considered within theorizations of its meaning (or apparent "lack" of meaning). The stakes of this recognition, in fact, become higher as early attempts in photo-cinematography to establish media difference according to masculinist notions of difference, and male claims on empirical reality itself, are acknowledged.

### **Color Girls and Early Photography**

Promoted in its earliest stages as the unmediated "light writing" of the "pencil of nature,"<sup>89</sup> the line/form of photography quickly replaced mediated graphic and sculptural representation (Fawcett 1986), dominant since Antiquity, as the preeminent technology of realism.<sup>90</sup> This invention of an apparently unmediated technology for picturing reality—indexed in "black and white" and animated by cinematography toward the end of the century—enhanced previous conceptual divisions between color and line/form and their associations. As an emergent scientific tool, which reproduced reality in monochromatic arrays and was largely handled by men, early photography soon became identified with the masculinized authority and primacy of line/form in its theoretical and institutional situation.<sup>91</sup> Reacting to the proliferation of this unmediated ("infallible") imaging—and its emboldened discursive alignment with rationality, masculinity, and patriarchy as a newly-mechanized iteration of empirical truth<sup>92</sup>—theorists of color (detractors and advocates) began to underscore color's oppositional value and its orientation as a distinctly different semiotic register and practice.

Color within photography, as within painting during this era, offered itself as a symbolic material, which, in sense, could provide a mediated counterforce to the indifference of the camera, its neutralized (male) “operators,” and the often apparent lifelessness of its machine-made products. This touch, in keeping with the history of painting, was able to render the “inner spirit” of subjects by “embodying the insight of the artist” (Woodall 1997, 6). These attributes also resonated with a broader experience of industrialization, which these alienating images for many were prone to invoke.<sup>93</sup> As discussed above, enthusiasm for this mechanized transcription of reality was accompanied by frequent expressions of anxiety. For many, monochrome images ominously appeared to reflect death, or the impassive discourse of science, which deprived the body or nature of spirit and essence. We hear something similar in Gorky’s now often-quoted reaction to early cinema, which for him carried “a warning, fraught with a vague but sinister meaning that makes your heart grow faint” (Leyda 1960, 408).

According to Kracauer (1960, 136, emphasis mine), the so-called reality effect of added color within cinema responded to this warning. In his estimation, in fact, “*any* color suggests dimensions of total reality ungiven in black-and-white representations.” He continued, “The addition of color . . . enlivens images which, victimized and silent, all too easily assumed a ghost-like character. Tinting was a ghost-laying device.”<sup>94</sup> As discussed above, early inventors of added-color processes within photography, such as Johann Baptist Isenring (Henisch and Henisch 1996, 22), similarly regarded the application of paint to daguerreotypes as a corrective to this condition.

Within early photography, and later cinema, classic binary relations between color and line/form reinforced dominant labor practices according to gender and traditions of domestic work. The tasking of (generally unattributed) coloration to women within nineteenth-century popular photography, in fact, to some extent began with the wives of the first photographers and their skill in the painting of miniatures. As a result, hand-applied color within photography and later cinema

not only frequently could assume color's familiar symbolic feminization across a classic divide, its facture could inhere a feminine "touch." This sign could insinuate feminine gesture, authorization, sensuality, mercurialness, morality, domesticity, forms of art and craft, nostalgia for pre-industrial industry labor practices, "life," etc.—an essentialization that recalled assumptions from an earlier tradition within eighteenth-century portraiture by which female painters were assumed capable of rendering the masculinity of sitters as "virtuous" (Woodall 1997, 148).

Within photography and cinema, the separate register of this touch was especially apparent

As Dry Plate Photographer.—Situation wanted by a first-class dry plate photographer, also proficient in any branch. Will give instructions to any photographer to manufacture his own plates. Address Barkman, photographer, box 80, Newton, N. J.

As Colorist.—A young lady, first-class colorist and spotter, also competent to attend reception room, would like a position, city or country. Best city references. Address A. V. B., care of D. Garber, 74 Broadway, New York City.

As Operator.—A first-class operator is desirous of an engagement. Formerly with Rockwood, 17 Union Square, and late with Anderson, 785 Broadway. Thoroughly practical. New York City preferred. J. T. Decker, 91 Water Street, or box 868, Newburgh, N. Y.

As Operator.—A first-class operator and dry plate manipulator desires a position. Address John Carbutt, 628 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

As Retoucher.—Situation wanted by a lady who has had experience as a teacher at Cooper Institute. Address Box C., TIMES Office.

A position in reception room of some good gallery, by a young lady. Can do retouching, printing and toning. Salary moderate at first. Address M. E. P., Box 355, Otsego, Mich.

As Retoucher and Reception-room Lady. Reasonable wages first year. Address Ada E. Starbird, care Mrs. E. N. Lockwood, Ripon, Wis.

WANTED.—A good Lady Retoucher. References given and required. Havens, Savannah, Ga.

**Figure 3.16** "Employment Offered and Wanted" (1884). From *The Photographic Times and American Photographer*.

in the "mismatch" of paint—most often vibrant and flat—applied over photo-cinematic media. Mid-nineteenth century photographic painting manuals,<sup>95</sup> as well as late-nineteenth century trade periodicals and critical commentary on cinema, often refer to or imply the "feminine" tactility of color within these media, or added color's indirect channeling of feminine "energies." The females responsible for the actual additions of color, however, for the most part remained anonymous.

A listing from *The Photographic Times and American*

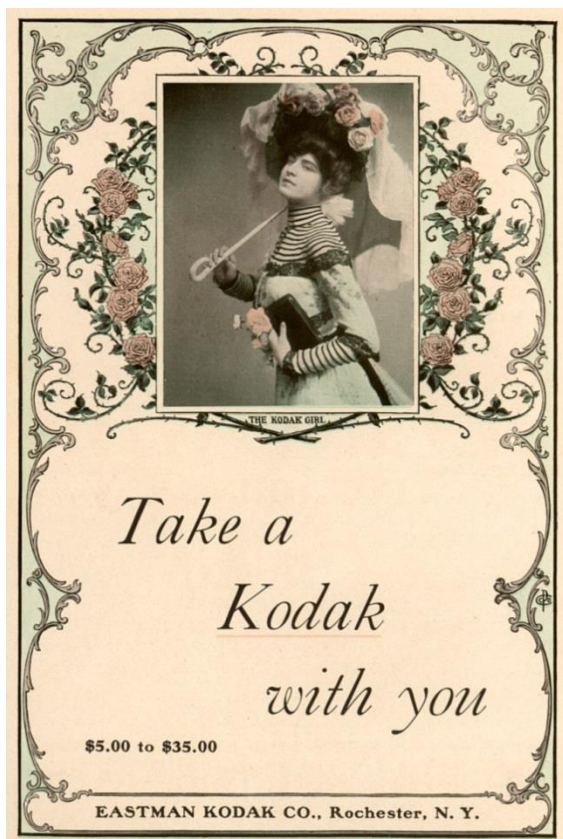
*Photographer* (1884) exemplifies these mostly lost female voices and the contexts of their labor (fig. 3.16). It also problematizes the notion of "cooperative interaction" referenced by Misek. As this "Employment Offered and Wanted" column demonstrates, women seeking positions as colorists or retouchers announce themselves diminutively by gender and through low salary requirements that they euphemize as "reasonable." Entries by males seeking positions as photographic operators, however,

vary significantly in tone. Their gender also is “announced,” but only implicitly through omission, which reinforces a sense of masculinist authority.

The entry that cites teaching experience at the Cooper Institute, where the coloration of photographic media often was taught to women, reinforces the extent to which the tradition of (re)touching, and likely its signification, assumed qualities of gender.<sup>96</sup> As Martha Louise Rayne’s (1893, 128) *What Can a Woman Do*, a guide to female employment, explains “it is common circumstance to find the wife or sister of a male photographer employed in the office.” Women requesting photographic positions, however, educated or not, still voiced their willingness to attend to (domestic) reception room duties. Even Martha Ewing, business partner of George Harris and co-owner of the famous Washingtonian photography firm Harris & Ewing, Inc. (1905–1945), also served as “his photo colorist and receptionist” until she sold her stake in the business (Collins 1989, 102). Nomenclature within the last item of the listing “Employment Offered,” which requests the services of a “Lady Retoucher,” underscores a divide that existed across the spectrum of employment.

This listing, which suggests divisions of labor, does not of course indicate that photography was beyond the reach of women especially toward the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>97</sup> In addition to professional roles within popular photography held by figures such as Frances Benjamin Johnson (1864–1952), amateur photography offered women creative outlets that were considered by many to be especially appropriate for domestic spheres. Advice to these women, given by women, appeared in journals such as *The Photo-American Series*. Women also were marketed to as “Kodak girls” holding flowers (performing femininity) and cameras, in magazines such as *Harper’s* (figs. 3.17–3.18).

Articles such as “Amateur Photography through Women’s Eyes” (1894) by Elizabeth Flint Wade, and the column “Our Women Friends” (1892–1897), edited by Adelaide Skeel, provide additional access to these often overlooked voices. Skeel’s column, for example, as Gover



**Figure 3.17** *Left:* Kodak, “Take a Kodak with you” (1901). Photograph is color tinted. Courtesy of Library of Congress: *Ellis Collection of Kodakiana*. Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

**Figure 3.18** *Right:* Detail by author.

(1987, 67) explains, featured a monthly section for questions and letters to the editor that generally reflected “the world of women and photography . . . and their struggle to master the new art form.”<sup>98</sup> Earlier advice from Skeel, however, within essays such as “Blues” (1888, 48, 50) (fig. 3.19), suggests a specific chromatic context germane to this new art form that merits special attention.

Skeel’s playfully transgressive advice—likely to women—to allow themselves to make and to

**BLUES.**

“Does your machine only take blue pictures—real photographers make people in black and white,” friends naïvely said to me when first I bought my ten dollar outfit. I paid no heed, and to day, blue grass, not grown in Kentucky, blue cows, blue trees, and blue faces, distinguish my work from that of real photographers.

Supposing Squeer’s system to be that of this ANNUAL, I hope readers who learn anything about blues out of this book will promptly “go and do it,” and let Bazaars and Christmas gifts show results.

*Adelaide Skeel.*

**Figure 3.19** Adelaide Skeel, “Blues” (1888, 48, 50). From *Photography and Photographic Times: The American Annual of Photography*.

distribute cyanotype prints of everyday life indicates a bold and perhaps feminist intervention. Her argument that these photographers should “pay no heed” to dominant proscriptions and authorities (most-often male) and to allow such things as “blue cows, blue trees,

and blue faces” to distinguish their work from that of “real photographers” suggests an alternative and perhaps gendered tradition of photography in need of further investigation.

Alternative/“minor” feminized channels of exhibition and commerce, such as the “Bazaars” mentioned by Skeel, also suggest valuable research to be done.

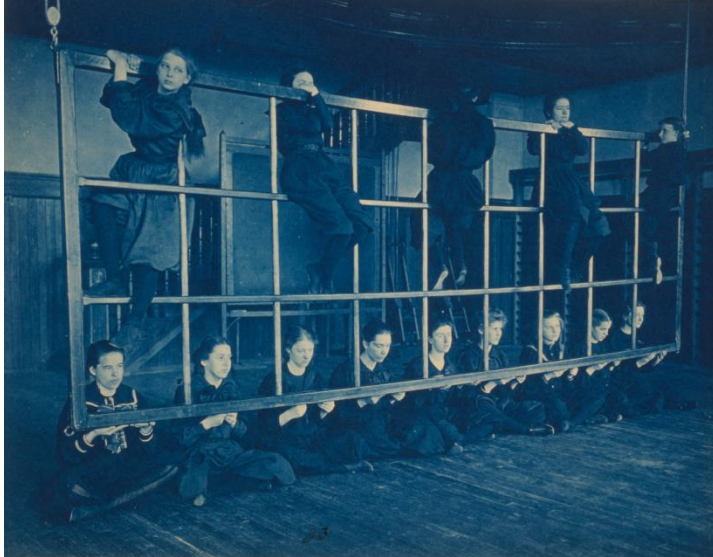
The unauthorized blue register of these “unreal photographers,” much like the anonymous chromatic touches of “lady colorists,” “lady retouchers,” and the “events” of narrativity into which they can be drawn, deserve recognition. Skeel’s cyanotypes, however, like the rest of her photographs, and the bulk of female vernacular photography during the nineteenth century, have not been institutionally archived.<sup>99</sup> This omission exists despite that most notable in the history of cyanotype, male or female, is Anna Atkins (1799–1871), commonly recognized as the first female photographer, suggesting perhaps a relatively overlooked chromatic tradition.<sup>100</sup>

Negative reactions to monochromatic colored photography, such as Henry Peter Emerson’s “No one but a real vandal would print a landscape in red, or in cyanotype” (1890, a year after “Blues”), recall now familiar debates over impressionist and post-impressionist painting and color science during this era, in which images by Skeel and other women also might be situated. Such intersections promote the consideration of these and other “low forms” of popular “blues” and “reds,” and the “amateurs” who made them, within discussions of emergent modernism across media and popular culture, including within verbal imagery. These also should be factored into the broader tradition of color as a term of alterity to (black and white) line/form.

### **MetaConclusion**

As we have seen, the discursive workings of color – line/form bear significantly on representation, its interpretation and uses, and the lived stories that shape and are shaped by its processes. The ideological contexts into which this binary so frequently has been drawn also suggest its continued relevance to aesthetics, as the very terrain of politics, in the sense described by

Rancière (2009b). A meta-picture, which suggests this terrain again here, concludes this chapter (fig. 3.20). Its female subjects, line/form, and Prussian blue, await metachromatic attention.



**Figure 3.20** Frances Benjamin Johnson, [*Female Students Posing with Exercise Equipment in a Gymnasium, Western High School, Washington, D.C.*] (c. 1899). Cyanotype. Courtesy of Library of Congress: *Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection*.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### “Unnatural” Multi-Mediation and Harold Frederic’s *Illumination* (1896)

Harold Frederic’s historically popular novel *The Damnation of Theron Ware, or, Illumination* (1896), situated within the expanding visual culture of the last decades of the nineteenth century, and known for being a composite or generic hybrid of realism and symbolism, suggests another valuable site for the consideration of verbal picturing, mediation, and composite representation during this period. *Illumination*’s undisguised staging of disparate approaches to internal and external life involved Frederic’s hybrid use of competing literary models, such as Romanticism (Hawthorne), Realism (Howells), and Naturalism (Zola).<sup>101</sup> This composite also included a variety of experiences of “realistic” verbal picturing, according to different media and their associated notions of realism, which also might be seen as incorporating other popular “effects” of variety—familiar from contemporary theatrical and early-cinematic programs—which allowed for aesthetic clashes and less-constrained and singular modes of narrative experience.

*Illumination*’s apparent incorporation of diegetically-framed “photo-cinematographic” images (in part connoted by its title) suggests an area of interest especially germane to this investigation. It references photo-cinematographic experiences of perception and memory within characters; motivates focalized and non-focalized (heterodiegetic) descriptions of the story world through a conspicuous use of ambivalent architectural/pictorial frames that violate the autonomy or naïve realism of that world; and translates elements of the story world into pictures that often lay bare their mediation. This experimentation with ambiguously mimetic/anti-mimetic strategies of description, which includes self-reflexive architectural and pictorial framing, multi-remediation involving photo-cinematographic picturing, and relations of pictures to theories of mind, fantasy, and realities (or reality effects) underscores Fludernik’s (2012, 368) recent call for the recovery of “the fantastic and the impossible within the Realist tradition” of literature. This chapter will begin to

investigate such questions, and to resituate *Illumination*, the book's preferred title,<sup>102</sup> within an historical media environment in which debates over the generic status of the novel, the indeterminacy of “realistic” mediation, and the increased presence of various forms of visual culture provided new (multi-) medial contexts and models for the production and reception—or visualization—of verbal images: aspects that reinforce the value of a more elaborate theorization of the medial dimensions of visualization, and attention to composite aesthetic during this period.

### ***Damnation or Illumination***

. . . as he caught the *effect* of her face now in profile, *memory-pictures* began *all at once building themselves* in his brain—pictures of her standing in the darkened room of the cottage of death, declaiming the *Confiteor*; of her seated at the piano, under the pure, mellowed candle-light; of her leaning her chin on her hands, and gazing meditatively at the leafy *background* of the woods they were in; of her lying back, indolently content, in the deck-chair on the yacht of his fancy—that yacht which a few hours before had seemed so brilliantly and bewitchingly real to him . . . (481–82, italics mine)

Although famous when first published, both in the US and England where it was a best-seller (Oscar Wilde requesting a copy from jail), Harold Frederic's *The Damnation of Theron Ware; or, Illumination* (1896) today retains familiarity more as a notable but mostly unread novel loosely assigned to the canon of US Realism.<sup>103</sup> Critical attention to Frederic's oeuvre and to *Damnation*, the primary source of his reputation, peaked during the middle decades of the twentieth century. Then and now, of greatest scholarly interest has been the book's fraught portrayal of religion amid modern shifts in intellectual and aesthetic values.<sup>104</sup> This anxious heterogeneity, however—now a familiar trope of modernism—also incorporates a variety of pictorial “effects” (such as those above) that merit further consideration within the context of word-and-image theory, as well as to the relation of color – line/form.<sup>105</sup>

Given *Illumination's* thematic staging of cultural transitions occurring in the US and Europe as the nineteenth century waned, it makes sense that most scholarship on the book prioritizes its treatment of the protagonist's passage from a (pre-modern) agrarian life governed by faith in god

and Protestant mores, to a shifting, urban (modern) existence destabilized by competing epistemologies.<sup>106</sup> Theron Ware's inconclusive turn-of-the-century "damnation" or "illumination" has prompted many investigations into this fin de siècle paradox. As it turns out, however, the equivocation of this double-title was simply the result of a publishing error. According to *The Critic* in 1896, confusion over the title arose because "after the final choice of *Illumination* had been made, no one remembered, until it was too late, that the American publisher had not been informed of the decision" (in Briggs 1969, 102). As a result, this quasi novel-of-manners, quasi bildungsroman was published in England as *Illumination*—the preferred, "intended title" (Garner 1977, 60)—and in the US (a day later) as *The Damnation of Theron Ware*.

When first published, the book enjoyed immediate success under both names, and publishers wished to avoid confusing buyers and dampening sales by deleting either one of them. For marketing reasons, subsequent editions often now feature both titles on the cover. "*Snarl*," another working title found within Frederic's papers, also has encouraged scholarly interest in the ambiguity of damnation/illumination established by the "double-title," drawing emphasis to parallels that might exist between Faust/Adam/Enlightened Man/Theron Ware, etc.

### **Word Pictures and *Illumination***

Dominant attention to the apparent theme of damnation/illumination within the novel, reinforced by circumstances of publishing, has overshadowed other dimensions of *Illumination* essential to the preferred title: specifically, its associations with embellishment, imaging, lighting, and aspects of technological mediation that appear to bear on the novel's verbal pictures. In fact, historical reviews of *Illumination* often foregrounded the presence of these pictures, which often frame subjects (both physical and ideational) in tacit and sometimes explicit photo-cinematographic terms. *Cosmopolitan*, for example, described the novel as "a consistent picture imbued with penetrating power" (Peck 1896, 439); the *Daily Picayune* praised it as "full of lifelike pictures"

(“Recent publication” 1896, 10); and the *St. James’s Gazette* (1896) averred “the character painting is excellent . . . painted without prejudice.”

These apparently fluid notions of realism, experienced as mediated by “imbued” (dyed, colored, painted) pictures or one “consistent” (moving) picture—lifelike, but still representational—invoked perhaps not only historical genres of realistic painting, but the so-called light-writing or “pencil of nature” of photography and cinema—both frequently painted and popular at the time.<sup>107</sup> *Illumination’s* pictures, which often exploit still and moving photography’s ontological instability, also appear to prefigure psycho-phenomenological notions of the photo-cinematographic pioneered decades later by theorists such as Münsterberg (1916) and Baudry (1970s).<sup>108</sup> Frederic’s relation to visuality, and background in photography and photographic editing, offer valuable context to these aspects of the novel.

In 1897, a year after the publication of *Illumination*, Frederic explains his writing process as “being like a ‘spectator’ who followed the movements of characters at a distance” (in Bennett 1997, 175). According to Frederic, “one of his greatest joys” (explains Bennett) “was to . . . sit watching people” (33). This recording of subjects from a detached point of view reflects Frederic’s training in journalism and his participation in literary realism influenced by William Dean Howells (among others). It also, however, suggests Frederic’s pleasure in recording movements and activities from a distance, which his experience in photography lends technological overtones.

Frederic’s work as a professional portrait studio operator for half the decade preceding *Illumination* put him in direct contact with all aspects of the effects and dynamics of the photographic process. As Bennett (1997, 32–33) explains:

Until 1875 [Frederic] was to work at a series of different photographic studios learning every aspect of photography. [In one position he was trained] as an aesthetic censor, removing signs of age and unsightliness from the faces of his subjects. . . . In Boston, he continued his

photographic career . . . retouch[ing] negatives [and doing] a lot of similar work . . . in the surrounding towns.

Framing shots, immobilizing subjects, lighting the scene and retouching its negatives to alter or remove “imperfections,” Frederic knew well the complicated “reality” illuminated by film and its capacity to actualize fantasies. His emphasis within *Illumination* on looking as a photo-cinematographic analogy (and vice versa) also typifies a sense of visuality piqued in the late-nineteenth century. As discussed above, prior to 1907 (Abel 1998, xv) or 1910 (Gaudreault 2011), cinema or “kine-attractography” often was considered an extension or derivative form of photography. This form of representation was contemporary with Frederic’s *Illumination* and recalls that some of the earliest cinematic projections were surrounded by photographic frames.<sup>109</sup>

The popularization of “recording” everyday life as images, decontextualized by the framing edges of viewfinders, negatives, prints and screens, appears to inform Frederic’s diegetic tracking and freezing of characters and scenes. Just as he “followed the movements” of his imaginative subjects at a distance, *Illumination*’s characters and we as readers often encounter pictures (or verbal-photographs) that appear to aspire to realism through (figurative) photo-cinematographic mediation. This medial and ontological situation suggests an aspect of Frederic’s narrative/descriptive technique and a central conflict within *Illumination* (discussed below).

As André Bazin (1960, 8) famously argued almost a half-century after *Illumination*, “No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discolored, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it *is* the model.” Because photography appears to bear the traces of its referents and thus a measure of indexical truth, even filtering, imaginative processing, etc., which might destabilize its iconicity, can fail to undermine its fundamental purchase on reality.<sup>110</sup> No matter its effects, as Emerson explained within the context of photographic portraiture, “The artist stands

aside *and lets you paint yourself*' (in Trachtenberg 1989, 23, italics mine). As this terminological ambiguity here demonstrates, however, the realism of photography can to some extent allow for the manufacturing of an "un-manufactured" self. *Illumination* suggests that if this model of realism should be adopted by the mind such that it starts to perceive its own images in photo-cinematographic terms, fantasy and truth can slip and conflate in ways that parallel representation on film: a "modern" possibility that appears to afflict Theron Ware and to account for an aspect of *Illumination's* literary realism.

### **Framing the Photo-Cinematographic**

To invoke what we might understand as a type of photo-cinematographic perception, or a cognitive framework for visualization, Frederic suggests the photo-cinematographic apparatus by carefully maneuvering subjects or "beauty spots" within architectural frames.<sup>111</sup> These frames, which appear throughout the diegesis, facilitate the formalization of views perhaps shared by many texts that seek to integrate narrative and description through realistic motivation.<sup>112</sup> *Illumination*, however, plays with realistic and anti-mimetic modes of representation, embodied by the paradox of photo-cinematographic mediation, by making reference to picture planes, or framing screens, and to photo-cinematographic thinking.<sup>113</sup> In this way, it also points to contemporary debates between science, new skepticism, and decadence championing the fake, which Frederic represents through his relatively flat characterization: Celia Madden (aestheticism), Father Forbes (skepticism), Dr. Ledsmar (philistinism and rational science), and Sister Soulsby (fraudulence).<sup>114</sup>

An example of this reference to photo-cinematographic thinking and paradox occurs midway through the novel. As Theron Ware stands looking through a window at Brother Soulsby gardening, he is struck by jealousy and indignation. The framed image of Soulsby evokes Ware's suspicion of Levi Gorrington, who earlier had purchased exotic plants for Alice, Ware's wife. Frederic

writes, “As if his mind had been a camera, Theron snapped a shutter down upon this odd, unbidden idea, and turned away from the window” (220).

According to this peculiar simile, rendered further conspicuous as a one-sentence paragraph, it seems that Ware’s mind is always “filming”: the shutter of his perceptual faculties is always open and illuminating the film plane of his mind. When confronted with a disturbing mental picture of Gorringe and Alice romantically together, Ware appears to stop “filming” Soulsby, whose reality-picture (framed by the window) had triggered the mental one.<sup>115</sup> In effect, he closes the film shutter, which had admitted the idea (another play on “illumination”), and turns away from the window. This window then frames the scene for the reader in explicitly photographic terms (as a picture within a picture).

Such “memory-pictures” (481) later are given explicit color, and conjured by music, reinforcing a theme of synesthesia and mediated visualization (fig. 4.0).<sup>116</sup> The isolated juxtaposition of yellow and blue here (and throughout the novel), especially within the context of synesthesia, also suggests the influence of a well-known chromatic polarity, posited by Goethe (1810), by which all colors tend to be associated with either yellow or blue. For Goethe, yellow and blue possessed oppositional properties, both in terms of physics and psychology, and their juxtaposition induced charged chromatic effects.<sup>117</sup>

#### THE DAMNATION OF THERON WARE

She had not wished to leave home, for the seaside or any other resort, during the summer, but had worked outside in her garden more than usual. This was inexpensive, and it seemed to do her as much good as a holiday could have done. Her new devotional zeal was now quite an old thing; it had not slackened at all from the revival pitch. At the outset she had tried several times to talk with her husband upon this subject. He had discouraged conversation about her soul and its welfare, at first obliquely, then, under compulsion, with some directness. His thoughts were absorbed, he said, by the contemplation of vast, abstract schemes of creation and the government of the universe, and it only diverted and embarrassed his mind to try to fasten it upon the details of personal salvation. Thereafter the topic was not broached between them.

She bestowed a good deal of attention, too, upon her piano. The knack of a girlish nimbleness of touch had returned to her after a few weeks, and she made music which Theron supposed was very good, — for her. It pleased him, at all events, when he sat and listened to it; but he had a far greater pleasure, as he listened, in dwelling upon the memories of the yellow and blue room which the sounds always brought up. Although three months had passed, Thurston’s had never asked for the first payment on the piano, or even sent in a bill. This impressed him as being

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**Figure 4.0** Harold Frederic, *The Damnation of Theron Ware; or, Illumination* (1896, 347). Coloration mine.

Language similarly associative to photo-cinematographic recording occurs when Theron Ware “escaped for some hours from the burden of work and *incessant observation* . . . and walked alone in the woods. The scene upon which he turned his back was one worth looking at” (338, italics mine). Frederic then provides readers with an elaborately framed picturesque view, which Ware apparently would have enjoyed (as we the readers are suggested to enjoy) had he not taken a break from (perhaps “filmic”) observation.

Frederic presents other transformations of the story world into explicit pictures that also appear to experiment with conventions of mimetic/anti-mimetic representation through suggestions of photo-cinematographic mediation. For example:

The sight of these venerable Fathers in Israel was good to the eyes, conjuring up, as it did, pictures of a time when a plain and homely people had been served by a fervent and devoted clergy . . . . These pictures had for their primitive accessories log-huts, rough house implements, coarse clothes, and patched old saddles which told of weary years of journeying . . . . (7)

This passage, explicitly focalized through a diegetic “observer” (6), uses the presence of “venerable Fathers” to invoke “pictures of a time”—a phrase that seems initially only to connote “memories”—but which Frederic then literalizes as a moving picture in implicitly photo-cinematographic terms: “These *pictures* had for their primitive *accessories* [like studio props] log-huts, rough house implements, [etc.]” Similarly, later in the story Ware focalizes Brother Pierce’s face, which likewise slips or transforms into a picture. Confronted with “Brother Pierce’s hard and colorless little visage [recalling perhaps a daguerreotype],” Ware remarks “*Its* little eyes were watching him . . .” (42, italics mine).

Due to these and other examples of explicit pictorialization and framing, which occur early in the novel, other instances of framing throughout *Illumination*, including those that involve

windows, doors, and even items of clothing, suggest similar photo-cinematographic qualities. For example, early in the novel, Frederic depicts “faces . . . framed in bonnets or juvenile curls” (5). He later then appears to take a verbal “snapshot” of Alice when, as “she thrust her under-lip a trifle forward out of its place in the straight and gently firm profile” (22), a pictorial orientation appears to suggest it. Profiles such as this and others throughout the novel, which trigger “*memory-pictures*” (481), can be understood as part of a longer tradition in portraiture, especially for realistic depiction of women, widespread by the sixteenth century (Woodall 1997, 1).

In another example, Ware looks out over a garden cluttered with refuse and recognizes “it was pleasanter to lift the eyes, and look across the neighbors’ fences to the green, waving tops of the elms on the street beyond” (23). He continues:

How lofty and beautiful they were in the morning sunlight, and with what matchless charm came the song of the robins, freshly installed in their haunts among the new pale-green leaves! Above them, in the fresh, scented air, glowed the great blue dome, radiant with light and the purification of spring. (23)

Theron Ware then “lift[s] his thin, long-fingered hand, and passe[s] it in a slow arch of movement to comprehend this glorious *upper picture*” (23, italics mine). By tracing his hand from side-to-side across this view, Ware frames a *composition* and then crops this “upper picture” from the lower (un-picturesque) debris-strewn yard. In doing so, he transforms a contextualized perception into a sundered “glorious picture” that he now is able to read as whole. Ware goes on to say, “What matter anyone’s idea of hell when we have that to look at . . .” (23). The idealized “reality” of this upper “picture” erases unpleasant truths and is able to circumvent theological dangers. Through the vision of Theron Ware, readers experience this problematic selective framing of reality.<sup>118</sup>

Theron Ware’s inability to negotiate the seductive paradox of mental, photo-cinematographic images appears to be an aspect of his characterization, a source of conflict in the

plot, and a way to motivate visual “effect” or spectacle reinforced by the title of *Illumination*.<sup>119</sup> For Ware, as fantasies and goals share a common place in the mind conceived as a camera or a framed (moving) photograph, they seem to attain a reality and plausibility, which despite their apparent realism, cannot escape the realm of private vision.<sup>120</sup> Gratified by the fantastic reality of the framed image and frustrated by its imperfect translation to life beyond it, Ware finds solace throughout the story by withdrawing to a fetishized, photo-cinematographic space.

On the first page of the novel, for example, Frederic frames a religious congregation who in turn frames “every eye upon a common objective point.” On the last page of the novel, Frederic repeats this phrase (and frame) to reinforce its thematic significance: Ware, having given up his religious post, fantasizes about being in front of a secular audience that morphs into “attentive faces . . . admiringly bent upon” him as “a common *object* of excited interest”—with “object” here suggesting another pictorial transformation (511, italics mine). His desire to be the cynosure of an audience, the centered “common object” of a picture cropping out the rest of the world, resonates with his experience of picturing throughout the book: the more he indulges in visually-conceived fantasies, the more he appears to unconsciously construe life in photo-cinematographic terms, and the more life appears framed for consumption: a condition that readers are perhaps also encouraged to encounter through Frederic’s many framed heterodiegetic pictures.<sup>121</sup>

Ware and readers are encouraged to experience photo-cinematographic depictions such as the powerful figure of Father Forbes “darken[ing] the outer doorway . . . standing in the doorway with an uplifted hand” (65–66), and MacEvoy’s last rites composed, and visually backed, by the frame of a closed door (65). We see Theron Ware illuminated and “blinking at the bright light . . .” as he “gained the outer doorway” (68) and then “stood . . . on the doorstep, through a minute” (69). We get snapshot-like portraits of Alice framed as she “open[s] the door from the kitchen, and put[s] in her head . . . with a correcting twinkle in her eyes” (96). And later again as she “puts her head out

the window . . . watering pot and broom in hand” (recalling perhaps those pictorial *accessories* mentioned above) (398).

Frederic positions Father Forbes’s servant in the doorway so that she “stood in black relief against the radiance of the hall-way . . .” (99). Ware also at one point faces “a great window,” much like a glass negative, on which an image develops:

A dim light from within [the room] shone through the more translucent portions of the glass, throwing out faint little bars of party-colored radiance upon the blackness of the deep passage way. He could vaguely trace by these the outlines of some sort of picture on the window. There were human figures in it, and—yes—up here in the center, nearest him, was a woman’s head. (118)

For no other apparent reason than to reinforce this thematic of looking, Frederic also positions Ware “by the window” (174) in the office of Gorringe, who then also, in turn, “look[s] out through the window at the buildings opposite” (180)—buildings that do not subsequently factor into the plot. This frequent attention to looking perhaps suggests more broadly the influence of new forms of emerging visual culture during this period, which might have reinforced Frederic’s mimetic/anti-mimetic experimentation.

### **More Moving Pictures in Visual Culture**

Although William Lincoln’s “zoopraxiscope” (patented in 1867) and a host of other pre-cinematic devices allowed spectators to watch drawings or photographs as “primitive” motion pictures,<sup>122</sup> it is not until the Lumières’ invention of the more portable motion-picture camera in 1895 (the year before *Illumination* is published) that moving pictures as “cinematic attractions” began to be shared by early cinematic audiences.<sup>123</sup> As we recall, the tasking of generally unattributed coloration to women within nineteenth century popular photography, as within cinema, in part began with the wives of the first photographers whose feminine “touch” could insinuate signs of

feminine (anonymous) gesture. This historical gap becomes especially relevant to considerations of the nature of photo-cinematographic “pictures” within *Illumination* and their tacit and explicit uses of color. It also bears on added color’s relations to the surfaces and “machinery” of life (i.e., inner-workings, organization), a word frequently found within *Illumination*.

The early 1890s also experienced excitement over new wax-cylinder audio recording techniques, the “photo-documentary” work popularized by Jacob Riis, and the innovation of relatively inexpensive, portable, mass-produced cameras, which could expose and immortalize new aspects of “reality” caught by the snap-shot: the informal, unprepared, in-between expressions, gestures, and moments, which up to this point, had largely remained fugitive or poorly staged within the photographic studio. By the mid-1890s, no longer were certain visual and auditory moments necessarily transitory. With this relative democratization of recording came new decisions regarding the framing of “views” of the world. Photo-cinematographic experimentation within Frederic’s *Illumination* spoke to the pleasures and dilemmas involved in this relativism,<sup>124</sup> their intersections with various systems of thought, and questions involving the mediated status of realism within mimetic/anti-mimetic literature being debated at the time. This latter issue suggests the value of attending to other historical genres involving composite experience and its mediation by the discourse of color – line/form.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Color Space in Symbolist Aesthetics

#### Color – Line/Form and the “Symbolist Symbol”

In an effort to uncover a principal taxonomical link between the Symbolism commonly associated with Baudelaire, the Parisian coteries of the 1880s and 1890s, and the broader international literary zeitgeist that spans the continents and most literatures between 1880 and 1920, René Wellek’s famous essay “What is Symbolism?” (1982) isolates Symbolist commonality based upon a single deformed linguistic device: the truncated symbol. For Wellek, the “Symbolist symbol” clips or buries its referent as it transforms its poetic vehicle into a suppressed or mysterious tenor; it speaks, but only of fugitive entities. This intentioned, cleaved signification is what distinguishes Symbolism (proper) from the “all-pervasive symbolism” that makes its way into much the world’s literature (28).

While Wellek’s reductionist (if elegant and useful) definition of literary Symbolism may prove too narrow to effectively essentialize Symbolist output across broader subgenres and media, his emblemization of Symbolism’s “depleted” sign importantly attends to unfixed meaning, and the process of unfixing it, as central to Symbolist discourse. Emphasis on this Symbolist drive to depict or enact transcendent semantic departure, ambiguous pointing, and the topos of distancing suggests a spatialization strategy essential to a Symbolist modality employed across a variety of expressive forms. Observation of color practices deployed within pictorial, theatrical, and even early photo-cinematic media according to this strategy draws attention to what might be understood as a “color space” integral to Symbolist aesthetics during this era, and to its intersections with color – line/form and the broader paradigm of composite pictures/picturing.

As we will see, within the context of Symbolist aesthetics, the discourse of color – line/form supports a chain of analogues primary to Symbolist concerns. Frequently recurring binaries such as

femininity – masculinity; imaginative freedom – naturalistic determinism; metaphysicality – logical positivism; spirituality – materiality; movement – stasis; the universal – the mortal; the solipsistic – the outer world, etc., provide stark polarities according to which Symbolism often demonstrates an orientation that favors alignment with the former terms, which are also those frequently imputed to color when construed binarily against line/form.<sup>125</sup>

### **The “Intellectual and the Emotional-Sentimental-Moody” of Symbolist Painting**

Turning attention to canonical examples of Symbolist pictorial art, two modalities can be posited by which Symbolist production often exploits regions of color to suggest these thematic alignments and the transcendent departures of truncated symbolism. According to Vajda’s “The Structure of the Symbolist Movement” (1982), two “poetic attitudes” predominate within the Symbolist movement: the “intellectual,” and the “emotional-sentimental-moody” (31). As slippery and perhaps awkward as this either/or may be, this heuristic recognizes a division within Symbolist expressivity, which articulated color space helps to formalize.

Diagrammatically, the configuration of this Symbolist space might best be understood in terms of an axis or concentration gradient: one extreme reflects a more unified pictorial space where color (as description) is most subordinate to line/form (and narrative) (both here classically construed); at its opposite pole, explicit chromatic counterpoint and correspondence appear to destabilize immersive pictorial illusionism and render a more “composite” experience of representation. As discussed within previous chapters, the experience of explicit coloration in this case can underscore color’s differential status within an ambivalent signifying context, which can undermine “narrative” dominance, and evoke the micro-event/storia associated with color – line/form. Color is not entirely relieved of service to iconic line/form (and its narrativity), as might be argued of non-figurative pictorial representation. Rather, color appears licensed to alternate

between descriptive subordination to line/form and autonomous or self-reflexive (Symbolist) phenomenon.



**Figure 5.0** *Left:* Arnold Böcklin, *The Plague* (1898). Tempura on wood, 149 x 105 cm. Basel, Kunstmuseum.



**Figure 5.1** *Right:* Gustave Moreau, *The Sphinx* (1886). Watercolor, 31.5 x 17.7 cm. Private collection. Photographic reproduction.

resists simplistic verbal translation or allegorical explication. Like other painting, Symbolist painting “speaks,” alludes, etc. but disjunctions between color and line/form, familiar to composite representation, strategically complicate diegetic closure.

Gustave Moreau’s *The Sphinx* (1886) and Arnold Böcklin’s *The Plague* (1898) (figs. 5.0–5.1), for example, both potentially communicate familiar historico-mythical narratives (by way of visual reference and title card). *The Sphinx* evenly disperses its light-infused color palette across harmonious pictorial space such that its macabre other-worldliness suggests fidelity to a fantastic realism. What

Constellations of color, within Symbolist aesthetics, often exploit this color axis at both poles to curtail reductive signification. Much in the same way that, as Gerould (1985a, 7) explains, “Symbolist drama is irreducible to rational analysis or univocal interpretation,”

Symbolist painting also

Vajda might regard as the “swim” or “float” (31) of the painting’s “emotional-sentimental-moodiness” arguably derives from an interplay between the chiaroscuro of the painting’s broad luminous sky, the impassible thin blue wedge of its distant horizon, and the erotic figuration of youthful naked bodies melting and twisting into rocky landscape.<sup>126</sup>

Color’s apparent submission to the rhetoric of pictorial illusionism also works to configure this effect. In this case, color serves a perhaps morbid and decadent beautification of human history. Human bodies in *The Sphinx*, almost as layers of sediment, “pile up” or heap to suggest a temporal persistence of existential hunger, unlearned lessons, un-canceled yearnings, and repeated failures. The tragedy of youth’s bravado portrayed in the painting also is subsumed by its luminescent beauty. In this sense, the depiction of the impossible desire for passage and for perhaps “essential” understanding (i.e., *The Sphinx’s* riddle) does not here seem primarily designed to arouse existential uncertainty, but rather to celebrate the profit of its consummation through the erotic agony of its figuration. The Sphinx’s unswerving eyes and clear-conscienced face also appear to crown “nature’s” similarly indifferent rock pillar, which appears to absorb mortal failure as its very body (further differentiating Moreau’s symbolic conception of nature from that of the Romantics).<sup>127</sup>

Arnold Böcklin’s violent portrayal of a demonized plague scything through a town also uses



spatial recession and an even palette of tans, grays, and pale blues to constitute a fantastic pictorial space. Encumbering, however, a viewer’s immediate ability to reconstruct (in reverse) the events depicted across recessed space, an assertive black/red (and then perhaps white) color dialogue centers and thus commands attention. Just as Moreau’s *The Sphinx* divides its focus (and arguably locates its unnamed riddle) between the pillar of corpses and the craggy blue invagination through

which many sought passage, Böcklin’s figures diagonally orient attention within the brightly lit

foreground, dividing foreground from background despite the street's continuous lines of recession (in shadow). In Moreau's painting, diegetic content appears to guide attention from passageway to pillar: the Sphinx's riddle, its solution, and what justifies mortal risk beyond its threshold remain hidden. Böchlin's painting, while also dividing attention between two narrative-generating focal points, seems to foreground a chromatic interaction whose function exceeds descriptive "support" of narrative.

Although this chromatic relation might, as discussed earlier, be narrativized according to the relevance of color to story on an explanatory and symbolic level (Genette [1966] 1982), the opacity of Böchlin's black and red pigments as flat masses of color, emerging from a tonally-muted background, suggests self-reflexive attention to color itself. The centered attention on colors *qua* colors, opposite an "achromatic" ground, reinforces the presence of an enigmatic system of signification that "escapes" or transcends the boundaries of line/form (much like the ambiguous missing half of Wellek's truncated symbol that escapes determinative signification). The nature and function of color oscillate from connotative or adjectival endowment (black for "Black Death," etc.)<sup>128</sup> to signification "sui generis" as an ontologically autotelic system.<sup>129</sup>

Within *The Plague*, the connotative function of deep black as (winged) death and bright red as (violated) femininity serves the diegesis.<sup>130</sup> Heavy and confined, and thus apparently calculated chromatic investment, set against a chromatically-desaturated background, however, imputes to color space another level of signification. The division of chromatic and achromatic space (associated with line/form) reinforces a dialectic that suggests color as bearing its own relevance against and beside the strictures of line/form. The relative achromaticity (or desaturation) of the background also becomes symbolically charged as a non-Symbolist space, force, orientation, tradition, etc. *out from which* Symbolist desire, foregrounded, appears to ascend or "become."

This “multivalent” aspect of color’s relation to line/form, discussed here and above, goes beyond Symbolist practice. The Symbolist’s overt articulation of *color-space-as-destination* or separate “sphere,” through, in part, apparent composite representation, bears relevance to other chromatic practices salient during this period (discussed above). The privileging of color as an oppositional space *into which* Symbolists urged revolutionary departure also reinforces ideological questions about modes and theories of expression that regard color as superfluous, relief, decorative, poetic, feminine, etc. or restricted to “lesser” or degenerate genres such as “local color” or “decadence” (recall, for example, Nordau [1895]).

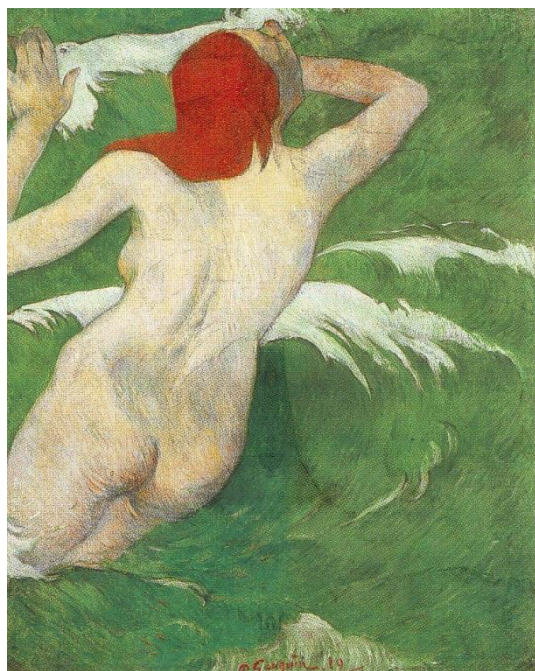
Kristeva’s (1980) psychoanalytical reading of a painter’s relation to colorization (vis-à-vis the generation of line/form) provides another understanding of this division between color – line/form. According to Kristeva,

Chromatic experience casts itself as a turning point between the ‘self’s’ conservative and destructive proclivities; it is the place of narcissistic eroticism (autoeroticism) and death drive—never one without the other. . . . Contrary to delineated *form* and *space*, as well as to *drawing* and *composition* subjected to the strict codes of representation and verisimilitude, color enjoys considerable freedom. (220, italics in the original)

Building on Kristeva’s notion of coexistent conservative and destructive proclivities, and Gerould’s (1985a, 8) explanation that a “dualistic vision of life in death and death in life is the central paradox of drama in the symbolist mode,” Symbolist composite representation suggests itself as another iteration of composite picturing during this period that intersects with other forms of composite representation (such as early photography, early cinema, etc.). Through suggestions of composite status, Böcklin’s painting differs from the Moreau-ean mode of depicting a more unified and immersive “emotional-sentimental-moodiness.” Located perhaps at the other end of the axis of Symbolist color space, the aesthetics of the *The Plague*, in Vajda’s terms, represents the more

fractured, “mathematical abstraction” of the “intellectual” Symbolist mood, which broader recognition of composite aesthetics during this period helps to contextualize.

As Kristeva (1980, 221–22) explains, pictorialized color can “shatter unity” and “provoke surface clashes of varying intensity.” Important to the concept of Symbolist color space, however, is to that figurally-bound color clashes do not necessarily entail an apparent disruption of pictorial space (as might black/red/tan within *The Plague*), but can simply render space of a different or “higher” order. As Post-Impressionism, Expressionism, Kandinsky’s non-representationalism, Malevich’s Suprematism, and Mondrian-Van Doesburg’s De Stijl were keen to demonstrate, vibrant color configuration can in fact appear to unify a plane of cohesive (if hermetic) meaning. As part of the legacy of Symbolism, these color constellations often suggested revolts against nature, rationality, monocular funneling, etc. in favor of a more pre-Renaissance discontinuity, heterogeneity, and



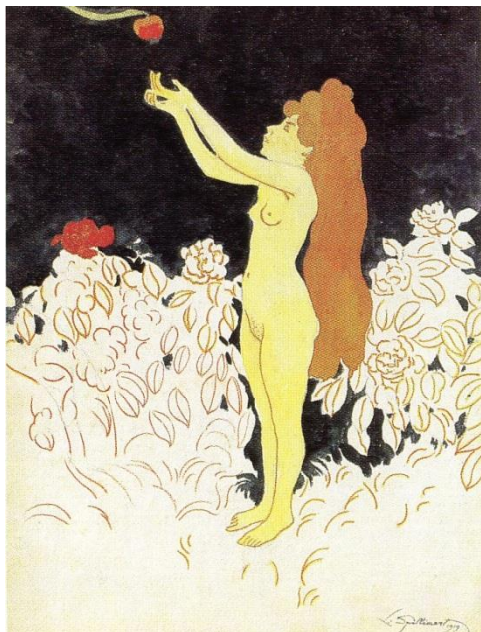
**Figure 5.2** Paul Gauguin, *Ondine* (1889). Oil on canvas, 92 x 72 cm. Cleveland (OH), Museum of Art.

Byzantine celebration of surface.

The fantastic red/green opposition within Gauguin’s *Ondine* (fig. 5.2), completed just three years after Moreau’s *The Sphinx*, might initially seem consonant with the self-referential chromatic counterpoint active within *The Plague*. Although *Ondine* does not evoke Moreau’s precious diffusion of light, it does, however, like *The Sphinx*, appear to unify a fantastic space. Yet *Ondine* remains “other” in not evoking departure from an established order within the diegesis. Everywhere and all over (like Moreau’s painting), *Ondine* represents a different (Symbolist) order entirely. With its figure’s unnaturally red hair, the tonic green of the sea, mixed

with a line/form still suggestive of mimetic realism or verisimilitude (Japanese two-dimensional landscape painting enriches Gauguin's waves), *Ondine* offers an alternative space for immersion.

Léon Spilliaert's *The Forbidden Fruit* (1919) (fig. 5.3), on the other hand, self-reflexively



**Figure 5.3** Léon Spilliaert, *The Forbidden Fruit* (1919). Indian ink wash and watercolor, 40 x 29 cm. Private collection.

frustrates this type of spectatorial absorption. Instead, it suggests a Symbolist departure (and all this departure symbolizes) into color space (and all it represents) by incorporating within its pictorial frame a subordinate achromatic or desaturated field. As a result, *departure-into* Symbolist space, rather than the *fantastic-as* Symbolist space, appears to dominate latent signification alongside the picture's more explicit narrative content (i.e., Eve's temptation to pluck forbidden fruit).<sup>131</sup> As with *The Plague*,

pictorial illusionism and three-dimensional space are undermined by the juxtaposition of vibrant flat paint against a contrasting ground. Here, however, Symbolic

engagement with familiar Symbolist themes, such as Evian/Promethean transgression, mysteriously powerful objects, the blind atmosphere of night, profound stasis, etc., reflect meta-Symbolist claims as the picture suggests desire for, or initiation to, a Symbolist realm.

The representation of Symbolist polemics through chromatic affiliation, which draws on discursive subtexts inherent to color – line/form, characterizes a rhetorical function of color space critical to the movement. This chromatic/achromatic dialectic, established by a meta-Symbolist division of space, cannot be reduced to a pre-Shklovskian or pre-Brechtian attempt to defamiliarize or “enstrange” the natural world, shatter illusionism, and alienate an audience. Rather, it represents an epistemological and spiritual deliverance, or transcendence of, the strictures of nineteenth-century

analytical functionalism, empirical rationalism, or other systems against which Symbolism has been traditionally understood to oppose.

Alexander Séon's *Orpheus Laments* (1896) (fig. 5.4) offers what might be considered a middle



**Figure 5.4** Alexander Séon, *Orpheus Laments* (1896). Oil on canvas, 73 x 116 cm. Paris, Musée d'Orsay.

point between the poles of color space previously discussed. Here, rough-textured stones and outcroppings diagonally orient space from immediate foreground (lower left) to recessed background (upper right). As attention passes back and forth across this diagonal, viewers are

encouraged to “leap” from stone to stone toward infinity. Positioned in line with this rhythmic chain, the body of Orpheus (like a rock among others) bears spatial correspondence to these landscape features. His shaded musculature, as well as the textured Baroque folds of his dress, associate his realistic (if idealized) form with other pictorial indicators of fantastic realism, such as whitecaps and lapping waves that depict an active sea beneath voluminous clouds.

The “neutral” colored sand upon which Orpheus has collapsed in lament, however, bears little signs of texture, and appears to absorb none of his weight. With a near-Surrealist precision, this stylized tan foundation serves to starkly define forms that encourage “visual travel” into a deep and bending distance. The “unnaturalness” of this effectively “absent” ground also serves to offset the rich violet (otherworldly) hue in which Séon invests such painterly attention. The Symbolist quality of *Orpheus Laments* in large part derives from the vacancy and stylization that the dialectic of color space here subtly affords. Within the diegesis of the painting, Orpheus visually disconnects from his

physical surroundings (his arm covering his eyes) just as his body seems hardly in contact with the highly-contrasted sand. Inhabiting a realm of mental anguish or perhaps even sleep, Orpheus has “departed” from a landscape from which an audience, passing visually across stones, his lyre, and his stone-like body, also are encouraged to “depart.” The painting organizes passage into another, “Symbolist” realm beyond the painting and perhaps beyond what vision is able to grasp.

### **Color Space and Symbolist Theater**

Color space as a motif of Symbolist representation extends to other spheres of activity in which the Symbolists found opportunity to depict or enact alternatives to traditional or more “bourgeois” orientations to life. For Symbolists, the “real” (physical) space and time of theater provided the greatest opportunity for representations of symbolic (transformational) departures that might effectively challenge aesthetic, philosophical, and socio-political rivals. As Gerould (1985a, 19) explains, Symbolist playwrights and painters were “closely aligned in their goals,” sharing, among other strategies, “the statuesque pose, [and] the suspended moment before dramatic action” as prominent devices for representing a Symbolist ethos. A shared rejection of “natural” or realist convention also can be found in Symbolist theater’s otherworldly presentations (recalling Moreau) and composite “departures” (recalling Spilliaert’s *Forbidden Fruit*) that distanced Symbolism from familiar theatrical paradigms for dialogue and scenario.

Toward this end, some Symbolist playwrights advocated the use of “wooden” performances, or actual masks and marionettes, in order to foreground artifice and diminish the presence of an actor’s “personality,” which might undermine the Symbolist prioritization of an alternative and “higher” reality. As the so-called anti-star Eleonora Duse (in Stokes 1980, 154) famously pronounced, “To save the theatre the theatre must be destroyed, the actors and actresses must all die of the plague: they poison the air, they make art impossible.” Maurice Maeterlinck ([1890] 2007), one

of the founders of Symbolist theater after Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, held similar convictions, suggesting:

If the human being comes on stage with all its powers and free as if it entered a forest, if its voice, its gestures and its attitudes are not veiled by a large number of synthetic conventions, if for a single instant the human being can be seen for what it is, there is no poem in the world that does not recede before it. . . . The spectacle of the poem becomes interrupted and we witness a scene of external life which . . . has its affinities with Eternity, but which is nonetheless incapable of wresting us from the present, because at this moment we do not have the capacity to perceive and appreciate these new and unforeseen affinities. (335)

Another means by which to mitigate theater's inclination toward realism was to overwhelm plot by sensorial event. By 1885, Wagner's influence on French Symbolism offered new ways to displace *Belle Époque* theatricality, whose bourgeois values and philistinism Symbolism regarded as vulgar (Rudorff 1972, 137). For Wagner, art as "an expression of a higher reality of spirit . . . should shape human life . . . instead of being merely an expression of society (mostly corrupt and coarsened by materialism)" (ibid.) His concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (or total work of art), from which Scriabin's Symbolist *Mysterium* arose years later, sought to appeal to all of the senses through poetry, music, dance, light spectacle, perfume, etc.

Just as pictorial Symbolism experimented with effects of composite representation as well as a more unified "emotional-sentimental-moodiness," theatrical Symbolism often enacted rites of Symbolist passage into (truncated) symbolic space, or realized more totalized illusions of "other" Symbolist worlds. Lugne-Poë's production of Maeterlinck's *Pelléas and Mélisande* on May 17, 1893, is noteworthy for its apparent achievement of both Symbolist approaches. According to reports, Lugne-Poë's use of darkness, flat and muted color, and a gauze veil stretched across the stage, likely

conveyed both the dreamy atmosphere of a Moreau-ean sensibility and the self-reflexivity of composite pictures.

Conspicuous diegetic light and explicit color, for example, interact with the play's more "distant ether" of fantasy.<sup>132</sup> Within the darkness of the opening act, sunlight streams through fissures in the heavy castle gate (1.1) as the sun rises over the sea (1.2). Later, Maeterlinck similarly exploits directional (rather than diffuse) moonlight to symbolically pierce space: dramatically, the moon "tears through [a] great cloud" (2.3). Mélisande's charged report of "a rose" embedded within the blackness of "the shadows" (2.3) also presages a chromatic interaction suggestive of Spilliaert's *The Forbidden Fruit*.

Maeterlinck's Symbolist use of light and color to penetrate blackness also can be found within his earlier and more minimalist play, *The Intruder* (1890). Given the diegetic significance to the play of faint sensory impressions, it is significant to notice within the minutia of *The Intruder's* stage directions a chromatic bursting forth that foreshadows the play's climax: just moments before the Intruder passes beyond the threshold of the home, "a ray of moonlight penetrates through a corner of [the predominately green] stained glass [window], throwing strange gleams . . . in the [dark] room" (65). This combination of explicit color and light functions as a critical representative of Symbolist alterity within the play, which also reinforces a broader thematic treatment of a Symbolist approach to light itself.

Although Maeterlinck's plays typically value extreme perceptual deprivation as a means to access truth beyond the empirical, *The Intruder* demonstrates an interest in the dynamics of light, affiliated with explicit color and counterpoised to darkness, as capable of representing the Symbolist approach to vision. For example, the Symbolist hero of *The Intruder* is the aged, maligned, and "blind" grandfather. He does not, however, wholly lack sight.

Instead, Maeterlinck affords his Symbolist elder the ability to distinguish the appearance of the passage of intense light through darkness, a perceptual faculty that ultimately bears conspicuous Symbolist metaphor. The grandfather is the only character within the play, despite (or rather because of) his blindness, who is able to perceive the impending “intrusion” (he is able to “see the light”). In this, he becomes the drama’s perceptual leader whose “vision” the audience is encouraged to respect and follow. This Symbolist transvaluation of “limitation” idealizes the dominant perceptual faculty of sight as one in which light/color might be allowed to overwhelm the sharp outlines of line/form, and attune subjects to more profound realities and experience.

Gabriele D’Annunzio’s *The Dead City* ([1898] 1923) centers on a similar meta-Symbolist figure in the character of the blind Anna. Like Maeterlinck’s “grandfather,” Anna’s relation to color and light repeatedly dramatizes a Symbolist departure. For example, although she always awakes “in darkness, always in night,” she explains that “Of nearly all things [she] has a recollection, of the things [she] saw when still in the light” (3). For Anna, however, these objects do not respect mimetic boundaries of color and line/form, nor does she identify them primarily according to their rationalized functions. Instead, they exist as unidentified “shapes . . . colors . . . [and] the most minute particulars” that “rise . . . out of the darkness” (3).

In fact, Anna’s fantastic evocations appear “truncated”: typical markers of identification are withheld from the audience, and only colors and indistinct shapes arise from a background of darkness. Through “blindness,” the banality of ordinary sight and identifiable objects is transcended by colored “perfect pictures” (3) (of nothing), which emerge from an achromatic void. Recalling Maeterlinck, at one point Anna also describes her blindness (that blackness) as penetrable by bright light. She speaks of a time when direct rays triggered visions of “something like a red vapor, scarcely perceptible, or at times a sparkling similar to that issuing from the hard flint, almost painful” (3).

Here, D'Annunzio also invokes the color theory of Goethe ([1810] 1970, lvi), for whom color arises necessarily from the interaction of darkness and light—red being nearest to darkness, is the first to “emerge.” For Goethe, “each color, in its lightest state, is a dark [sic],” and all colors, when darkened, become red (277), suggesting red as a type of ur-color here especially vital to Symbolist aesthetics as an alternative paradigm.

Within Symbolist practice, blindness does not represent a physiological condition that restores an appreciation for vision; rather, it is an achromatic foundation from which a “new” orientation to vision is able to reconstitute objects as aesthetic entities. Symbolist “blindness” allows for the reconfiguration of the “default” relation between color and line/form, and in doing so, also challenges naturalistic imperatives and their bourgeois associations. Interactions between color and line/form within Symbolist theater, and perhaps even within Symbolist painting, might be approached according to their ability to reproduce effects of “blindness” within an audience that might broadly catalyze Symbolist transvaluation (recall the chain of Symbolist analogues from the introduction above).

Within paintings such as Alexander Séon's *Orpheus Laments*, in which a stark, untextured, and relatively “unnatural” foundation of chromatically-desaturated ground contrasts with the more mimetic rendering of rock, sea, sky, and figure, space may be understood as organized not only to facilitate the passage across line/form toward a diegetic point of infinity, but to recreate a perceptual lack (e.g., flattened, “out-of-focus” sand) that might bring into question a naturalized orientation to vision. The bright light of sand, contrasting with darker, textured surfaces, in this way also might resemble Anna's description of blind sight as “a sparkling similar to that issuing from the hard flint.” In this sense, *Orpheus Laments* confronts spectators with a natural/unnatural composite in part constituted by a Symbolist construction of blindness, and color space.

Other Symbolist dramatists made even more prevalent use of this “blinding” effect in combination with explicit coloration. Stage directions for Leonidas Andreyev’s prologue to *The Life of Man* (1906), for example, call for a “Being in Grey” within an empty gray rectangular room. Andreyev stresses “Everything in it is grey: grey walls, grey ceiling, grey floor, . . . grey light.” The Being wears a “grey robe,” and a “grey scarf” that frames his countenance, which is described as “massive and solid, as if hewn from grey stone” (67).

This achromatic Being reads, in what could be described as a gray tone (“with severe indifference”), from the *Book of Fate*, which describes an arguably gray (or colorless) human condition: Man, “limited in knowledge . . . limited in vision,” will come “from the night” and “return to the night” (68). Through this explicit coloration, Andreyev compels heightened awareness to color words throughout the prologue, as well as attention to their absence. This lends special attention to two nouns within the prologue that bear pronounced, if tacit, coloration.

Appearing at the end of the prologue, the chromatic constitution of each noun, much like color words, for example, discussed above in Freeman’s “A New England Nun,” appear to erupt from an otherwise achromatic space: a “sudden” impression of “red” surges into the play with the introduction of “*blood in the heart*” (69). Without the preceding explicit coloration of gray, the tacit “red” of the “blood” and “heart” might not contrast with surrounding space as starkly (both in print and on the stage).

In fact, “red” does not appear at all; color is only evoked tacitly by two signifiers, and even then, these signifiers are only words within a book (*The Book of Fate*), which appear as words within a play. As a result of this careful Symbolist calibration, the play suggests the “escape” of color from objects in much the same way that black and red alternate between narrative service and Symbolist chromatic dialogue within Böcklin’s *The Plague*. For example, stage direction in Act One again makes

use of explicit coloration to depict the “grey” silhouettes of Old Women who resemble “grey, hiding mice.” A page later, color erupts through the “greenish” hue of wet, drowned females.

Given the play’s universalizing depiction of “the life of man,” Andreyev’s attention to explicit and tacit coloration involves a critique of the hegemonic “grey” of verbal expression itself. As Rood ([1879] 1973, 310) explained in *Modern Chromatics*, the explicit addition of color to a picture alerts viewers/readers to a monochrome “dullness” primary to the rest of it. Andreyev, in effect, draws on such an idea to level a critique of that world. By coding (and coating) a fruitless humanity and its rationality in “grey,” and then piercing this monochrome picture with bursts of color, Andreyev reinforces attention to the foundations of language as disproportionately achromatic—part of humanity’s doomed fate through the limitations of language—and he attacks this “rational order” by enacting a Symbolist departure. Andreyev interjects through explicit and tacit coloration a now familiar chromatic dialogue by which color resists ontological reduction to mere description or the qualification of existents.

Andreyev’s apparent distrust of language also recalls Maeterlinck’s distrust of theater as a perhaps inherently naturalistic genre, which points to a broader critique in Symbolist aesthetics of symbolic representation in favor of the truncated symbol. Following Mallarmé, Maeterlinck ([1891] 1994, 145) questions theater’s ability to get beyond actors, whose humanity compromises a play’s symbolic range. As he explains, “the stage is where masterpieces go to die . . . because the symbol never withstands the active presence of man.” Just as theater for Maeterlinck might not be able to escape flaws integral to the genre, for others language to some extent suffered from inherent symbolic limitations, which Symbolist color space in part could serve to transcend.

Maeterlinck’s critique of theater as perhaps useful only for deficient individuals, who were unable to see for themselves, echoed debates earlier in the century against photography’s empirical literalism. For Baudelaire ([1859] 1980, 84), recall, monochrome photography constituted only a

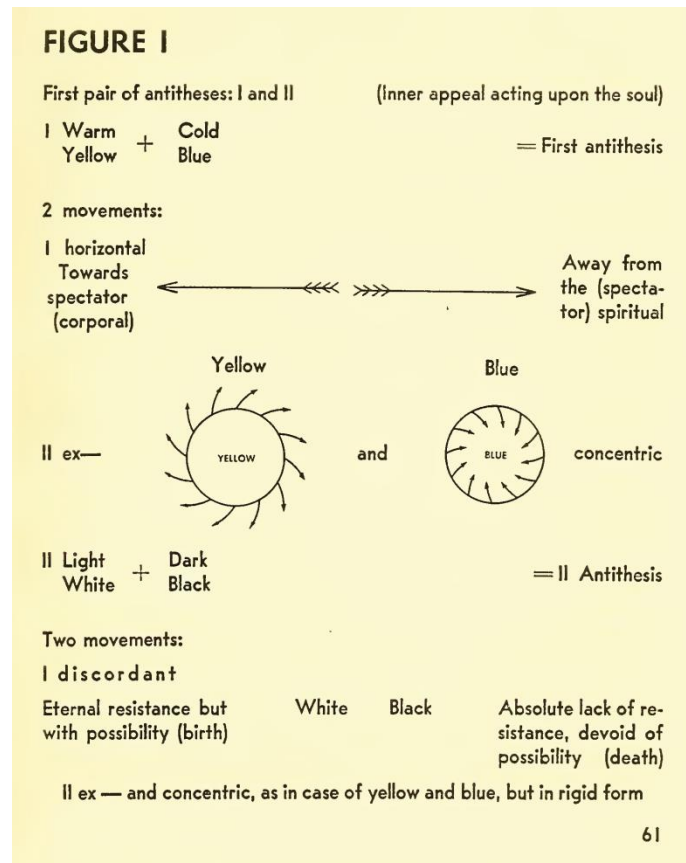
“superficial” record valuable to individuals who needed to “restore . . . the precision [their] memory may lack.” The perceived failure of theater to transcend the reductive account of experience, promoted by mimetic “realism,” was a sentiment more broadly shared by advocates of composite (photo-cinematic) representation throughout this period, by which color in part could be made to stand in for a variety of “immaterial” aspects of life, and as well as symbolic transgressions.<sup>133</sup>

Symbolist color practices broadly challenged the traditional subordination of color to the imperatives of line/form based on a philosophical opposition to (empirically) limited accounts of reality and experiential possibility. What the Symbolists make especially evident, however, is that the revolt of color space can be understood as latent within composite fields of representation beyond any affiliation with Symbolism (proper), which metachromatics helps to foreground for revelation.

## CHAPTER SIX

The Pain/Pleasure of Blue: Chromatic Coding in *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) and  
 “The Woman Who Rode Away” ([1928] 1998)

PLUS	MINUS
yellow	blue
action	negation
light	shadow
brightness	darkness
force	weakness
warmth	coldness
proximity	distance
repulsion	attraction
acidic	basic
gay	melancholy
soft	



**Figure 6.0** Examples of polarized color attributes posited by Goethe, *Theory of Colours* ([1810], 1970, 276). List assembled by me based on the original.

**Figure 6.1** “Figure 1” Reproduced from Wassily Kandinsky ([1912] 1945, 61). First English translation.

### A Tradition of Blue – Yellow Polarity

Critics have paid D. H. Lawrence's short-story "The Woman Who Rode Away" ([1928] 1998) and Olive Schreiner's novel *The Story Of An African Farm* (1883) significant but rarely overlapping critical attention despite the fact that coupling the two stories prompts useful discussions involving issues of identity, imperialism, and chromatic encoding. Juxtaposing these stories might especially lead to an interest in how Schreiner's arguably "New Woman" narrative instantiates a critique of the destructive power of entrenched patriarchal hegemony that the conclusion of Lawrence's text just four decades later might be said to celebrate.

Whereas Lyndall of *African Farm* dies defeated because of gender subjugation, Lawrence's nameless female protagonist "succeeds" as a type of cosmological heroine ("reuniting" the sun and moon, male and female) *because* she seeks and consummates her own mortal submission. Explicit coloration involving "blue," moreover, in both stories appears to code suffering according to the popular chromatic polarity established by Goethe ([1810] 1970) at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and elaborated by Kandinsky ([1912] 1945) a century later, by which blue was understood to induce inherent psychological effects and possess certain patterns of recessive movement (figs. 6.0–6.1).

Within "The Woman Who Rode Away" and *African Farm*, the color blue purposefully resists exegetic simplification (both for characters and readers). Why "blue" (as opposed to any other color) registers the slipping pain/pleasure throughout both stories is perhaps an even more difficult question.<sup>134</sup> Most historians of color, such as Pastoureau (2000, 7), argue that any attempt to analyze color symbolism "universally" is futile (and intellectually irresponsible). For Pastoureau, there is no "transcultural truth to color perception, despite what many books based on poorly grasped neurobiology or—even worse—on pseudoesoteric pop psychology would have us believe." Although limiting the symbolic constitution of blue, based on the (cultural, material, etc.) presence

of blue in, say, 1880s South Africa (or England), perhaps binds the imagination of the writer and reader too rigidly to a temporally and regionally circumscribed range of signification, an historical contextualization of blue adds to an understanding of its explicit use throughout the novel.

Influenced by the expanded use of the colorant indigo—imported to Europe from only a handful of regions in which the indigo plant grows, chief among them, Africa (colonized by England)—blue by the 1890s was regarded in opinion polls as Europe’s favorite color (Pastoureau 2000, 170). According to Pastoureau, this popularity may be traced back to the eighteenth century, however, at which point the symbolism of blue began to broaden. In fact, by this point blue was “enthroned as the worthiest color,” and became associated with “progress, enlightenment, dreams and liberty” (124).

Given the regional and temporal context of *African Farm* as a South African, English, New Woman, revolutionary novel, perhaps these connotations informed Schreiner’s complex, paradoxical use of blue to connote romantic longing, freedom, and oppression. Similarly, the color blue in Lawrence’s story marks freedom and oppression, pleasure and pain, life and death, and romantic longing.

Intratextually, perhaps the blue of the “blue gum tree” (205) in *African Farm* under which Lyndall’s dead baby is buried; the blue of the bags, rags and handkerchiefs; and frequent explicit coloration of “blue” eyes, simply refer back to the sea, which as Waldo writes, is “Of all the things I have ever seen, [the only thing] like a human being . . . . It never rests; it is always wanting, wanting, wanting. It hurries on; and then it creeps back slowly without having reached, moaning” (196). Song within *African Farm*, such as Em’s “Blue Water,” also appears to lilt with a similar repetition: “And take me away, / And take me away, / And take me away, / To the Blue Water.”

In addition to its material contextualization, however, the novel’s repeated suggestion of blue’s linkage to recessive movement, and to submission within the story, suggests perhaps the

influence of popular theories of the “inherent” properties of color. The blue sea’s “wanting, wanting, wanting,” for example, also recalls Lyndall’s exclamation “self, self, self,” which invokes the so-called inward and outward movements of color theorized by Goethe (1810 [1970]) and Kandinsky ([1912] 1925).

Within his *Theory of Colours*, Goethe argued for the existence of only two primary colors, blue and yellow, each of which bearing opposing properties (fig. 6.0). Blue was said to be the color of negation, or more literally, “privation.” It was the color of shadow, darkness, weakness, coldness, distance, and attraction. In *On the Spiritual in Art* (1912), Kandinsky extended Goethe’s chromatic binarization based on this two-color system. For Kandinsky, blue also (always) has “a centripetal motion . . . in which the viewer becomes immersed” (179); it moves, inward, concentrically upon itself. According to Kandinsky, this movement contrasts with yellow, which moves outward, “eccentrically”: a notion in keeping with Goethe’s designation of yellow as the color of “repulsion.” For both Goethe and Kandinsky, blue draws the viewer near; it recedes and it inspires “want”; whereas yellow engenders proximity.

Applying this schema to the ending of both stories, we recall that “blue” perhaps encodes a yearning for ontological unity (“wanting, wanting, wanting”), and yellow moves “outward” toward the self and allows it to dissolve, or extinguish. In the same way that the blue-eyed nameless woman waits for the “yellow rays [of the sun] . . . filling . . . the cave” to melt the ice and signal her release from desire (398), Waldo sits in the “yellow sunshine . . . stretching out his hand . . . craving those tiny sparks of brother life . . ., strange little brother spirits [‘tiny yellow chickens’]” before he dies (233). He realizes that happiness resides in “taking no part in the world’s life,” and he fades away, content, as he is met by the yellow light and the yellow chickens that overtake his body (232). Lawrence’s protagonist also dies content in the advancing yellow light.

This chromatic encoding suggests the argument that Waldo, and Lawrence's nameless woman, free themselves from the inward, "concentric" desires of the self (of the "blue"). The descriptions of death that conclude both stories (Lyndall staring into her own reflection on the mountain, whose blue eludes her; and the nameless woman who rode away, dissolving in yellow light within a mountain cave) reinforce this interest in the correlation of the dynamics of yellow and blue, and psychic desire.

Hackett (2004, 51) argues that the "deaths at the end [of *African Farm*] form the critique Schreiner makes of the Cape Colony: New Women and New Men are more developed forms of humanity than can thrive in the society in which they are located." Clayton (1983, 24) agrees, suggesting that Lyndall and Waldo "together would be complete, but in the imperfect world to which the novel is faithful that completeness is not attained." Given the tenacity of the existential paradox Schreiner encodes in blue, however, it seems more likely that her conception of desire promises everything but "completion" irrespective of the world's imperfections. This conclusion of course does not dampen the revolutionary thrust of the novel, or suggest its indifference in the face of oppressive conditions. Rather, it permits Schreiner's narrative the uncomfortable, unmanageable "blue" pain colored within it, which neat polemical appropriations of the novel expunge to its detriment.

### **Misogynistic/Feministic Subjects and Objects**

Both *African Farm* and "The Woman Who Road Away" leave readers with two very different pictures of women struggling for fulfillment. Lyndall, the protagonist of *African Farm*, dies staring miserably and ironically at her own reflected eyes into which she had earlier declaimed: "We are not afraid, you and I; we are together; we will fight, you and I" (218). The narrator then dubiously asks, "Had she found what she sought for . . .?" (219). Lawrence's heroine, on the other hand, dies reduced to a symbol, sacrificing herself to a primitivist, patriarchal leader. Lawrence's narrator also

frames the concluding death for readers, but in his case, the female sacrifice is affirmed with dreamy admiration for the killer: “The mastery that man must hold, and that passes from race to race” (398).<sup>135</sup>

The ideological contrast that these two stories bear appears even starker when their structures are analyzed to reveal how the two texts motivate actions. Applying A. J. Greimas’s (1987) theoretical model proves particularly useful. This framework, centered on the notion of desire said to motivate action and the impulses in “deep (psychological) structures,” describes narratives as comprising actants (things or beings) that participate in “actantial processes” as subjects or objects; senders or receivers; helpers or opponents.

Examining the female protagonists of Schreiner and Lawrence as “subjects,” Lyndall and the unnamed woman are shown to have the same “object”: personal fulfillment and freedom from oppressive conditions binding them to dehumanizing futures. Both subjects, as representatives of their gender, can be understood as having been sent on “quests.” Success in both stories, which frame these female quests in broader and political terms, suggests the attainment of forms of liberation (for all women).

The two stories diverge, however, as their “helpers” and “opponents”—things or beings that assist or impede the subjects’ quests for objects—are compared. Within “The Woman Who Rode Away,” the opponent of the protagonist is her “confidence in her own female power” (373) typified by her “sex-consciousness” (385) as a “highly-bred white woman” (387) acculturated and “over-educated” by a so-called bankrupt society. The convincing rhetoric, symbolic discourse, and powerful physical body (forceful eyes and flesh) of the “primitive” male in the story serve as the “helper” on her mission toward “fulfillment.”

Within Schreiner’s story, however, the helper/opponent actants are transposed. Lyndall’s “opponent” is the male physical body (she essentially dies from an unwanted pregnancy) and

unconquerable institutions of patriarchy (poor systems of female education, rights depriving marriage, etc.). Lyndall's *only* helper is confidence in her own female power, steeled against conditions threatening to vanquish it. She dies without attaining her "object" of female liberation and institutional change. The elusive object of this incomplete quest is then passed along to readers, whom the story then attempts to enlist as subjects.<sup>136</sup> Lawrence's heroine, on the other hand, dies "fulfilled" by her submission. And her success, like Lyndall's failure, likewise passes along at least a figurative inducement to willing readers: men, embolden your domination, and women, submit—both for your own sake.

Lain side-by-side, these tales clearly provide opposing appraisals of female submission as it features in (and beyond) late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century institutional patriarchy. Perhaps more interesting, they also bear striking intertextual signification that suggests a complicated pervasiveness of submission laced throughout both narratives. Surprisingly, Schreiner's *New Woman* novel overlaps with Lawrence's arguably misogynistic allegory. Significantly, both female and male characters in *African Farm* appear to court suffering, which is also often marked by explicit blue coloration. As a result of their powerlessness, they experience an accented "thrill of exultation" (Lawrence, 374) similar to that enjoyed by Lawrence's sacrificial victim who also appears to savor her "blue" submission.

Both texts also share a systematic color scheme that encodes this religiously, psychologically, and philosophically complex suffering. A constellation of masochistic suffering, explicitly and repeatedly marked by the color word "blue," whose "movement" and properties also suggest the color schemes of Goethe and Kandinsky, makes these ostensibly very different stories fertile ground for shared inquiry.

According to Heilmann (2004, 122, 124), "Schreiner believed in redemption through self-abnegation . . . [and] her life and work embody the conflict between the need for . . . self-realization

and the *moral importance* of altruistic self-sacrifice” (italics mine). In this way, Schreiner “tap[s] into the feminist unconscious of the time . . . [by using] the central Christian metaphor of self-sacrifice and the transfiguration of the material body into transcendental energy” (125). Although Heilmann offers valuable religious context to Schreiner’s oeuvre and its intersection with late-nineteenth-century feminism, *African Farm*, arguably her most influential work, is not so easily read as a clear-cut Christian allegory in which unquestioned self-abnegation yields unambiguous moral reward.

### **Suffering in Blue**

The novel’s first curious example of submission belongs to Otto, the pious German overseer of the farm of ‘Tant’ Sannie, in which the story is predominantly set. When an obviously dangerous charlatan, Bonaparte Blenkins, intrudes upon the property that Otto is supposed to protect, instead of acting with caution or circumspection to guard his son, the rest of the inhabitants, and their property, he indulges in a personal fantasy of submission. He sees neither “the bloated body nor the evil face of the man”—a fraudulence recognized even by the small children, Lyndall and Em—“but the form that long years of dreaming had made very real to him”: Jesus in “disguise” (20).

As a result of this fantasy, Otto welcomes the confidence trickster onto the farm, and abjectly defers to him. When later he is made aware of his mistake, Otto “ejaculates ‘Ah, I thought so!—That was a rogue! I saw it before!—I knew it from the beginning!’” (53). Although what he actually knows is debatable, his temptation to reduce himself, and to submit repeatedly to the stranger, is foregrounded as a seductive vice that consumes his judgment.

Another such instance occurs when a “Kaffir woman” entreats Otto to assuage her apparently questionable hunger and poverty. Otto again immediately seizes the opportunity and views her “like Hagar [of the bible]” (47). He “ejaculates Yes, yes, yes” as he rides home eager to sacrifice some of his meager provisions for charity (46). He then ties up food in “three blue

handkerchiefs” (46), waits for privacy to guard the (pleasurable) altruism of his act, and then presents his gifts.

As he rides away, he is depicted exaggeratedly “nodding his head [with self-satisfaction] in a manner that would have made any other man dizzy” (47). The narrator of *African Farm* clearly accords naivety and indulgence to Otto’s “self-sacrifices,” and rather than reaffirming renunciation as a normative model, seems to critique it as a rather tendentious, cloaked pleasure. An historical reader might have been reminded more of, say, the cynical portrayal of Mr. Briand’s calculated altruism in Henry James’s *The Europeans* ([1878] 2005), rather than the “faithful” parable to which this chapter appears ironically to allude (“I Was a Stranger, and Ye Took Me In”).<sup>137</sup>

Soon after Otto’s dizzying nod, Bonaparte the conman engineers Otto’s unjust dismissal from the farm. Instead of fighting back, Otto again recognizes an opportunity for gratifying submission. He acquiesces, and in fact harnesses Bonaparte’s aggression to then compound his self-debasement. By leaving his possessions behind, he also allows himself to be punished further.

To accompany this punishment, Schreiner again makes use of explicit coloration. Otto prepares and contemplates his small “blue tobacco bag,” and small “blue handkerchief” bundle with such satisfaction that he almost “forgets his sorrow at leaving” (53). He swells with pleasure at leaving with so little (“That is not much; they cannot say I take much”) despite the fact that, as he pointedly writes to the children (and posterity), “The things are all mine” (52). An “un-silent” note highlights his sacrifice: “I am silent. Let it be. But I feel it. I must say I feel it” (52). He feels the pain of having to quit the farm; but the narrator complicates this suffering by attaching to it a masochistic satisfaction.

From a psychoanalytical perspective, Shirley Panken (1983) explains what might be understood as this “moral masochism” as “moral motivation” mixed with “unconscious masochistic gratification.” She continues,

One's own suffering is regarded as a manifestation of the degree of ingratiating or of the amount one is prepared to endure to gain the father's forgiveness. . . . For most, some degree of self-sacrifice and a need for effacement or subordination of self to a higher authority are deeply rooted longings. . . . There is considerable evidence that some moral masochistic impulses are essential if we are to be content with ourselves. (41–42, 44)

As Brenner (1959) explains, however, masochistic versus non-pathological “self-sacrifice” is crucially a matter of degree.

In the case of Otto, Schreiner underscores the extent to which religious fantasies of suffering occupy him personally and jeopardize his moral position. Selfishly, rather than selflessly, Otto leaves the children and his own son in the hands of a scoundrel who later tyrannizes them. Otto's departure deprives them of safe haven, yet he expresses no concern in this regard. Instead, Otto is described as being preoccupied with the tightening of “blue” bundles. This gratifying submission is just one of the many instances of suffering within the story associated with the explicit coloration “blue.” As within previous examples of literature, discussed above, these moments of

## CHAPTER X.

### GREGORY ROSE HAS AN IDEA.

GREGORY ROSE was in the loft putting it neat. Outside the rain poured; a six months' drought had broken, and the thirsty plain was drenched with water. What it could not swallow ran off in mad rivulets to the great sloop, that now foamed like an angry river across the flat. Even the little furrow between the farm-house and the kraal was now a stream, knee-deep, which almost bore away the Kaffir women who crossed it. It had rained for twenty-four hours, and still the rain poured on. The fowls had collected — a melancholy crowd — in and about the wagon-house, and the solitary gander, who alone had survived the six months' want of water, walked hither and thither printing his webbed foot-marks on the mud, to have them washed out the next instant by the pelting rain, which at eleven o'clock still beat on the walls and roofs with unabated ardor.

Gregory, as he worked in the loft, took no notice of it beyond stuffing a sack into the broken pane to keep it out; and, in spite of the pelt and patter, Em's clear voice might be heard through the open trap-door from the dining-room, where she sat at work, singing the “Blue Water,” —

“And take me away,  
And take me away,  
And take me away,  
To the Blue Water,” —

Figure 6.2 Olive Schreiner, *Story of an African Farm* ([1883] 1890, 297). Coloration mine.

explicit coloration can appear to erupt into an otherwise achromatic or only tacitly-colored story world, and invite metachromatic experience and consideration (fig. 6.2).

Tracing the appearance of suffering throughout the novel, and in particular, suffering highlighted by “blue”—a word that describes the sky over the bitter-sweet “lonely plain” in its first sentence—foregrounds instances of suffering also perhaps related to Lawrence’s story of self-sacrifice in which the color also factors prominently. The exchange, for example, between the blue-eyed nameless protagonist, and the “captors” whom she sought, is characteristic of Lawrence’s similarly explicit use of color words to suggest, in this case, a primitivist initiation to color:

There followed a day of ceremonial, when she was brought out before all the people, in a *blue* blanket with white fringes, and holding *blue* feathers in her hands. . . . Only one personal question she asked the young Indian: “Why am I the only one that wears *blue*?”

“It is the colour of the wind. It is the colour of what goes away and is never coming back, but which is always here, waiting like death among us. It is the colour of the dead.” (392, italics mine)

The color blue here dresses the willing victim, and the paradox of its symbolism harmonizes with the pain/pleasure that arises from her submission. This chromatically-coded instance of submission parallels similar moments of explicit coloration in *African Farm*, which similarly correlate with withdrawal and existential transition.

Waldo, like his father Otto, also is shown to be morally and physically aroused by acts of submission. Although for the shyer Waldo the expression of this thrill appears more muted, and is revealed often retrospectively in flashes by the narrator, his suffering involves just as much satisfaction. While still just a small child, for example, Waldo arranges twelve, small (apostolic) stones on an altar that he constructs between two bushes. He then draws from a “blue bag” his lunch mutton, and places it on the altar as a sacrifice to god (5). He prays once aloud, and twice

again, as he waits for a response. Unanswered, he looks up to the sky where “nothing broke the intense stillness of the blue overhead” (6). He waits, and then despairingly throws his meat into the field, with the unending muteness of the blue sky foregrounded to add enduring weight to this apparent withdrawal by god.

Like his father, Waldo also accepts unjust punishment for a crime invented by the malevolent Bonaparte. He remains quiet, while Bonaparte, with a penknife, sadistically “slit[s] [his] shirt down from the shoulder to the waist” and whips him (80). Schreiner also infuses erotic intimacy into moments preceding the beating: “It was perfectly quiet; they could hear each other’s breath”; Bonaparte then says, “I think we had better have your naked back” (80). The boy’s shirt is then erotically “slit” and peeled back like a theater curtain as the downward (playful) penknife reaches Waldo’s (and Bonaparte’s) waist. Here, the shirt is needlessly cut and destroyed rather than simply removed in an act of discipline.

As he lashes Waldo, Bonaparte pauses, and while still behind him, he “peep[s] around into his face” to question “Nice, eh? . . . Cold, eh” (81). Afterward, Waldo looks up at him “not sullenly, not angrily” (81). Schreiner’s leading construction (“not . . . , not . . .”) as a reaction to a sadistic game (the punishment is not “deserved,” and both know it) suggests more than stolid pride, especially in light of what the narrator later reveals more explicitly about Waldo’s enthusiasm for suffering.

Given “Bonaparte’s” self-inflation, despotism, and his exploitative relationship with Tant’ Sannie, this scene reinforces his characterization as a sadist.<sup>138</sup> Waldo’s silent submission here also merits consideration according to the traditional definition of the masochist.<sup>139</sup> Although more particularly relevant analyses of sadism and masochism (and sadomasochism) from the vast writings on the topic will be discussed below, it is first valuable to examine within the novel the Christian ethic that seems to justify the masochism experienced by Waldo and his father.

In the chapter “Time and Seasons,” readers learn that Waldo is very familiar with Biblical scripture, that he knows all about “the old “Thou shalt,”” and that he does not “care about it” (90). Still he finds a chapter in the book of Matthew, which mandates suffering, viscerally arousing. Schreiner emphasizes Waldo’s corporeal thrill over its passionate language. Its authority “sets [him] on fire” as he extrapolates that it requires him to “deny [himself],” to “keep quiet [and] (feel oh, so happy)” when the Kaffirs throw sand at him (90).

Referring back to Panken (1983) on masochism provides a better sense of what might underpin Waldo’s enthusiasm for the “exotically virtuous” (90) and also attract Lawrence’s heroine. In “Time and Seasons,” Schreiner’s narrator describes why individuals choose to “bear the greatest stones”: we “feel a satisfaction when we stagger under them, and are hurt by a pang that shoots through our chest” (100). This general description of suffering perhaps helps to explain why Waldo, despite the whipping, later gives up his dinner, his bed, his hat, and his money to the rogue Bonaparte. It also suggests why Waldo as an adult frequently accepts unjust, painful working conditions, and even allows his beloved horse to be borrowed (and subsequently killed) by a base man whom he abhors.<sup>140</sup>

From a related but secular vantage point, the narrator offers another universalism that describes the reward of accepting pain: “of all . . . crying there comes nothing. The lifting up of the hands brings no salvation; redemption is from within, and neither from God nor man: it is wrought out by the soul itself, with suffering and through time” (181). Taken together, these assertions provide a thread, often tagged by the word “blue,” which unifies the novel’s many moments of suffering. Pain in *African Farm* is never allowed to stand alone; instead, suffering involves physical arousal and the pleasure of advancing toward god or an equally-elusive but secular redemptive “Truth.”

Through the secularized, *Pilgrim's Progress*-like story of Waldo's stranger, who, drawn to the figure of Waldo because it "attracted him and it hurt him" (106), unpacks a tale carved in Waldo's "grotesque" statue, the reader encounters examples of what Panken (1983, 141) describes as the "pleasure in pain' orientation . . . in Western European . . . culture [that] stress[es] . . . the value of pain and suffering as a necessary prelude to salvation." In the stranger's tale, the character Wisdom (in the land of Absolute Negation and Denial) avers "The eyes must be washed with tears that are to behold me; and according as a man has suffered, I speak" (108–109). Similarly, Waldo's stranger hypostasizes Truth as "that great wild [unreachable] bird . . . sailing in the blue" (109).

As throughout the novel, "blue" here signals withdrawal and suffering. It colors the realm in which "Truth" resides, but from which it never descends. Throughout *African Farm*, this blue sky shifts from being like an oppressive "small blue rag [resembling Waldo's and Otto's sacrificial handkerchiefs] stretched out over us . . . so low that our hands might touch it, pressing down on us" to the "immeasurable blue arch over our heads" (103). In both cases, the blue of the sky suggests the suffering of being beneath and subordinate to a controlling force. It also obliquely invokes Hegel's concept of "lordship and bondage," which appears to factor into Em's conception of love (discussed below).

Schreiner's characterization of Gregory Rose suggests the novel's most vivid expression of masochism. After Gregory falls in love with Em, for example, he writes a letter to his sister with self-conscious satisfaction (recalling Otto's note) declaring that if Em will not marry him, he will commit suicide. Evincing his Romantic/masochistic predilection, Gregory's blue eyes "read over [the letter] with much approval" (124). Although, rhetorically, suicide is presented as the alternative to life without Em, not surprisingly, tropes of self-sacrifice package his understanding of love as well. To win her heart (which is already won), Gregory soars with romantic scenarios poorly

imitating metaphysical poetry: “If you were in hell I would go after you to find you there! If you were dead, though my body moved, my soul would be under the ground with you” (127).

Although Em remains sober despite his perfumed speech, she too sees love in terms of submission, and replies succinctly to his willingness to die, “I will do everything you tell me” (127). About this response, the narrator didactically adds, “Her idea of love was only service” (127). After having mastered Em, and having met the untamable Lyndall, Gregory’s love soon wanes, indirectly urging Em to cancel the union. Gregory eagerly assents, but asks her (after Em’s subsequent indifference arouses him) if he might still call on her as a brother. Em thanks him humbly, “so humbly that he wished she hadn’t. It wasn’t so easy after that to think himself and injured man” (167).

The classic section “Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage” in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) adds an interesting perspective for consideration regarding these and other relationships within *African Farm* and “The Woman Who Rode Away.” According to Hegel,

The relation of two self-conscious individuals is such that they prove themselves and each other through a life-and-death struggle. They must engage in this struggle, for they must raise their certainty of being *for themselves* to truth, both in the case of the other and in their own case. And it is only through staking one’s life that freedom is won . . . . [The struggle proves] one is the independent consciousness . . . . [The other’s] essential nature is simply to live or to be for another. The former is lord, the other is bondsman. (95)

An expression of such a struggle arguably occurs within “The Woman Who Rode Away” when the unnamed white woman engages in verbal and non-verbal exchanges with the natives. Her fearless autonomy (“lordship”) confronts a similar disposition in these men who, although initially “just natives to her” (“bondsmen”), were not so easily dominated (372). After one of the natives

strikes her horse, for example, she commands: “Don’t do that!” with a temerity that enrages him. Sensing this struggle, she then “met his black, large, bright eyes, *and for the first time her spirit really quailed.*” As a result, “. . . She sat in her saddle in wonder, feeling . . . as if she had died” (374, italics mine). After this “lord/bondsman” reversal, a “thrill of exultation” appears to wash over her.

Like the woman who rode away, and Em, Gregory enjoys his servitude, which for the most part explains why Em’s passivity turns Gregory against her, and why to Lyndall he is so intensely drawn. Sharp as always in her assessments, Lyndall exposes Gregory’s masochistic hunger. She says to him directly (injuring him, to his pleasure) that he is like a “little tin duck floating on a dish of water that comes after a piece of bread stuck on a needle, and the more the needle pricks it the more it comes on” (170). Lyndall’s intermitting cruelty and indifference toward Gregory promises him a new pain. Her verbal abuse also parallels Bonaparte’s penknife as it ornately “slits” (unnecessarily). Unlike the taciturn Waldo, however, Gregory replies to aggression “with a burst of uncontrollable [orgasmic] ardor” (172). He says to Lyndall that Em (his much kinder lover) is “not half so good as you are” (172).

“Good” in this case of course does not denote “moral,” “just,” “gentle,” or even “beautiful.” Just as Lawrence’s nameless blue-eyed woman knows in an instant that “she is a victim . . . but does not mind. She want[s] it” (395), the blue eyes of Gregory Rose read in Lyndall a brutal master. In this exclamation “good,” Schreiner reinforces a slippage between suffering and pleasure woven throughout the text. “Good” indicates “punishing/dominant,” which promises suffering, and equals pleasure. Evincing a hunger to complete his debasement, Gregory strangely and suddenly offers to give up all of his possessions and be Lyndall’s literal slave. Beyond Romantic hyperbole, he begs “I know you could never like me; but, if I might but always be near you to serve you, I would be utterly, utterly happy. . . . If you could only take everything I have and use it; I want nothing but to

be of use to you” (173). This guttural repetition of “utterly, utterly” echoes his masochistic anticipation of climactic subjugation.

Although his pleasure is deferred, Gregory eventually does manage to become Lyndall’s slave (the duration of his satisfaction in this role indicates the degree of his masochistic character). In a sense, he goes on a “quest” for Lyndall, finds her, and sacrifices his gender (his body) to become an imposter “sister of mercy” able to gratify Lyndall’s orders. Although of course eye color may be only an indexical aspect of characterization (not necessarily a symbolic one), in *African Farm* the appearance of “blue” always signals a node of suffering.

For example, Gregory’s blue eyes are mentioned only when they focalize objects associated with renunciation and suffering. When Gregory finds in the rafters Em’s mother’s dress, he contemplates wearing it, and his “imploringly blue eyes . . . fix on the frill,” hinting that within that frill of femininity, hides the prospect of sacrificed masculinity (184). He then puts on the kappje, and his “blue eyes look out with the mild gentleness that became eyes looking out from under a kappje” (185). Here, Gregory appears to sense that womanhood offers a greater opportunity for submission, which functions ironically to underscore Schreiner’s critique of patriarchy (a point perhaps underscored for later readers by Freud’s [1924] 1959] assertion of masochism’s inherent femininity).

Heilmann (2004, 126) maintains that “Gregory Rose’s fluid gender identity suggests that femininity and the female body can become the sites of male self-reconstruction [i.e., the New Man] . . . if men are prepared to transcend their socially-constructed masculinity.” She adds, “yet bodily and spiritual transformations . . . remain firmly predicated on female self-immolation in the form of the death of the New Woman Lyndall” (126). As shown above, however, Schreiner does not strictly gender pleasurable submission. Nor does Schreiner gender (or class) sadistic pleasure, which the Schadenfreude of Lyndall, Tant’ Sannie, as well as her female servant, attests to. Moreover, *African*

*Farm* does not exemplify the absurd Gregory Rose as a praiseworthy “New Man.” His transformation is meaningful on many levels, yet his indulgence is unique only in its actualization of the story’s fullest masochistic fantasy.

Gregory’s desire to become Lyndall’s slave is not predicated on her merit as a “New Woman.” Rather, it is Lyndall’s indifference and articulate cruelty that excite him. In fact, a similar cruelty also attracts and arouses Lyndall’s fiancée. Her “love-note” to him, for example, amounts to “Come if you wish” (175), and once he does, her “cold reception” (175) sparks in him “a *strong inclination* to stoop down and kiss the little lips that defied him . . .” (178, italics mine). In addition to reflecting Schreiner’s well-known ambivalence toward marriage, Lyndall’s handling of her engagement ring also serves as an icy-hot metaphor of her vacillating treatment of men: “Sometimes I wear it; then I take it off and wish to throw it into the fire; the next day I put it on again, and sometimes I kiss it” (176).

Through Lyndall, Schreiner expresses a paradox related to this vacillation that is central to *African Farm*. Within a dialogue with her lover, Lyndall argues that desire dissipates once satisfied, and thus must be deferred:

. . . if I had required your generosity, it would not have been shown me. If, when I got your letter a month ago, hinting at your willingness to marry me, I had at once written, imploring you to come, you would have read the letter . . . and tore it up . . . and I would have heard no more of you. But because I declined your proposal . . . then what you call love woke up. Your man’s love is a child’s love for butterflies. You follow until you have the thing, and break it. If you have broken one wing, and the thing flies still, then you love it more than ever, and follow until you break both; then you are satisfied when it lies still on the ground.

(178)

To some extent, this analysis of “man’s love” responds to the unanswered question posed by Lyndall to Gregory, whose ultimate subordination to her in a sense neuters him. Lyndall asks him/her, now a nameless “woman” who in essence “rode away,” “What makes you all [men and women] love me so?” (215). This question also recalls that even Em demonstrates an attraction to Lyndall that parallels her romantic love for Gregory based on dominance: Em says to Gregory, for example, “I love you better than Waldo [who is not sufficiently commanding], but I can’t tell if I love you better than Lyndall” (125). In Lyndall’s authoritative presence, each character seems to adopt the position of “gratified bondsman.”

While the overdetermined origins of masochism of course cannot be solved here, it is noteworthy that a hunger for submission, suffering, etc. plays a prominent role in both *African Farm* and “The Woman Who Rode Away,” highlighting perhaps a complication impeding the praxis of 1890s “New Womanhood.” Gregory Rose’s gender-transcending masochistic tendency also may point toward a Schopenhauerian pessimism (1819, 318), in vogue toward the end of the century, which held that “suffering is essential to life.”<sup>141</sup>

Establishing Gregory as the character most subsumed by his transforming masochistic impulse, Schreiner again uses “blue” to remind the reader of his (“utter, utter”) “pain.” After having ridden away from his former life to become Lyndall’s sacrifice, he dismounts his horse, and “Above his head rose the clear, blue African sky. At his side were the saddlebags full of women’s clothing” (206). He then “look[s] up half plaintively into the blue sky [and asks] ‘Am I, am I Gregory Nazianzen Rose?’” (206). After Lyndall dies, and Gregory returns back to the farm, Schreiner again uses the blue of Gregory’s eyes to characterize his stare: he sits with his “[phallic] *dead* pipe lying on the bench beside him, and his blue eyes gazing out far across the flat, like one who sits on the seashore watching that which is fading, fading from him” (the memory of his pleasurable sacrifice to Lyndall) (228, italics mine).

Earlier in the story, Em suffers for a similar reason, and in a similar manner. Longing for Gregory's revoked oppressiveness, "Em wished that he would still sometimes talk of the strength and master-right of man; but Gregory was as one smitten on the cheek bone. She might do what she pleased, he would find no fault, had no word to say" (184). She also revisits the memory of this brief experience as Gregory's "bondsman" twice in song (183, 230), "a song that has a world of sweetness, and sad, vague yearning" (183). Involving the explicit coloration of blue, the song betrays its symbolism, as well as perhaps its Goethean chromatic physics: "And take me away, / And take me away, / And take me away, / To the Blue Water" (183) (fig. 6.2).

In addition to what has already been suggested regarding the lure of masochism, an aspect of Krafft-Ebing's (1894) theory, which first treats masochism as a psychological concept (by 1886), suggests another plausible explanation for Em's very direct masochistic longing. He writes:

Love that willingly bears the tyranny of the loved one then becomes an immediate love of tyranny. *When the idea of being tyrannized over is long closely associated with the lustful thought of the beloved person, the lustful emotion is finally connected with the tyranny itself, and the transformation to perversion is completed.* This is the manner in which masochism may be acquired by cultivation. (145)

Em's vocalized desire for oppression in this way again reinforces Schreiner's critique of institutionalized patriarchy, which apparently degrades love into sadistic/masochistic service.

Despite her role as the New Woman figure in Schreiner's story, Lyndall also is not exempt from this *sadomasochistic* impulse. Although Lacan argued that masochism and sadism are discrete, Freud argued that "the sadistic pain of *causing* pain can also arise retrogressively; for while these pains are being inflicted on other people, they are enjoyed masochistically by the subject through his identification of himself with the suffering object" (quoted in Nasio 2004, 128). In discussing the obvious pleasure Lyndall derives from verbally wounded men, and in light of her final revelation

that she too is aroused by fear and longs to be submissive,<sup>142</sup> perhaps it makes sense to understand her disposition from Freud's perspective.

Although Lyndall resists self-sacrifice (embodied in marriage), she and Lawrence's protagonist differ in fewer ways than one might expect. Not only does the feminist Lyndall voice sentiments that we might associate with Lawrence's submission-seeking nameless woman, she does so with more force. Lyndall declares her motivation directly, whereas the mind of Lawrence's "woman" appears only through (the relatively indirect) heterodiegetic narration. Lyndall exclaims, "I am so weary of myself! It is eating my soul to its core—self, self, self! I cannot bear this life! I cannot breathe, I cannot live! Will nothing free me from myself? . . . I want something great and pure to lift me to itself" (181). As a woman whose character centers on the struggle for attaining equal status for women, and revealing inequities naturalized by corrupt systems, it is curious that Lyndall's only romantic love results not from an enlightened meeting with a true equal, but from an encounter that reasserts her powerlessness.

To her lover, for example, she attributes the inception of love to a violent experience of power: "You are the first man I ever was afraid of" (178). She also seeks that which Lawrence's blue-eyed nameless woman also seeks: "something nobler, stronger than I, before which I can kneel down. . . . a thing to worship . . ." (214). In this way, it is not a man-as-an-equal who excites Lyndall romantically; it is, just as it is for her fiancée, Em, Gregory, and Lawrence's protagonist, a person who inspires fear, which recalls Hegel's fear of death encountered during the "battle of consciousness."<sup>143</sup>

On the verge of death, Lyndall pursues a symbol of that nebulous object of worship as she demands of her nurse (Gregory), "That blue mountain, far away; let us stop when we get to it, not before" (218). She dies, however, without ever reaching it; for once she arrives at the mountain it is no longer blue. This recession of color also resonates with a claim made by Lawrence's Indian to the

woman who rode away. About “blue” he says, “When we go near, it goes farther. It can’t be near” (392).

In an effort to get a sense of what this elusive blue mountain might signify for Lyndall, and moreover, the larger symbolic significance of blue found throughout both stories, one can turn to Lacan, whose concept of “desire’s phallus” seems particularly relevant. He explains that the “phallus function[s] as the ‘signifier of power’ (as ‘master signifier’) [in] that it is erected, raised upright, like the human body or the statue of stone . . . . Erection is power and height, the ability to stand upright on one’s own legs . . . . In a word, the phallus is the imaginary ‘Master,’ the . . . colossal double . . .” (Borch-Jacobsen 1991, 216).

Given Lyndall’s quest to attain for women institutional rights equivalent to those enjoyed by men, this reading of the mountain seems tenable; it is phallic both in the Freudian sense (resembling a phallus, male power) and in the Lacanian sense (her colossal double—what she and all women *could* be). Lyndall reaches the symbolic mountain before she dies, yet she fails to achieve the object of her quest. The object, encoded in “blue,” instead recedes as she nears. The suggested “inevitability” of this chromatic recession, reflected by the color science of theorists such as Goethe, and later, Kandinsky, perhaps complicates assessments of Schreiner’s ultimate faith in the possibility of gender equality. The pursuit of this equality, idealized as an object of power (a blue mountain) whose color and line/form are unified, but inevitably divided (color escapes), also perhaps suggests a broader sense of the painful “inevitability” of asymmetric relations of power and endless struggle. The legacy of color – line/form here reinforces a sense of the transhistoricity of this contact zone and offers orientation for the pain/pleasure associated with domination and subordination, which metachromatics helps to isolate for analysis.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Color – Line/Form and Ekphrastic Bodies: A Textual History of William Carlos Williams's  
“Lost” Poem “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” (1923)

## Abbreviations

<i>AQQ</i>	<i>Al Que Quiere!</i> (1917)
<i>CEP</i>	<i>Collected Earlier Poems</i> (1951)
<i>CLP</i>	<i>Collected Later Poems</i> (1950)
<i>CP1</i>	<i>Collected Poems 1909–1939</i> (1986)
<i>CP 1921–1931</i>	<i>Collected Poems 1921–1931</i> (1934)
<i>GAN</i>	<i>Great American Novel, The</i> ([1923] 2003)
<i>I</i>	<i>Imaginations</i> (1970)
<i>AG</i>	<i>American Grain, In the</i> (1925)
<i>KH</i>	<i>Kora in Hell</i> ([1920] 1970)
<i>SA</i>	<i>Spring and All</i> ([1923] 1970)
<i>SE</i>	<i>Selected Essays</i> (1954)
<i>SG</i>	<i>Sour Grapes</i> (1921)
<i>SL</i>	<i>Selected Letters</i> (1957)
<i>SP 1949</i>	<i>Selected Poems</i> (1949)
<i>SP 1985</i>	<i>Selected Poems</i> (1985)
<i>W</i>	<i>Wedge, The</i> ([1944] 1950)

William Carlos Williams's essentially lost poem "THE HOTHOUSE PLANT" (1923)<sup>144</sup> suggests a useful object of study, and an opportunity for historical and poetic reclamation within the contexts of metachromatics, modern ekphrasis as mode of mediated visualization, and homosocial desire.<sup>145</sup> The value of attending to variation in poetic line/form over a poem's textual history, and the bearing of such variation on aspects of signification, especially as it might pertain to the relation between color and line/form, also are suggested by this reclamation. In particular, this chapter will demonstrate variances in paratextual and intratextual situation as significant to the production and reception of meaning.<sup>146</sup>

In the case of "THE HOTHOUSE PLANT" and later "iterations," the presence, absence, or shifting location of its "dedication" to the painter Charles Demuth—an intimate friend and patient of Williams (a medical doctor as well as poet)—significantly alters content and ekphrastic representation. This dedication also influences potential readings of the relation of chromatic language to color's embodiment in flora represented by the poem, and to the representation of color *through* flora more generally. As a practice that might "entail" explicit coloration and chromatic interaction and play, but which "grounds" this (pre-)occupation in the line/form of subject, and by metonymy, geographic place, nation, "nature," identity, etc., the representation of flowers can serve as site of signification whose complexities implicate the discourse of color – line/form.

Within "THE HOTHOUSE PLANT," effects of "color confusion" (line 1) and chromatic reversals ("colors and colors reversed") suggest micro-events/micro-stories of aesthetic interaction, including perhaps chromatic effects characterized by irradiation, simultaneous contrast, luster, metamerism, etc. (discussed earlier) which also can be found within other poems by Williams.<sup>147</sup> A vacillating relation of color to an ambiguous line/form also intersects with suggestions of heteronormative transgression and its reassertion within the poem, as well as to debates over color's autonomy or immanence to form within nationalized modes of modernist aesthetics found within

the little magazine *Secession*, its original context of publication. This chapter brings attention to these aspects of the poem, to its situation within the US “little magazine” *Secession*, and its bearing more broadly on color within the poetics of William Carlos Williams, so often identified with the line/form of “things.”

### **Background**

Currently, no fully-annotated edition of the poems of William Carlos Williams exists, and “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT,” dedicated to Charles Demuth when first published in *Secession* (1922–1924), has never been collected. Moreover, critical acknowledgement of this first version of the poem remains exceedingly rare. Even Cirasa’s *The Lost Works of William Carlos Williams* (1995) mistakes a later and differently-titled version of the poem as the published “original.” This incomplete textual history is attributable in large part to the scarcity of *Secession*, the poem’s various titles or omitted titles, and its exclusion from later collected editions, some of which Williams selected and sequenced himself arguably to reflect his later interest in longer poetic form.

As Cirasa (1995) explains, between the 1930s and 50s, Williams sought to recast his earlier poetry and his reputation on a larger scale by assembling collected editions of his work. With an eye toward posterity and a desire to counter a tradition of critical apprehension over his “miniaturism” and perceived limits as a poet, Williams organized and unified collected editions in part to suggest a more significant lyrical form that could situate his work alongside the ambitions of contemporaries, such as Pound, who were also experimenting with longer forms (17). This motivation to “work big,” as Cirasa describes it, inevitably meant making changes to aspects of earlier versions of poems whose “digressive” singularity, or responsiveness to original publication contexts, might have inhibited the formulation of longer and more unified semantic units.

Iterations of “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” appear in *Spring and All* (1923), *The Collected Poems 1921–1931* (1934), *Selected Poems* (1949 and 1985), *The Collected Earlier Poems* (1951), *Imaginations*

(1970), *Spring and All* (reprint 1970), *The Collected Poems 1909–1939* (1986), and various anthologies, but none of these editions fully reflects the poem’s initial form (see the included appendices for comparison). Few secondary sources even note that the poem was published before *SA*, and Williams himself curiously omits the poem altogether from *The Complete Collected Poems 1906–1931* (1938). Textual histories regarding the publication of “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” are often erroneous or incomplete. This neglects what amounts to a curious history of the poem, the context of its earliest publication within a chromatically-themed issue of the short-lived *Succession*, and its arguably more provocative and queerer initial frameworks of referentiality.

### “Iterations” of “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT”

It is uncertain as to why the early collection *CP 1921–1931* includes the poem without reference to its inclusion within *SA*, and retitles it “The Pot of Primroses.” Decades later, the volumes *CEP*, *SP 1949*, and *SP 1985*, also featured the poem, but under yet another name, “The Pot of Flowers,” the title by which the poem is now most frequently indexed. Like *CP 1921–1931*, these later editions sequence the poem with the other poems of *SA*, published without “prose,”<sup>148</sup> but add the title “II,” which recalls its place within *SA*.<sup>149</sup> Like *I* and the small-run republication of *SA* by Frontier Press, the most definitive collection of Williams’s pre-1940 poetry (*CP1*) publishes the poem only as “II” as part of *SA*, inclusive of prose. *CP1*, however, indexes the poem as “The Pot of Flowers,” making no mention of either “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” or “The Pot of Primroses.” This decision has helped to reinforce a teleological notion “the” poem, and to erase these earlier important iterations.

Similarly problematic, especially within the context of metachromatics, none of the collections includes the poem’s original dedication to Charles Demuth: paratext that bears as much relevance to this poem’s ontology as any other words comprising it. While it is possible to consider the dedication “to Charles Demuth” on *SA*’s title page as superseding the line “Dedicated to Charles

Demuth” found beneath the title “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” within *Secession*, it is important to consider these differences in form and their potential influence on reception. The experience of reading a calligramme (a poem whose shape makes iconic reference to content) that features a dedication positioned within its immediate boundaries is different from reading a dedication found on the title page of a book whose contents vary in form (not all the pieces in *SA* are as calligrammic). We might also take into account Sayre’s (1984, 20) contention that *SA*’s dedication and unified form are indebted to Demuth’s painting *Spring* (c. early 1921), a series of shirt fabric swatches exhibited at the Daniel Gallery in New York (December, 1922). If Sayre is correct, then the dedication to Demuth in “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” may have been motivated by a different set of conditions in that the form of the poem does not reflect the swatches of Demuth’s *Spring*.

As part of “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT,” the dedication to Charles Demuth suggests intertextual reference to Demuth’s numerous paintings of flowers. It also identifies the poem as possibly or even likely ekphrastic, which then influences possible readings of the poem’s occasion. Is the speaker verbalizing a particular painting by Demuth that the reader is meant to visualize? Is the speaker more generally verbalizing Demuth’s mode of painterly articulation in relation to an actual plant (not yet painted)?

The dedication also invites metaphorical extensions to the subject focalized by the speaker. In this way, the “hothouse” plant—a qualifier that suggests exoticism, delicacy, showiness, fragility of health, survival only under artificial or unnatural conditions, and even illicit sexuality (i.e., a brothel)—in many ways might be said to figure the body and disposition of Demuth, whom Williams as his friend and sometimes physician described in similar terms years later within autobiographical prose. The metaphorization of plants as sexualized bodies also can be found within other poems by Williams, such as “The Flower” ([1934] 1951, 322), which explains that “[. . .] at its heart (the stamens, pistil, / etc.) [a flower] is a naked woman, about 38, just / out of bed, worth

looking at [. . .].” Williams’s apostrophe to “The Red Lily” (1934, *CP 1921–1931*, 46), whose speaker praises “Everywhere / Red Lily/ in your common cup / all Beauty lies—[,]” suggests a similar conflation.

When read with the dedication, the graphic spatiality of “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” “entwines” the body of Demuth with that of the hothouse plant in provocative ways. From the top down, the poem transfigures the plant (or the picture of the plant) into words such that the textual body of the poem echoes the spatial organization of the plant itself. The poem’s first stanza, for example, introduces “Pink confused with white / flowers and flowers reversed.” The next three stanzas compound a chromatic display of clashing light and shade, mauve and red petals, whorls, and neologized “flamegreen throats.”<sup>150</sup> The poem’s body then dents and ramifies as flowers:

contending  
                                   above  
 the leaves  
 reaching up their modest green

yield to branches. Just above the base of the poem (its last stanza), “the pot’s rim” mimetically occupies the last line of the penultimate stanza. Similarly, the “wholly dark” pot “gay with rough moss” anchors the poem (and the plant). “William Carlos Williams,” which appears under the poem, also might be read as a corollary to the plant’s roots, which draw, select, distill, and organize elements (minerals, etc.) that “feed” the plant (or the poem). Much as roots stabilize a plant in soil, so might the poet be understood as grounding and fixing language: an analogy also expressed by Pound (1934, cover) within his description of Williams as “a man with his feet on the soil, on a soil personally and peculiarly his own. He is rooted.”

As a calligramme, “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” both describes and becomes its subject. As such, “Charles Demuth,” interposed between the title and the top of the plant (its flowers),

becomes part of a referential oscillation that mingles their bodies. Removing the name/body of Demuth alters the referentiality of the poem, its dynamism, and how readers might experience its focalization. The proximal and symbolic association of Demuth to “Pink”—the first and only capitalized word of the poem and the metaphorical “head” within this plant portrait—also is removed. Later decisions to omit the dedication to Demuth in some sense then imply a desire to alter such content and poetic effects. For this reason, it is valuable to consider other ways in which the poem was altered since its original publication, to inquire further into the relationship between Demuth and Williams, and to consider comparative readings.

If the poem is read as published in *CEP*, for example, where it is titled “II” / “The Pot of Flowers,” should it be contextualized as part of the full text of *SA* and as separate from it? Should that separation exclude the dedication to Demuth and the poem’s earlier reference to the exotic “hothouse” that “contained” the poem’s subject(s)? If one reads the poem as it appears in *CPI*, should it be read as “untitled” because “The Pot of Flowers” only exists in the volume’s index? Does a critical appreciation of the poem require its situation within *SA* because, as Miller (1966, vii) argued, the poems of *SA* “cannot be fully understood apart from the context of the prose around them”? Should one return to the “original” text (overlooked here by Miller), which has been marginalized by its scarcity?

None of these questions is intended to privilege the earliest publication of “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT”; each “version” merits analysis within its given context. This implies, however, that just as the first publication does not undercut later editions, later editions do not erase earlier versions through revision.<sup>151</sup> As such, this treatment of “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT,” which restores to the history of the poem hitherto neglected attributes of its earlier publication, foregrounds the dedication to Charles Demuth and other variances of later editions. It also addresses the poem’s situation within *Secession* magazine, which devotes notable attention to flowers,

gardens, and plants (metaphorical or otherwise). This original publication context also deepens awareness of the role that plants and flowers might have played as chromatic sites within contemporary debates over the value of pure abstraction versus embodied defamiliarization within poetry and art.

### **The Relief of 1913**

According to a now familiar account, the large-scale exhibition of European art at the Armory Show of 1913 in New York significantly catalyzed non-mimetic approaches to verbal and visual representation within the US. While this cataclysmic account of the history of aesthetic modernism within the US neglects earlier exponents of formal experimentalism,<sup>152</sup> for Williams this show displayed of new freedom or permissiveness. As he explains within the *Great American Novel* ([1923] 2003, 32), the Armory Show, Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*, and Dadaism in particular represented in fact the "apotheosis of *relief*" (italics mine)—an expression consistent with a "relief" from constraints imposed by theories and iterations of narrative and monochrome line/form (discussed above).

Although it may be the case that visual modernism in the US was substantially catalyzed by this now famous 1913 exhibition, the comparable turning point in US modernist poetry occurred a year earlier. Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* (1912–), the first major modernist "little magazine" in the US, soon became a primary engine for developing literary experimentation.<sup>153</sup> Motivated to provide younger poets with an opportunity to publish imagistic and free verse, Monroe organized *Poetry* (out of Chicago), and employed Ezra Pound as her foreign correspondent to further the careers of many now canonical writers such as Marianne Moore, Joyce Kilmer, Millay, Sherwood Anderson, Malcolm Cowley, Frost, Hart Crane, Robert Penn Warren, W. H. Auden, Hemingway, and Countee Cullen. *Poetry* also was responsible for first publishing Eliot's "Prufrock," Richard Aldington's "Choricos"

(the first publication of the Imagists), H. D.'s first US publication "Verses, Translations, and Reflections from the Anthology," and many others.

A year after the founding of *Poetry*, Alfred Kreyborg, with the help of Man Ray and poems shipped from abroad by Pound, established another important little magazine, *Glebe*. It is here that Williams received his first offer for commercial publication, which led to his first commercially published book, *The Tempers* (1913). As Hoffman ([1947] 1967, 8) explains in his pioneering history *The Little Magazine*, 80% of the most important writers after 1912 were published in little magazines. Williams proved no exception as his work found outlets within many significant journals of the time, which helped to accelerate his book-length publication interests.

Magazines such as *Poetry*, *Others*, *The Little Review*, *The Egoist*, *Dial*, *Contact*, *Broom*, *transition* (by expatriates), and *Secession* were instrumental in the early careers of many US modernists, and held particular relevance for Williams. He tested his new ideas and gained valuable exposure especially within little magazines that sought to bridge the verbal and visual. These publications contributed to his validation as a poet, which for Williams was significant given his full-time employment as a physician. The coteries surrounding these art and literary magazines also provided a network of imaginative support and retreat from his work as a doctor within a provincial town.

*Al Que Quiere! A Book of Poems* (1917) established for Williams a significant departure from his earlier poetry, which had been largely influenced by Shakespeare, Keats, and Pound. It also demonstrated less reliance on narrative sequencing—characteristic of his more conventional verse—and a substantive turn toward the pictorial. A few years after *AQQ*, *Kora in Hell: Improvisations* ([1920] 1970) reinforced this emerging proclivity for fragmentation and isolated verbal pictures. Its now famous prologue also established a rhetorical basis for *SA*'s experimentation that soon would follow. Indicating the influence of the visual arts (and Demuth in particular), *KH* (28) extolled "Charley[']s" treatise on the virtues of anything that puts the poet on the "ship's prow" where one

breaks with banality, or “the continual hardening which habit reinforces.” It also underscored sentence fragmentation as a critical element of spatial arrangement. This fragmentation arguably found its fullest expression soon after within *SA*, and within one of its most visual poems, “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT.”

During the year in which “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” was published, Williams also published two books: *SA* and *GAN*. Both offer insight into Williams’s evolving poetics and his larger motivations. In the prose of *SA*, for example, Williams called for a renewed, non-mimetic appreciation of ordinary life transmuted or defamiliarized in the manner of a Cubist painting. He explained:

The only means he [the artist] has to give value to life is to recognize it with the imagination and name it; this is so. To repeat and repeat the thing without naming it is only to dull the sense and results in frustration. [. . .] My whole life has been spent (so far) in seeking to place a value upon experience and the objects of experience that would satisfy my sense of inclusiveness without redundancy—completeness, lack of frustration with the liberty of choice; the things which the pursuit of “art” offers—  
I have felt “free” only in the presence of works in the imagination [. . .].

So most of my life has been lived in hell—a hell of repression lit by flashes of inspiration, when a poem such as this or that would appear [. . .] (115–16)

In *GAN* he continued:

Expressionism is to express skillfully the seething reactions of the contemporary European consciousness. Cornucopia. In at the small end and—blui! Kandinsky. But it’s a fine thing. It is THE thing for the moment—in Europe. The same sort of thing, reversed, in America has a water attachment to be released with a button. That IS art. Everyone agrees that that IS art. Just as one uses a handkerchief.

[. . .] Dadaism is one of its prettiest modes: *rien, rien, rien*. —But wait a bit. Maybe Dadaism is not so weak as one might imagine. —One takes it for granted almost without a thought that expressionism is the release of SOMETHING. [. . .] It has no value for ME. It is all very interesting and God knows we have enough to learn. The swarming European consciousness. But there it is much simpler—No good to us. (32–33)

These two passages articulate Williams’s emerging need to found a distinctly US poetics capable of delivering transcendence: a “relief” comparable to his experience at the Armory Show. They also disavowed mere copying or transcription and the contrary extreme: a “European” abstraction divorced from objects. Williams reinforced this notion of the function of poetry years later within his *Autobiography* (1951, 265). He also promoted such ideas through Zukofsky’s Objectivism (a 1930s poetry movement heavily informed by *SA*) when purporting that “it must be the purpose of the poet to make of his words a new form: to invent, that is, an object consonant with his day. This was what we wished to imply by Objectivism, an antidote, in a sense, to the bare image haphazardly presented in loose verse.”

“THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” also embodies a debate, found more broadly within *Secession*, over exactly how modernists were to use (or not use) the representational world to make art new. In the first issue of *Secession* (Spring, 1922), for example, (founder) Gorham Munson published the Dadaist poetry of Tristan Tzara while at the same time asking within an editorial:

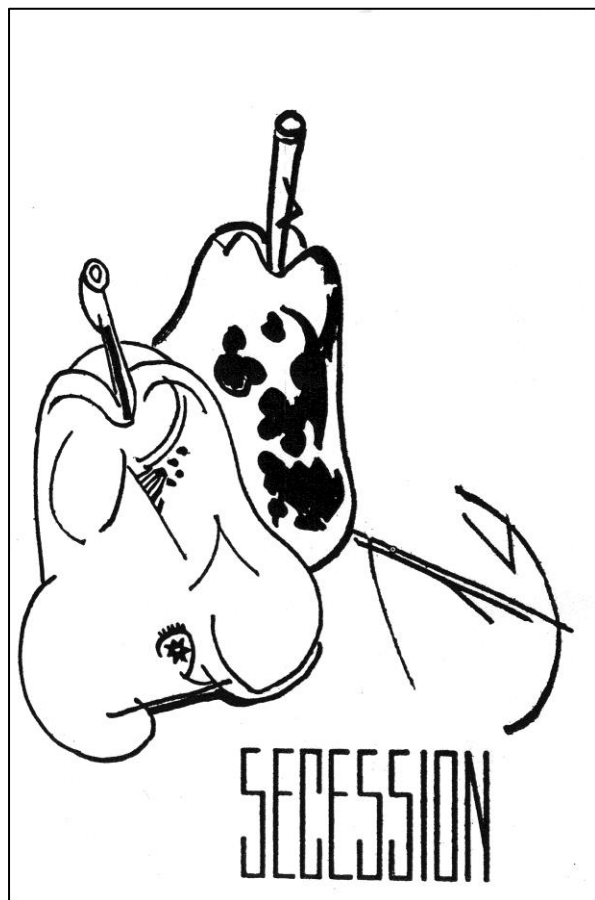
The writer’s material? Is it words filed as clean of all their connotations and ideational meanings, those idea-emotions, that are the writer’s material? The sign or the things for which the sign stands? Tzara is heading toward a sign esthetic . . . . Abstract literature, to date, falls short of representative literature because it has not yet conquered a literary third dimension, cannot expand very far into an interior organization. (18)

Subsequent issues suggested a similar ambivalence, which involved the appeal and suspicion of abstraction, and its national associations.

In *Secession* 2 (July, 1922), for example, Munson moved toward establishing a group identity that recalled those devised by various European art and literary movements of the 1910s. This idea was extended within *Secessions* 5–6 (July, 1923, 28) to include a non-normative community of readers, whose “difference” was underscored especially with the help of irregular/avant-garde type: “*Secession* speaks, not to a *public meeting*, but to a *room-full* of FRIENDS. Would *you* care to be *one*? This POST CARD can *make* you so.”<sup>154</sup> Within his earlier article, the “Interstice between Scylla and Charybdis,” Munson explained this goal of *Secession*:

to be a group organ. It will make group-exclusions, found itself on a group-basis, point itself in a group-direction, and derive its stability and correctives from a group . . . . [It will include] a sizable corps of young American writers working substantially in the same direction, battling with similar problems, and achieving results which can be assembled in a fairly homogenous review. (32)

While *Secession* 3 contains expressly Dadaist writings in the form of Soupault’s “ARTICLES DE SPORT” (in French), Arp’s “ARP THE TRAP-DRUMMER,” Matthew Josephson’s “PEEP-PEEP PARRIS,” and Malcolm Cowley’s “POEM,” it also includes Williams’s less-aesthetically determined “THE ATTEMPT,”<sup>155</sup> as well as “HOPE” by Waldo Frank, who was decidedly anti-Dada in disposition. In this way, *Secession* never wholly subscribed to an absurdist or fully “abstract” aesthetic, which for many bore European undertones. William Sommer’s cover design for *Secession* 4, for example, reveals what could be, at times, the awkwardness of this negotiation between “pure abstraction” and defamiliarization (fig. 7.0). Within it, linear and figurative abstraction spills beyond the edges of two juxtaposed (and perhaps sexually-suggestive) pears in a rather uneasy compromise of realism and formalism.



**Figure 7.0** William Sommer, cover for *Secession 4* (1923). Black-and-white reproduction from Kraus Reprint (1967).

As within “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT,” *Secession 4* makes prevalent use of color words, compound neologisms to name sense impressions, and detailed attention to ambient conditions. It also frequently employs flowers as a locus for embodied chromatic interactions, verbal/visual spectacle, and metaphor: an interest also expressed within other flower poems by Williams during this period. “Primrose” ([1921] 1951, 209), for example, exclaims within its first line, “Yellow, yellow, yellow, yellow!” and then lists metaphorical equivalents that include “summer”; “the wind”; “the lap of waves”; “the shadow / under a bush, a bird, a blue bird, / three herons, a dead hawk”; “a piece of blue paper”; “green walnuts”; “a man / swinging his pink fists”; “the / wavy lines in a split

rock”; “a disinclination to be / five red petals or a rose”; “four open yellow petals”; etc.<sup>156</sup> Basil’s (1983, 251) idea about the symbolic usefulness of flowers to Williams likely reveals a greater aesthetic commonality among *Secession*’s writers and the group identity pursued by Munson. As Basil explains, “a flower [is] both universal—in its design, determined by DNA—and local, feeding from minerals in the earth about its roots, and photosynthesizing [based on locality—breathing in the surroundings].” In this way, flowers could serve as defamiliarized indices of place and identity as well as sources of abstraction.

For Williams, the near ubiquity of flora also provided a democratic subject through which readers could achieve a new secular transcendence and restorative freedom through artful attention.<sup>157</sup> By way of symbolic realism, flowers could be used to embody moral, aesthetic, and perceptual paradigms. They also could serve as a safe space for homosocial gratification: a capacious proxy suggested by Williams in “On Gay Wallpaper” (in *SP 1949*, 58), for example, in which flowers are metaphorized as “baskets of desire” (discussed more below). Because of their unrestrained color, “aristocratic” silence, “resigned” stasis, and lack of apparent agency, plants and flowers for Williams also could emblemize a Kantian (modernist) idealization and organic autonomy of form (or *l’art pour l’art* indifference). Williams’s poem “Flowers By the Sea” [First Version] (*CP1*, 352), in which “Chickory and daisies, tied, yet released / seem no longer flowers alone / but color and movement—or the shapes / of quietness,” demonstrates this ability of flowers to constitute both organic symbolism and formal abstraction.<sup>158</sup>

Flowers for Williams bore significance to his poetics in other foundational ways. His early affinity for depicting the interrelating “mechanisms” of flora, exemplified by “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” and other poems, in fact informed his later conception of the “machine” as the objective correlative of poetry itself. As Williams ([1944] 1950, 4) argued, a poem is a “small (or large) machine made of words [. . .] [within which] there can be no part, as in any other machine, that is redundant.” He continued, “As in all machines its movements are intrinsic, undulant, a physical more than a literary character.” Plants, as well as color, played a significant role in this trope. As Williams explained, “Poets have written of the big leaves and the little leaves, leaves that are red, green, yellow and the one thing they have never seen about a leaf is that it is a little engine. It is one of the things that makes a plant GO.”<sup>159</sup>

Williams’s conception of poems as plant-like machines in which no part is extraneous or redundant underscores the importance Williams placed on each aspect of a poem, including its

spacing, punctuation, title, and dedication as he avoided “the falseness of attempting to ‘copy’ nature [. . .] [and the] sill[iness] [of] try[ing] to ‘make’ pictures” (*SA*, 106).<sup>160</sup> Williams’s placement of poems into specific contexts of publication also can be understood as bearing a similar intentionality.

Other, less-remembered writings within *Secession* whose space the poem shares, for example, offer a sense of this context. Just as *SA*’s serialization of “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” as “II” reinforces the poem as a component bearing larger meaning, the editorial decisions of *Secession* 4 reflect Munson’s desire to found a cohesive publication and group identity. In that readers of *Secession* likely would have experienced “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” by “Dr. Williams” as exemplifying not only his aesthetic but a more pervasive and modern “secessionist” one, it is valuable to consider this important early work within its original context of publication.

#### ***Secession* 4**

The five poems by Richard Ashton that begin *Secession* 4 (1–4) also introduce the issue’s interest in aestheticization and the defamiliarization of the perceivable world. Neologisms such as “white-hot,” “haze green,” and “flaming green” (cf. line 11 of “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT”) are deployed along with chromatic abstractions (i.e., “houses like patches of white, with dark holes”) to bring fresh attention to, and departures from, the everyday (1). Dancers evoke abstraction as they slip into “an intricate pattern [. . .] that mingles and merges [. . .] in softened yellow light” (2). Ashton uses searchlights to “[. . .] reach out to touch glowing / patterns” (2), and in “MOON-GARDEN,” he (like Williams) brings attention to the colors and shapes of flowers. More specifically, he depicts “peony-petals” carefully interacting with light that surrounds them (4).

For Kenneth Burke’s “IN QUEST OF OLYMPUS,” wind rather than light serves poetic defamiliarization: a breeze “starts up, making the lake [and green trees in the distance] look blue-black” (14). Wallace Stevens’s “LAST LOOKS AT THE LILACS” also uses nature for curious metaphorization through lines such as “this bloom is the bloom of soap” (19). On the page opposite

Williams's "portrait" of Demuth/"THE HOTHOUSE PLANT," Hart Crane's "POSTER" also uses line breaks, one-word lines, and deliberate spacing to mobilize the visual.<sup>161</sup> The poem, for example, reiterates content through visual device as a plant/weed trickles (off the line) after "brilliant kids" crush it:

[. . .] their fingers crumble fragments of baked  
 weed  
 gaily digging and scattering. (20)

Directly following "THE HOTHOUSE PLANT," Slater Brown's short sketch "A GARDEN PARTY" again employs the trope of the flower, which recurs throughout *Secession*.

*Secession* 4 also offers direct attention to trends within the visual arts that serve to contextualize these floral and chromatic experiments.<sup>162</sup> In his "NOTE ON DER STURM," for example, Kenneth Burke asserts his perspective on the contemporary imperative for "pure" abstraction in art, which for him also involves the discourse of color – line/form. He argues that Herwarth Walden, founder of the German Expressionist poetry and art magazine *Der Sturm* (1910), factionalizes two "parties fighting for dictatorship in the arts": those "pleading for an art which will have a more fundamental relationship with life; and over against it, . . . the struggle to preserve the exclusively esthetic point of view" (32). He continues,

[For Walden,] the man who requires the representation of water in order to see a blue completely lacks the artistic eye. If, when placed before a colour, one must think something before he can experience it, he is without any colour sense whatever. A colour is not received in the soul, but in the eye. Everything else is simply the association of the subject.  
 (32)

Burke maintains, however, that such a premise aligns art with a mere trend of the last twenty years that allows for the prioritization of color over line/form, instead of “recovering a method which has sat upon Europe for whole centuries” (32).

Burke’s prescription for a modernist heritage located beyond the industrialism of the past twenty years within the US typifies a strand of debate that sought alignment with a (longer) European tradition that could counter assumptions about the relatively youthful (and arguably “low”) culture characteristic of the US. It also again brings to the foreground the overlapping relation between verbal and visual arts during this period, to which recent scholarship on Williams has devoted considerable attention.

### **Historical Reception**

Before advancing to the contemporary reception of Williams’s “Objectivist” work, and in particular, “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT,” it is useful to recall earlier responses to his literary output.<sup>163</sup> Before *SA* (now most often regarded as the original context of “The Pot of Flowers” or “II”), no critical commentary on “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” was made. Given that *Secession* only printed several hundred copies of each issue, and in the end realized Munson’s intension and closed after only two years, this fact is not surprising.<sup>164</sup> Also, historically much of Williams’s work was only belatedly recognized as important; in this sense, the reception of his early publications, earning only brief attention within newspapers and a handful of (prominent) little magazines, reflected a larger trend that only in the 1960s substantively began to change (in part due to his death in 1963).

Among these early and largely uncritical assessments, Williams’s poetry found praise in the *Rutherford American* (1909, 977), which celebrated its “credibility” and “Georgian exuberance.” Several years later, Pound (1913, 227), whom he had met in college, presciently lauded Williams based on his second book, *The Tempers*. Dorothy Dudley of *Poetry* (1918, 39) magazine gave a mixed review of *AQQ*, calling it “marvelously observant, delicate, haunting; then at moments stilted,

confused, obtuse.” John Rodker (1918, 33) was more decisive as he championed *AQQ* as “the most important book that has come from the Imagists.” John Gould Fletcher (1918, 60) however, found Williams’s experimentation far too self-aware to be valuable. Despite these early debates (just briefly mentioned here), by this point in his career not many readers or critics were talking seriously about William Carlos Williams.

### **The 1920s and Beyond**

Unfortunately for Williams, *KH* was received in a similar fashion to his earlier work. Experimentally-sympathetic poets, such as Robert McAlmon (1921) and Marianne Moore (1921; 1927), praise the book in several little magazines, while detractors, such as Helen Birch-Bartlett (1921), were put off by his formal innovations and improvisatory decisions. After *KH*, 1923 was an especially productive year for Williams, who, recall, published both *SA* and *GAN*. As Townley (1975, 158) explains, however, “the world received [these] sixth and seventh books as it had the five before them, in silence.” Although *SA* does establish Williams as an important new US poet, it was not widely read, nor was the scant critical attention paid to it necessarily favorable. The book was never reprinted in its original form during Williams’s lifetime, and posthumous reprinting (in its original form) was only on minor, small presses.

Although one could argue that Wallace Stevens’s approving preface to Williams’s *CP 1921–1931* and Randall Jarrell’s introduction to his *SP 1949* began to assert Williams’s larger significance to US modernism, it is not until the 1960s that critics began to devote concentrated attention to his literary career, and in particular, to the “flowers” of *SA*.<sup>165</sup> Nearly every critical response that mentions “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” (however obliquely) does so in the context of the influence of the visual arts on Williams. As such, most of the criticism reviewed here will entail the issue of ekphrasis, and the influence of Demuth on Williams. While important later scholarship more broadly attends to the influence of painting and twentieth-century art movements, such as

Cubism and Dadaism, the interest will be to highlight where possible the most direct references to “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” in any of its versions.

The first collection of essays on Williams appeared in 1966 (edited by Miller). It also is the first to publish the prose of *SA* (without the poems). This book, according to Miller, represents the development of literary taste in the US since the 1920s. He favors renewed attention to the prose of *SA*, arguing that its poems “cannot be fully understood apart from the context of the prose around them” (vii).<sup>166</sup> Citing Williams’s (1954, 213) assertion in “Against the Weather” that “no symbolism is acceptable,” Miller adopts the (romantic) notion that Williams’s poems, lacking symbolic and romantic dimensions, resist analysis.<sup>167</sup> Given Williams’s connection to the visual arts, however, more probable is Hoffman’s (1954, 23–24) conception of *SA* as a “still life of a special kind . . . [in which] progress is clearly seen either in spatial and temporal movement or in symbolic pattern.”

Guimond’s (1968) critical biography reintroduces us to the relationship between Williams and Demuth first discussed within Williams’s autobiographies (1948; 1958). Guimond shows that in the “sophisticated, sharp-witted, irreverent” Demuth, Williams saw “art as a lively, imaginative, essentially aristocratic activity” (43). This dandy friend of Duchamp, known by Stevens as a “Connoisseur of Chaos,” was “the master of the witty title.” In the 1920s and 1930s, he painted object portraits such as his famed picture of a water tower and chimney, titled *Aucassin et Nicolette* (“invoking” the young couple from the famous medieval romance).<sup>168</sup>

More frequently referred to within studies of the relationship between Williams and Demuth is Demuth’s “poster portrait” of Williams, *The Figure Five in Gold* (1928) (figs. 7.1–7.2), which is based on Williams’s poem “The Great Figure” (1921). In his (at times ironically strained) metonymic practice of depiction, Demuth took after Picabia whose “object portraits” of 1915 had been reproduced in *291*, a magazine with which Williams had been familiar. Stein’s verbal portraits “Matisse” and “Picasso” also appeared around this time in *Camera Work* (Aug., 1912), as did her



**Figure 7.1** *Left*: Charles Demuth, *The Figure 5 in Gold* (1928). The Alfred Stieglitz Collection, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

**Figure 7.2** *Right*: Detail by author.

“Portrait of Mabel Dodge at the Villa Curonia” (June, 1913). In the same issue, Dodge herself explains that Stein does with words what Picasso accomplishes in paint, something that Williams would no doubt build upon as he developed his poetics.

Perloff (1983, 174) notes that Williams’s verse shares a quality with these early verbal portraits: for her they are “drawings” “endowed with legends that identify them as particular personalities . . . .” Also important to the study of “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” and its dedication to Demuth is Perloff’s (176) observation that in Williams’s work, “ordinary objects are granted a curious sexual power as in Picabia’s *Ici C’est Ici Stieglitz* (July–Aug. 1915). Through . . . desire aroused by ‘hung over’ words” (i.e., line breaks that visually prompt questions that subsequent lines answer), Williams’s poems tease, and seduce.<sup>169</sup> From such earlier practitioners of the object portrait as Stein, Picabia, and Demuth, Williams no doubt learned that just as visual work can have verbal dimensions, so can the opposite be true. If Perloff is right, he also experienced or saw reaffirmed in

the verbal or visual details of a composition the encoding of sexuality, which entails of course (or even especially) its titling.

Guimond's critical biography brings one closer to an understanding of the connection between Demuth and Williams in its detailing of how, like Williams, Demuth's art often centered on commonplace reality. More specifically, in the 1920s both Demuth and Williams exploited flowers for their respective depictions. Guimond suggests that both men in a sense "save' flowers by lifting them out of the sooty world of time and decay into their aristocratic, aesthetic vision" (49).

According to Guimond, one of Demuth's favorite techniques was to juxtapose images of the world he values with "an exciting, tawdry environment which encroaches upon it" (48). In light of the polysemy of "hothouse"—in one sense, a "brothel" (OED)—and Demuth's overt homosexuality, which Williams even later in life avoided discussing, Guimond's observation here proves useful.<sup>170</sup>

Expanding Guimond's investigation of the significance of the visual arts to Williams is Dijkstra's (1969) influential first major assessment of the influence of Cubism, Stieglitz, and the Stieglitz circle on Williams. Dijkstra also first posits the Armory Show as the turning point in Williams's style, and first argues that Demuth's *Tuberoses* (1922), which Williams owned, was the basis for Williams's "The Pot of Flowers." In Dijkstra's view, "The Pot of Flowers" is a "literal rendering into poetry of Demuth's watercolor," just as *SA*'s "The Rose" translates Juan Gris's collage *Roses* (1914) (172). Given his poetics, Williams was drawn to Gris's synthesis of Cubism and Realism (and his photographic attention to light) vis-à-vis Picasso's and Braque's work, which flattened an object's volume, and treated light more synthetically (173). Within this context, one also might consider other ekphrastic treatments by Williams, such as those found within *Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems* (1963).<sup>171</sup>

Dijkstra also recalls that Williams's interest in painting stemmed from his early childhood. As young woman, Williams's mother had studied painting in Paris, and continued to paint during

Williams's youth. As Williams (1958, 16) remembered, "Her interest in art became my interest in art."

The association of art with Williams's "romantic" mother, at one point considered his "poetic ideal" (ibid.), bears special relevance to an appreciation of the homosocial dimension of "THE HOTHOUSE PLANT."<sup>172</sup> It was, for example, to his Puerto Rican mother that he attributed his arguably more Dionysian interior "Carlos" (Marzán 1994, 190): an emotional side supposedly constrained by the more "Apollonian" name of his father, which reflected his disposition. Incidentally, "Carlos" also was the name by which Demuth always referred to Williams, which suggests another instance of names used to create special meaning and intimacy between them.<sup>173</sup> Also revealing is Dijkstra's observation that Williams was a man more inclined to be "furtively in love" rather than boldly. His "crush" on Mina Loy, who was intense and emancipated for the time (37), reinforces this contention.

Before continuing to detail the contemporary reception of Williams's work, especially as it pertains to the visual arts, it is useful to mention Williams's own suggestive writings on Demuth, who clearly factors significantly into his career, and especially "THE HOTHOUSE PLANT." While an interrogation of the homosociality of "dedications" and object portraits for Williams cannot be given full treatment here, this important discussion should be begun.

*I Wanted To Write A Poem*, which, recall, misremembers the origins of "II," recounts Williams's initial meeting with Demuth in cool, "revised" terms. He writes:

I met him almost at once when I went down to Penn in my freshman year and we became at once lifelong friends. The men I met in those years I have clung to forever; that's the way I felt about it from the first, that it would be forever, and that's the way it has turned out. With *Spring and All*, it was his turn for a dedication and tribute. (36)

Williams's earlier depiction of this initial meeting—like the earliest version of “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT”—bears far more revealing and complex emotions:

At that table I met one of my dearest friends. Will you have some bread? Yes. That look. It was enough. Youth is so rich. It needs not stage setting. Out went my heart to that face.

There was something there, a reticence, a welcome, a loneliness that called to me. And he, he must have seen it in me too. We looked. It was gauged accurately at once and sealed for all time. The other faces are so many prunes. (quoted in Marling 1982, 16).

Another description by Williams (1948, 53) also suggests his intimacy with Demuth: “when supper would be over and we felt disinclined to return to our rooms, Charles Demuth used to take long walks with me in West Philadelphia.” With apparent discomfort, however, Marling (1982, 16) asserts, “Neither Williams nor his friend realized it, but Demuth was a homosexual. Williams was attracted not only by his sensitivity and winning ways, but by his representation of the ‘energy’ of the female attitude.” Unfortunately, Marling offers no evidence of Demuth’s or Williams’s “unawareness.” He continues, “in 1912, Demuth, Hartley, and Duchamp, in fact, became part of an extensive homosexual network that extended from Paris to Provincetown and Philadelphia.” While Williams, in Marling’s view, “was aware of this nether side of Demuth” he “was somewhat naïve about it” (25). Given Demuth’s brazenness, and that in many ways he facilitated Williams’s social life, this purported “naivety” in an otherwise acute Dr. Williams seems very unlikely.

In a different essay, Marling (1989, 285) recalls Williams’s “The Baroness Elsa Freitag von Loringhoven,” which admits Williams’s deception of “male and female friends alike with the promise of promiscuity”—a promise, Williams maintains, “on which he does not deliver.” In the same essay, Williams “rail[s] against the sexuality of painter Marsden Hartley, who apparently tried to seduce him.” He also suggests that sexual foreplay and coitus offer him “a way of gathering and

discharging biological urges, emotions, [and] *conventions of thought and emotion.*” For Williams, “After sex comes clarity” (286 italics mine).

A history of dedications between the two men adds to this complexity. For instance, several years before the publication of “The Hothouse Plant,” Demuth exhibited *Machinery: For W.C.W.* (Dec. 1920). And after Demuth’s death, Williams wrote the elegy “The Crimson Cyclamen,” a flower traditionally part of the Primulaceae or “Primrose” family, which recalls the “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” as retitled for *CP 1921–1931*.

Treatment of this topic also benefits from attention to the homosocial dimension of Williams’s role as Demuth’s doctor. After the onset of Demuth’s diabetes (1919) and his diagnosis (1920), Demuth was confined to a sanatorium in Morristown, New Jersey, for insulin treatment (1922). As Marling (1980, 31) explains, Demuth’s illness in the early 1920s detached him from the New York social scene “and renewed a close relationship with Williams, a doctor of medicine.” In fact, Williams himself would later give Demuth injections, and inspect his body. The issue of Williams’s sexuality clearly is complicated, especially as it also relates to his concept of “contact” through work. More on this topic, introduced by Marling, needs to be done.

Following Dijkstra’s groundbreaking *Hieroglyphics* in the late 1960s, scholarship on Williams flourishes. Notable among the studies that emerge are those that argue in favor of an inter-art, comparative approach to the early poetry of Williams. Weaver (1970), Tashjian (1975; 1978), Perloff (1981), Marling (1982), Sayre (1983), and Schmidt (1988) remain important books on this subject. While all introduce valuable work on Williams’s relation to the visual arts, none however provides a substantively detailed examination of “The Pot of Flowers.” Tashjian (1975, 111) highlights the importance of words in *SA* as seeking liberation from “a particular kind of experience—the European experience, which is second-hand for most Americans” (111). And he emphasizes the importance of “straight” photography and Duchamp’s concept of the readymade to such poems as

“The Little Red Wheelbarrow.” Sayre underscores the significance of early object portraits to Williams—especially germane to “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT”—when he reminds us of Williams’s praise for the machine drawings of Picabia, which appeared in the fall issue of *The Little Review* (1922) just a few months before “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” was published. Perloff (1981), whose insights have been discussed previously, reinforces the view that became widely held with the publication of *I* (which finally reprints *SA*), that the poems of *SA*, reliant on surrounding prose, should be considered foremost as part of this larger context. As demonstrated here, however, “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” did in fact stand alone in form and location; or rather, as alone as any poem published within a magazine.<sup>174</sup>

A variety of shorter essays, published within the 1970s and 1980s, provide more specific ideas about “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT.” Sayre (1984, 22) is rare in actually mentioning this early title (in a footnote), and offers that the title and dedication “suggest the plant’s winter flowering,” which when dropped, enabled Williams to place the poem within “spring.” While Sayre is right to suggest that meaning changes with alterations to title and dedication, these changes seems unlikely attributable to Williams’s desire only to realize a new season.<sup>175</sup> Sayre departs from earlier notions about the flower poems of *SA* as ekphrastic and contends instead that Williams more broadly reproduces the stylistic diversity of an era in collage form. In doing, Sayre agrees with Breslin’s (1977) important earlier work, which is the fullest analysis to date of “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT.”

Breslin’s exegesis challenges oversimplified generalizations about the direct correspondence of Williams’s poem to Demuth’s painting. He disagrees with Dijkstra that “The Pot of Flowers” faithfully transcribes Demuth’s *Tuberoses* by demonstrating inconsistencies, such number of flowers and the inclusion or omission of light source.<sup>176</sup> Breslin overlooks, however, a critical observation found within another (rare) treatment of this poem.

As Ollier's "Of colors and sounds: A musical reading of "The Pot of Flowers"" (1985, 35) suggests, the poem "illuminates not only Williams's and Demuth's relationship but also their respective personalities." Quoting Williams himself on the painter Emanuel Romano, Ollier foregrounds Williams's conviction that "The artist is always and forever painting only one thing: a self-portrait" (35). Expanding Breslin's remarks on the likeness of the two men, which does not include a discussion of their sexual (dis)similarities, Ollier mentions that Demuth's "nervous versatile nature" was akin to Williams's (32). We also learn that it was first within the controlled (and perhaps hothouse-like) environment of the hospital that Williams, while visiting Demuth, "caught sight of *Tuberose*, bought it, and took it home . . ." (32).<sup>177</sup>

The profusion of scholarship on Williams in the 1980s, and the multi-volume publication of the "complete" *Collected Poems*, no doubt stemmed in part from Mariani's (1981) biography on Williams, which renewed attention to Williams. Although this attention to some extent waned in the 1990s, Halter (1994) provides another rare investigation of "The Pot of Flowers." He urges new critical attention to the "sound patterns" of Williams's poetry neglected by a tradition that privileges the visual (213). As of yet, few critics have taken up this call. In fact, Layng's (2002, 199) more recent study returns to familiar ground in positing that Williams's formal arrangement is, "at its deepest level, arbitrary and more indebted to the visual than to the oral." Specifically valuable in Halter's book, however, is his acknowledgment that

Williams, who was so strongly against an indiscriminate use of metaphors and similes, has an abundance of hidden metaphors in his poems. . . . Through them, we experience the life in all things, the forces that they embody and exert on other things and beings, as well as the forces that they themselves in turn are subject to—forces that shape them, so that it is indeed their forms that contain their essences. (153)

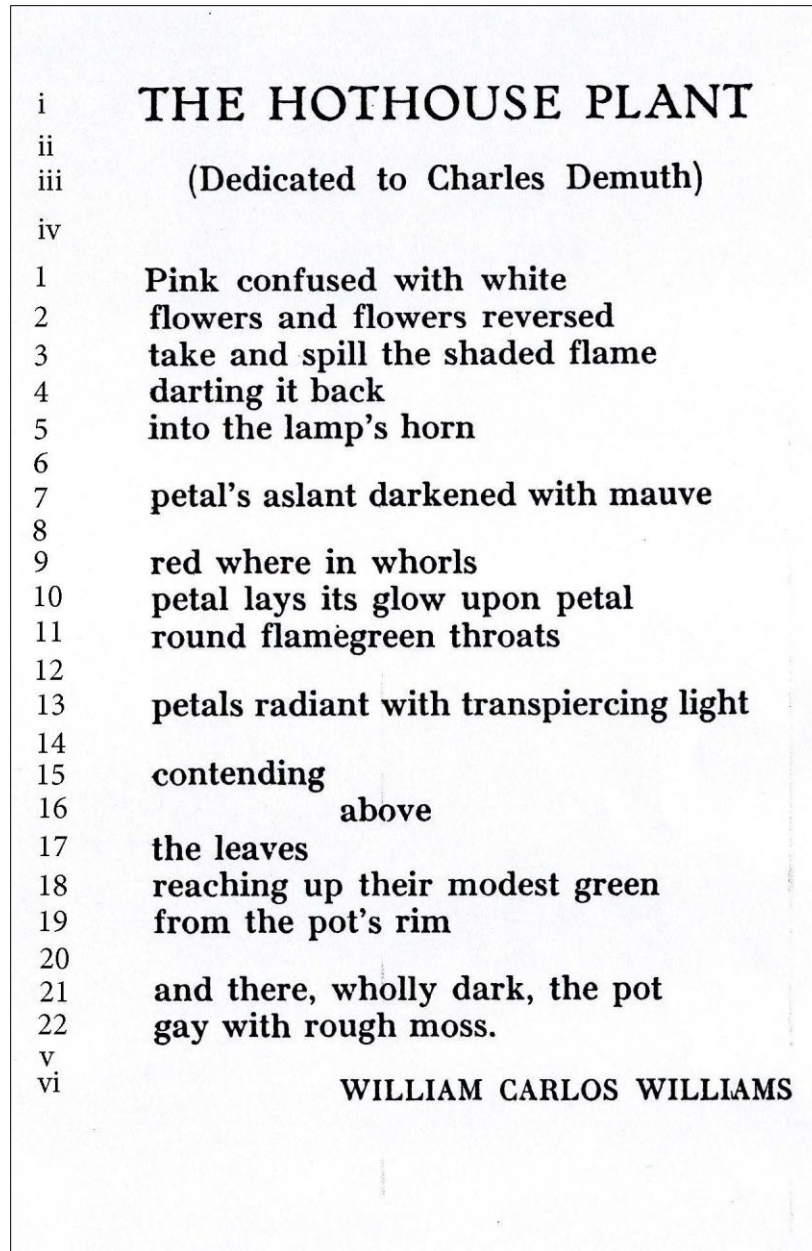
While Halter perhaps diminishes his claim by reminding us that all language is metaphorical—and that this inherent quality itself bridges the self, the other, and the environment—his observation underscores Williams’s strained desire for the quasi-indexical “truth” status of “object writing,” and the more pervasive bearing of this discourse on twentieth-century modernism.

Although examination of the desire to depict “the thing itself” may be approached within a variety of ways, its relation to photography here is especially germane. Despite awareness of photography’s role in shaping the “reality” that it depicts, many hold firm to the notion that the indexicality of the apparatus ensures its “objectivity.” Williams, however, like poets such as Baudelaire ([1859] 1980) before him, understood that mere photographic transcription or mimetic iconicity could not sufficiently essentialize subjects.

For Williams, without the inflection of imagination, viewers remained, in a sense, imprisoned by the perceivable world and unable to make “contact” with a desired transcendence. Williams’s poetics argued for the mediation of intellect, biases, hidden wishes and motives, etc. as critical to the defamiliarization of “objects,” which allowed for a subject’s liberation. As such, for Williams a poem should forever admit its mediation and shed any mythical aura of “the thing itself” (whatever that thing might be).

In constant struggle with the terms of representation and mediation, which for him were complicated by a propensity to seek universals, Williams over the course of his career often revised his notion of “object” writing by redefining its ontology. He declared that even “the most abstract, the most subjective, the most distorted . . . painting is [still] representational.” And he realized that “the only question that can present itself is: What do you choose to represent” (1978, 197). At the same time, however, he maintained that expressions of pure subjectivity could only represent “incompleteness, a partial development,” even though by his account every depiction does represent something fully (206).

The terms of this paradox point to the crux of Williams's poetics, and to an unaddressed dimension of "THE HOTHOUSE PLANT." The "incompleteness" of which Williams speaks entails a missed touch, an "unfulfillment," and a lost opportunity for a type of gratification. For Williams, "partial development" and "incompleteness" resonated with reproductive and biological implications. Just as sexual reproduction is the fulfillment of two beings "touching," the objective world exists as a "space" with a capacity to "yield" (if properly touched). In this sense, Williams's poetics involved a type of fertilization; and "completeness" entailed coupling to make things (or people), in a sense, pregnant records of this contact: evidence that one has escaped, in Williams's case, the isolation of being. As we read "THE HOTHOUSE PLANT," Dedicated to Charles Demuth, and its annotations below, we should foreground this desire and its fetish: the (secrets) of the testifying object, and the play of color and line/form in its disclosure.



**Figure 7.3** William Carlos Williams, "THE HOTHOUSE PLANT" (1923). From *Secession* 4 (January): 21. Black-and-white reproduction from Kraus Reprint (1967).

## Annotations

i        The first published title of Williams’s poem goes far toward shaping it. The title adumbrates a single exotic body unrestrained by stable classification whereas later titles, such as “The Pot of Primroses” and “The Pot of Flowers,” reveal and categorize the subject as an angiosperm or “flowering plant” (the most dominant and prevalent floral type). The suggested plurality of these primroses and flowers foregrounds a profusion of floral ornamentation supported by any number of bodies (stalks and stems). “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT,” however, more restrictively denotes a fragile exotic alterity and a single subject. This title also affords the poem a humid and warm setting to which the subject and speaker are restricted; this in a sense introduces to the poem a dynamic involving architecture and place, in that to experience a hothouse plant one must succumb to the environment of its fastidious conditions. “Hothouse” suggests the breathing of hot moist air within a shared structure—breath to some extent “scored” within the alliterative “h” and spondaic “hothouse” of the title itself. It also suggests several other qualities of space, such as the decadence of keeping a single plant alone in a rarified “house,” or the viewing of this plant or many “kept” exotic plants from behind hot (or even, steamy) glass.

“Hothouse,” whose meaning here includes a “figurative brothel,” also registers sexual deviance, which is, like homosociality, paradoxically hidden (or housed) yet knowingly exposed: in this case, by glass or translucent walls. Trapped hothouse light also might allude to the body as a vessel for religious grace or beneficence. As discussed above, the title also carries intertextual reference to the thematic presence of plants and flowers within the poem’s original publication, *Secession* 4, and to flora as a site for interactions of color whose embodiment was construed as a US alternative to Europeanized modes of expressionism and “total” abstraction.

iii        The dedication to Williams’s close friend Charles Demuth, a US painter whose oeuvre includes many paintings of flowering plants, reinforces a notion of intertextual ekphrasis and

implicates the enduring personal and professional influence that existed between these two men. Dijkstra (1969) was the first to propose that “The Pot of Flowers” transcribes Demuth’s painting *Tuberoses* (1922), which Williams owned. Munson (1928, 109), however, much earlier contended that it was Demuth who produced a painting based on Williams’s “II” rather than the other way around.

5 According to Breslin (1977), the “lamp’s horn” provides evidence against Dijkstra’s observation that “The Pot of Flowers” strictly transcribes Demuth’s watercolor *Tuberoses* (1922). As Breslin (1977) notes, *Tuberoses* does not include a depiction of a lamp; moreover, it features three flowers, whereas Williams’s poem embodies one. Like Breslin, Halter’s (1994) explication of the poem also entails flowers “darting [light] back” (line 4) into a light source. Offering a different reading of “horn,” Ollier (1985, 31) suggests that “The Pot of Flowers” musically transposes Demuth’s picture. She maintains that, “Faced with the problem of expressing in words what was painted on the canvas, [Williams] instinctively turned to another artistic medium: music, transforming shapes and colors into rhythms and sounds.” Why musical transposition does not pose a problem while ekphrasis does confounds Ollier’s argument. Also, in the end, Williams does of course employ words whose value exceeds musicality. Ollier’s attention to lines 3–5, however, draws valuable attention to this complicated section of the poem.

While “flame” (line 3) can be read as a light source “horned” by its shade, this reading then suggests the representation of light “darting back,” from flowers, into an artificial light source (“the lamp’s horn”). A reading of “lamp’s horn” instead as descriptive of floral structure, however, allows for a description of the downward passage of sunlight, into a hothouse, and “back/into” to an extended floral “throat” (line 11) (or lamp’s horn), which also recalls floral structures within Demuth’s *Tuberose*. This downward tracking of sunlight also would correspond with the poem’s representation of the plant from an initial confusing perception of pink and white (line 1) detached by line break from the line/form of “flowers” (line 2), down through the plant’s leaves, etc., and to

its base. According this reading, flowers, shaded by translucent hothouse walls, “spill” (refract) abundant (sun) light, but also absorb or “take” that light (“it”) into its floral apparatus.

It is useful to note here that within *Secession* 4, Richard Ashton’s poem “MOTORCYCLE, AND OFF TO THE BEACH!” uses a similar construction to trace the absorption of sunlight by plants, and color as a phenomenon of interaction between sunlight and surface. He writes, “the sunlight is *flaming green* in the first spray of leaves that sways in the trees” (1, italics mine). Both readings of “the lamp’s horn” maintain the flux of contraction and expansion: the simultaneous bidirectional movement between the local and universal so often commented upon in Williams’s poetics. However in locating the plant within the sun, the latter reading more directly draws attention to the hothouse and its range of signification.

7        Subsequent editions remove the apostrophe from “petal’s.” The Kraus (1967) reprint of *Secession* (1922–24) features corrections made by the publisher, but does not remove the apostrophe. It is likely that variances of line 7 reveal Williams’s evolving intent. The 1923 edition, reproduced above, published just before *SA*, reflects Williams’s most Dadaistic and formally-divergent period. He experiments with devices such as punctuation, neologisms (“flamegreen”), calligrammic shaping, spacing, and heightened syntactic ambiguity through line breaks. His use of the apostrophe in line 7, for example, installs a punctuational slant rhyme between lines 5, 7, and 11 in which the former apostrophes (“lamp’s” and “petal’s”) signal possession, and the latter “round” flickers with elision (“around”).

The apostrophe in line 7 also preserves the singularity of the petal, which line 10 furthers, and line 13 contrasts. Lines 7 and 13 (each comprising five words) visually mirror each other to underscore the above mentioned use of synecdoche, which is essential to Williams’s *ars poetica*: the localization of universality (and vice versa). The conjunction of the single petal and “aslant” also forwards the secretive homosociality of the poem’s metonymy “dedicated” in part to Demuth.

About Demuth, Williams reveals in his *Autobiography* (1948, 151), “he had an evasive way of looking aslant at the ground or up at the ceiling when addressing you.” Williams here articulates Demuth’s habit of “aslant address” in the face of a single petal (chin level in this purposefully-ambivalent calligramme). The bidirectional movement of the “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” further gestures toward Demuth as its leaves reach up (line 18) while the poem’s lines scan downward over the body of this plant/painted plant/plant-portrait.

11 See note 7 for more on Williams’s use of “flamegreen.”

13 Later versions of “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” diminish the relation between lines 7 and 13 when they incorporate lines 13–15 (*SA, CP 1921–1931, CPT*), or lines 13–18 (*CEP, SP 1949* and *SP 1985*), into this fourth stanza. In preserving the singularity of line 13, the first published version assertively couples lines 7 and 13 as the only one-line stanzas in the poem, and the only lines comprising five words. The stanzaic and phonemic paralleling of lines 7 and line 13, one “darkened,” one “radiant with . . . light,” creates a formal bridge that allows for their “movement” toward each other (allowing contact) despite their differences. These include contrastive lighting (dark/light), numbering (petal/petals), and figurative affect (the evasive slant/centrifugal radiance). It is also noteworthy that each version of the poem depicts stanza four differently (if but only in spacing) (7.6), suggesting the authorial and editorial complexity (and significance) of its various groupings.

Of particular interest here are lines 8–12, which constitute the space that is bridged, or which allow for a transition from a singular darkened aslant (askew, or inward) to a plural enlightened radiance (outward). Lines 7–9 can be enjambed to create a mauve/red compound color word that serves as the location “where in whorls / petal lays its glow upon petal / (a)round flamegreen throats.” As a separate stanza, however, lines 9–11 also suggest a separate treatment, which resounds with word play and sexual innuendo. “Red where in whorls” hints of “red wear in whirls,”

suggesting circular abrasions (red wear) or the twirling of showy/salacious dress (red-wear); a (phallic) petal “lays” its “glow” upon another petal and (a)round (the interior) of a “flaming” throat; also suggested is the “peddling” of “lays.” Such connotations resonate with the “hothouse” titling of the poem, and with biographic experiences (discussed above), such as Williams’s medical inspection of marks on Demuth’s body indicative of his sexual adventurism.

It is noteworthy that the awkward syntax of this stanza makes it difficult to read (alone) without stammering and searching for semantic and syntactic orientation, much like Gertrude Stein’s *Tender Buttons* (1914), which features similar erotic and vulgar word play. Such processing difficulty encourages an alterity of reception, which in this case helps give rise to additional signification. Awareness of the poem’s buried and slanted meanings, and the more general recognition of, and permission for, alternative possibilities, factor into the above mentioned transition from a “petal’s” singular and darkened aslant, to “petals” (together) radiant and (after)glowing.

15 Stanza five (lines 15–19) underscores the poem’s spatial or calligrammic resolve, and perhaps its formal eccentricity, as “above” indents or bends right to embody an arched stem or an obliquely attached floral segment. The positioning of “above” “hangs” the plant’s ornamental petals over its more modest leaves, an effect that heightens consideration of their contrast. Petals, botanically “showy” by nature, draw pollinators toward the plant’s sexual organs to facilitate fertilization. A plant’s leaves, responsible for the absorption of light energy, and for respiration through stomata— orifices that regulate a plant’s “breath”—are far more instrumental to the plant’s daily “labor.” “Above” appears to mediate this “argument” between the “contending” petals and leaves; or, it relegates them to separate spheres, or even separate stanzas, depending on the version of the poem.

The degree to which “above” indents determines its vertical associations. Here, “above” floats, with a pun, over “up their,” while it paradoxically joins—serves as a middle between— “contending” and “the leaves” while still being “above” (them). Within other iterations of the poem,

such as found in *SA*, “above” is disconnected from the edges of the words “contending” and “the leaves,” and hovers more immodestly in its indentation above the “modest” greenery (line 18).

“Above” denotes a “superiority” of petals to leaves (spatial and dispositional), and in its isolation from the rest of the poem, it bears in part the transcendence suggested by the “transpiercing” light of the petals. “Above” locates these showy petals, and this light, far above the “modest green” of the more prosaic or workmanlike leaves, a contrast that augments the “height” of that glow and heat of that light. Playing on this theme, *CP 1921–1931* indents “above” so that it vertically aligns with “transpiercing” and “green,” perhaps underscoring a binary more directly. As “above” aligns differently within the poem, its implications vary, if only in tone, which makes variances of this element especially fruitful to consider over the course of the poem’s textual history as perhaps an index of Williams’s shifting interests.

16 Cf. annotation 15.

18 Cf. annotations 10 and 17.

20–22 Separating the (organic) colorfulness and luminosity of the flowers and leaves from the “wholly dark” (artificial) pot and “rough” gay moss, the white space of line 20 enables the final stanza to anchor the poem calligrammically. Breslin’s (1977) observation of the homophonic pun (holy) in “wholly dark” echoes the semantic dissonance of “gay rough” moss. “Holy” darkness here also presents an uncertain relation to the (w)holiness? of the transpiercing (wholly bright) light above. Williams uses a line break (line 21) to instill another surprise and ambiguity as the thoroughly “dark” pot becomes suddenly “gay” with, of all things, moss. Just as there is something “holy” even in the uncompromising darkness of the banal (the black everyday pot subtending the transcendent flowers), for Williams, even demure moss awaits recognition (or perhaps uncloseting) of its “gaiety.”

i THE HOTHOUSE PLANT		APPENDIX I		
ii (Dedicated to Charles Demuth)	II	THE POT OF PRIMROSES	II	II
1 Pink confused with white	Pink confused with white	Pink confused with white	Pink confused with white	Pink confused with white
2 flowers and flowers reversed	flowers and flowers reversed	flowers and flowers reversed	flowers and flowers reversed	flowers and flowers reversed
3 take and spill the shaded flame	take and spill the shaded flame	take and spill the shaded flame	take and spill the shaded flame	take and spill the shaded flame
4 darting it back	darting it back	darting it back	darting it back	darting it back
5 into the lamp's horn	into the lamp's horn	into the lamp's horn	into the lamp's horn	into the lamp's horn
6				
7 petal's aslant darkened with mauve	petals aslant darkened with mauve	petals aslant darkened with mauve	petals aslant darkened with mauve	petals aslant darkened with mauve
8				
9 red where in whorls	red where in whorls	red where in whorls	red where in whorls	red where in whorls
10 petal lays its glow upon petal	petal lays its glow upon petal	petal lays its glow upon petal	petal lays its glow upon petal	petal lays its glow upon petal
11 round flamegreen throats	round flamegreen throats	round flamegreen throats	round flamegreen throats	round flamegreen throats
12				
13 petals radiant with transpiercing light	petals radiant with transpiercing light	petals radiant with transpiercing light	petals radiant with transpiercing light	petals radiant with transpiercing light
14	contending	contending	contending	contending
15 contending	above	above	above	above
16 above			the leaves	
17 the leaves	the leaves	the leaves	reaching up their modest green	the leaves
18 reaching up their modest green	reaching up their modest green	reaching up their modest green	from the pot's rim	reaching up their modest green
19 from the pot's rim	from the pot's rim	from the pot's rim		from the pot's rim
20			and there, wholly dark, the pot	
21 and there, wholly dark, the pot	and there, wholly dark, the pot	and there, wholly dark, the pot	gay with rough moss.	and there, wholly dark, the pot
22 gay with rough moss.	gay with rough moss.	gay with rough moss		gay with rough moss.
iii WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS				
<i>Scesion</i> 4 (Jan., 1923): 21.	<i>Spring and All</i> . Paris: Contact, 1923.	<i>Collected Poems 1921-1931</i> . New York: The Objectivist P, 1934.	<i>Selected Poems</i> . New York: New Directions, 1949, 1985 <i>Collected Earlier Poems</i> . New York: New Directions, 1951.	<i>The Collected Poems 1909-1939</i> . Ed. A. Walton Litz and Chrisopher MacGowan. Vol. 1. New York: New Directions, 1986.

**Figure 7.4** Appendix I, Comparison of five versions of “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT.” Versions transcribed by author.



## CODA

### Color – Line/Form and Experiments in Reading

#### Beyond the Age of Composite Pictures

#### Color – Line/Form and the Grid: Mona Hatoum's *Untitled (hair grid with knots 3)* (2001)

On exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (June 2006) (third floor) hangs a relatively small, untitled piece by Palestinian-born British artist Mona Hatoum called *Untitled (hair grid with knots 3)*. Within the relatively-full exhibition space, noticeably few people pause to gaze at the small untitled grid. No postcard, poster, or book containing a reproduction of *Untitled* is for sale in the museum shop, nor can one find a picture of it on the Internet. It is, however, neither underwhelming nor silent. It seems perhaps to suffer, however, from its grid: a risky projection of a perhaps overused modern form, and a stale sign in a modern art gallery.

The physical dimensions of the piece are not provided (it appears to be approximately 9 cm square), but there is information about the medium: the work is made of “human hair with hairspray tied to transparentized paper.” As a result, three aspects of the piece seem of greatest potential interest: hair as an art medium; the inferred dexterity required to weave strands of human hair into a relatively ordered grid without it collapsing into a disordered knot; and the estimated time such an enterprise might take. Visual interest in *Untitled* might be difficult to sustain, however, because its line/form seems to resist, so to speak, the initial look of the viewer. The historical subordination of chromatic discourses to those of line/form also perhaps contributes to an immediate impression of color's irrelevance to the picture (“dark” hair, in this case, perhaps appearing “colorless”).

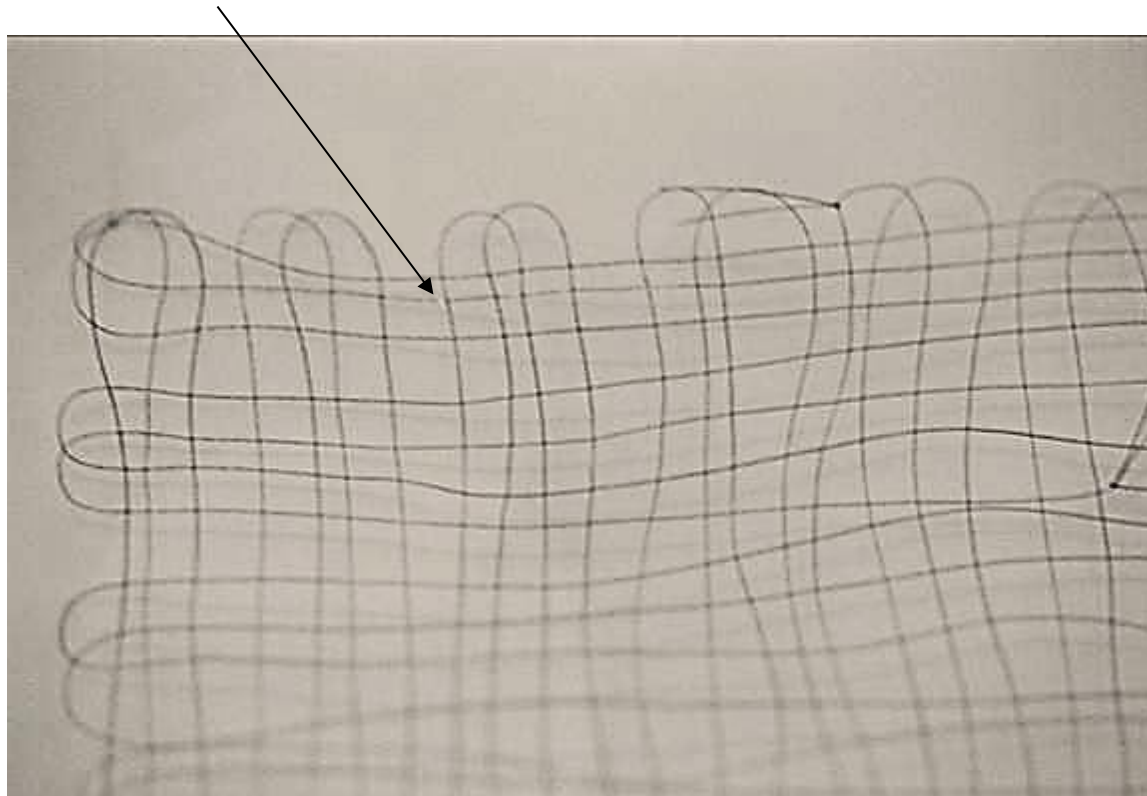
At first glance, *Untitled (hair grid with knots 3)* appears to bear little “content” beyond the novelty of its materials and “grid” as a familiar trope within an art space. “Grid,” however, as a concept within art, no longer seems to provoke exigent questions. Its relation to the “modern condition”; the difficulty of perhaps plotting moral, psychosocial, or historical positions, etc. as

“absolute coordinates” on the connoted Cartesian map; the effects of empiricism or science on the imagination; the problems associated with hermeneutics; art as commodity whose value can, for instance, be charted on a grid’s plane, or entered into quadrants, etc. are topics still of contemporary interest and relevance, but the grid’s “ordered emptiness” no longer seems metaphorically fit to invoke them. Or, a small grid, by 2001, perhaps too directly recalls those of Agnes Martin (1960s) to be that original.

For whichever reason, when approaching *Untitled*, there appears to be “nothing to see,” and this seems to drive viewers toward the text of the museum card (which is larger than the grid) even faster than usual. Based on the novelty of its materials, *Untitled* might be categorized according to what Dadaist Hans Richter ([1965] 1997, 208) described as art “whose content is reduced to nothing after the first shock effect.” Similarly, it may fall into Barthes’s ([1973] 1994, 18) category for “those productions of contemporary art which exhaust their necessity as soon as they have been seen (since to see them is immediately to understand to what destructive purpose they are exhibited: they no longer contain any contemplative or delectative duration) . . . .”

*Untitled* is vulnerable to such assessment not because its line/form may be reduced to cliché grid, but because it appears to be only a clever grid whose artfulness hinges on its shocking medium and the demands it presented to the artist. The reduced, categorical, even taxonomic explanation of its materiality as “human hair” advances this limited reading. Its “non-signifying” title, which in fact connotes the undifferentiated, the impersonal, the non-contextualized (i.e., namelessness, pure form, perhaps even universality), also to its detriment appears to reinforce the trope.

That *Untitled* tempts a reductive reading, or risks being dismissed, however, in fact contributes to its effectiveness. The grid, which turns out to be more of conscious pretense than a punch line, consists rather of a series of strands and boxes that hold a secret that requires “getting around” the grid to access. The work requires inspection from an almost uncomfortable proximity,



**Figure 8.0** Mona Hatoum’s *Untitled (hair grid with knots 3)* (2001). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photograph by author (2006).

and chromatic scrutiny despite the overbearing line/form of the grid, which again seems to imply color’s absence or irrelevance. From about seven centimeters—a distance that suggests the artist’s relation to materials—it becomes evident that *Untitled* comprises strands of hair of two different colors, from two different bodies, woven together. One thread is black, and the other is brown. Examined from a sharp angle this especially becomes apparent as the brown strand shines in the light.

Prior to the moment when color as a consideration appears to “enter” the composition through its differentiation, the grid is dominated by line/form and its many narratives. The flash of light on the brown strand amounts to what is a shocking moment that invites access to a figure whose “achromatic” line/form previously had seemed resistant. Whereas before the grid appeared little more than a woven paradox—an impersonal, untitled, inorganic, cold “grid” composed of

personal, organic material whose function is to keep the body warm—it now suggests the dynamics and dualities of relationship.

Because a single strand of hair is not long enough to form the grid, it becomes clear that multiple hairs have been knotted together. Brown is tied to brown, and black to black; and the two then are made to move under and over each other within a weave. Having moved beyond the idea of the grid, and line/form, as singular and unified, one sees that each strand also is formally different; the black hair appears straighter and a little thicker, and the brown has waves.

Prior to the recognition of color within the work, the “human hair” of the grid seems to bear a more singular synecdochical relation. For example, a viewer might assume the artist has woven her own hair into a grid, which might suggest hair as a vehicle for lyrical expression. In this sense, *Untitled* might suggest an artist *who has woven herself into a grid* by pulling out her hair, or collecting (i.e., valuing) that which typically only imperceptibly falls, is lost, or discarded.

The moment of color differentiation, however, allows *Untitled* to remind viewers of the inseparability of color from line/form, and of a different “syntactical” possibility; a viewer may now more easily follow a third-person narrative on exhibition—one which, however, always was available, even had both strands been “black.” *Untitled* no longer only seems to “address” the viewer; the strands, or synecdochically the “people” in this grid, interact with each other and one is invited to watch. From this perspective, the “grid” then, in a sense, recedes into the background of the work, and the interaction of hairs as a conceit for a relationship “open” to be read.

Looking carefully, for example, one can count the knots (mentioned by the title) and notice that each strand knots eight times. From this, one might infer that the two people comprising the grid have roughly the same length hair. This observation, however, does little to decipher the encoded relationship. On the contrary, it likely instills more ambiguity as the viewer is invited to reassess previously unchecked assumptions. The thicker, straighter, black hair, coupling with the

thinner, wavy, brown hair, might seem to suggest a romantic relationship between a man and a woman respectively. This, however, betrays heteronormative bias and gendered expectations respective to physiognomy and behavior (i.e., the assertive, strong, black hair, interacting with the yielding, slighter, brown hair).

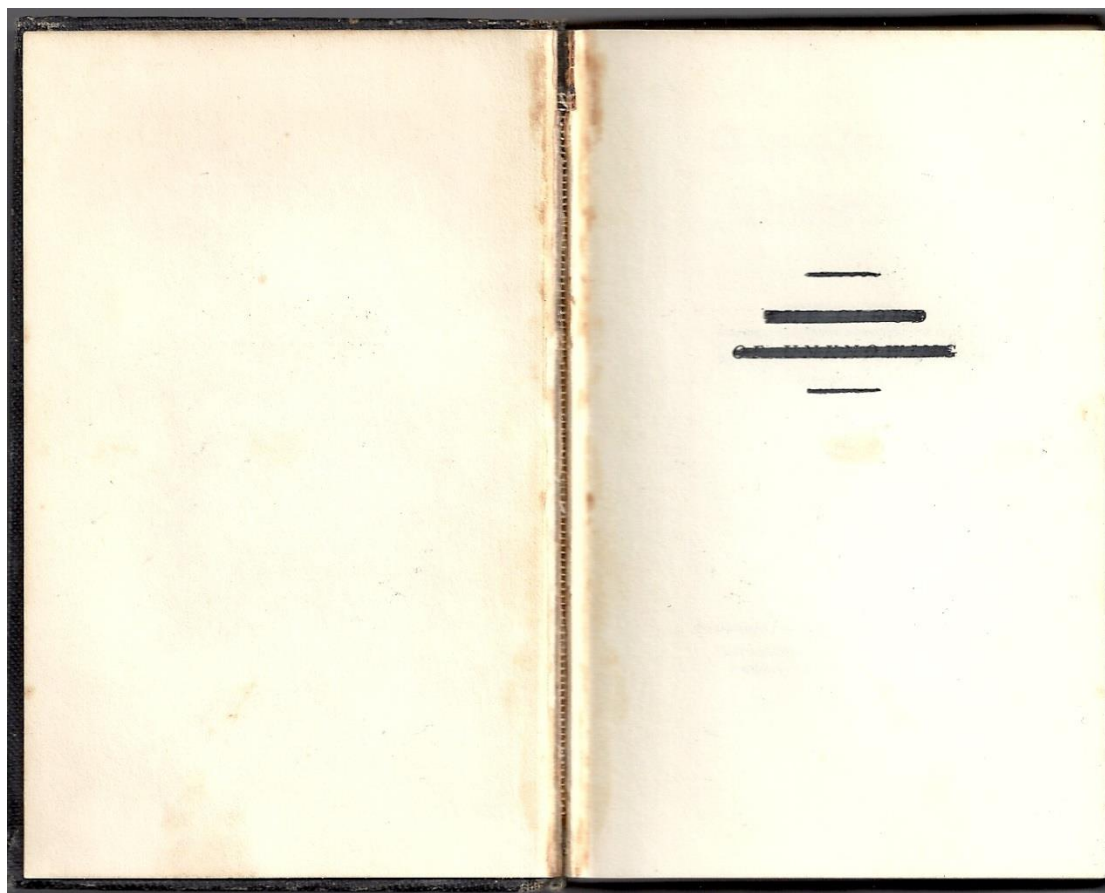
Given that the hairs are apparently long, and more or less of equal length, one could easily now infer a relationship between two women. Substantiating this idea, one can notice that the strands “couple” to comprise physically mirroring loops at the grid’s edges. In fact, the vertical edges themselves mirror one another (each features distinctly six “couplets”). In addition, a black hair curls left from the lower corner of the grid, and a brown hair on the upper right parallels this direction and curling motion.

Couplets, systematic order, paradoxes, the conceit of human hair, vacillation between the universal and the personal, the complexity of the trope, etc. combine also to connote a type of poetry; specifically, one might recall John Donne’s metaphysical poems “The Funeral” or the “The Relic” ([1633] 1952), where human hairs likewise function synecdochically, allowing a wanting lover to possess, in a sense, the object of his affection. “The Relic” even involves the act of burying a wound human hair, and depicts the subsequent interpretation of this action after it has been encountered. *Untitled* might then appear to evince only a hidden but ultimately ambiguous or even fraudulent relationship that exists only in this “grid-poem,” whose corners are messy and inelegant, and whose strands are twisted and fixed artificially with hairspray.

On the other hand, these could be the hairs of siblings, mother and daughter, close enemies, strangers, etc. It becomes clear that the looping and mirroring of strands bears in fact no stable meaning (enemies also may pattern each other—these strands could depict a pursuit; or, the strands’ movements might point toward heredity, one taking after the other). As the ambiguity woven into this grid appears too great, interest in the possible relationships contained within it may recede, and

once again the calm order of the grid may be foregrounded. One then recalls how color flashing in *Untitled* invited access to the formal loops, gaps, doublings, and knots as elements defining an interplay between individuals, relationships, and the relation between color and line/form itself. As the strands of *Untitled* then appear to alternate between absorption by the line/form of the grid, and chromatic individuation, the work, far from static and “saying nothing,” seems dynamic with metachromatic implication.

*Lining*: Black pencil on paper, thread-bound pink transfers, and pencil shavings



**Figure 9.0** Robert Machado, Stanza one, *Lining* (2013).

### Introduction

When alternative paradigms inform our reading, we are able to read texts differently or, to put it more strongly, to read different texts. —Susan Lanser (1986, 419)

*Lining* (fig. 9.0) is an artist book by me comprising a 178-page, 3,377 “line” experiment in poetics and “unnatural” pragmatics (or reception/reading strategies).<sup>178</sup> In one sense, the nature of this project might be summarized as a response to Klein’s assertion ([1954] 2008, 119) of “color’s enslavement by the line that becomes writing” (discussed above). By graphically transforming a given prose text into a series of lines that are then “read,” the book literalizes the frequent metaphorization of “line/form,” discussed throughout this dissertation, and its service to constructions of narrativity, plot, text, word, dominant formations of identity, etc.<sup>179</sup> It also

represents the boundaries of “interpretive” and theoretical validity as the productions of meaning determined by the conventions, strategies, and politics of reading/reception itself, which are less often acknowledged than performed. As this dissertation has suggested, such boundaries can impinge on the determination of constructs such as eventhood, description, narrativity, tellability, etc., which by influencing and limiting methods of production/reception, can shift determinations of experience, identity, and relations that come to constitute the “lived world” (Williams 1977) (Ricoeur 1984).

As an alternative conclusion to the dissertation, this coda reproduces excerpts from *Lining* and details of the methodology involved in its production. This includes a discussion of source materials, process, and reading. *Lining* in part was inspired by the postmodern poetics of Wayne Koestenbaum, the concept of reading as textual transformation explored by Barthes *Pleasure of the Text* (1975) and Eve Sedgwick’s “How to Do Things With Words and Other Materials” (2010). Its extremity underscores the context of reception as always emergent, constructive, rule-governed, effacing as well as extractive, and inexhaustive.

### **Materials**

In keeping with the project’s focus on aspects of self-reflexivity, *Lining* was produced with attention to constraints, issues of frame and support, as well as the archiving of materials and their possible signification. Figure 9.1 lists/shows the materials used to prepare the source book for lining, to line through each verbal and non-verbal sign that appears within this text, to structure a work environment, and to preserve aspects of production. The selection of each element was framed as bearing meaningfully on the experience of production, its results, and possible analysis of the project.

Pigment pencil was used, for example, because of its relative permanence and transferability to multiple surfaces. Black pigment was selected because of its association with black ink and



- (6) pencils: black, Prismacolor PC935
- (1) sharpener: tope, Baumgarten, manual
- (1) jar: glass with black lid
- (1) razor blade: straight
- (1) surgical tweezers
- (1) book: hardbound, black cloth, 13.5 x 9 cm
- (87) transfer pages: pink, 13.5 x 8 cm
- (1) cloth: thin, white
- (1) page clip: black
- (1) ruler: 45 cm
- (1) steno book: quad ruled, top flipping
- (1) editing loop: Horizon 4x

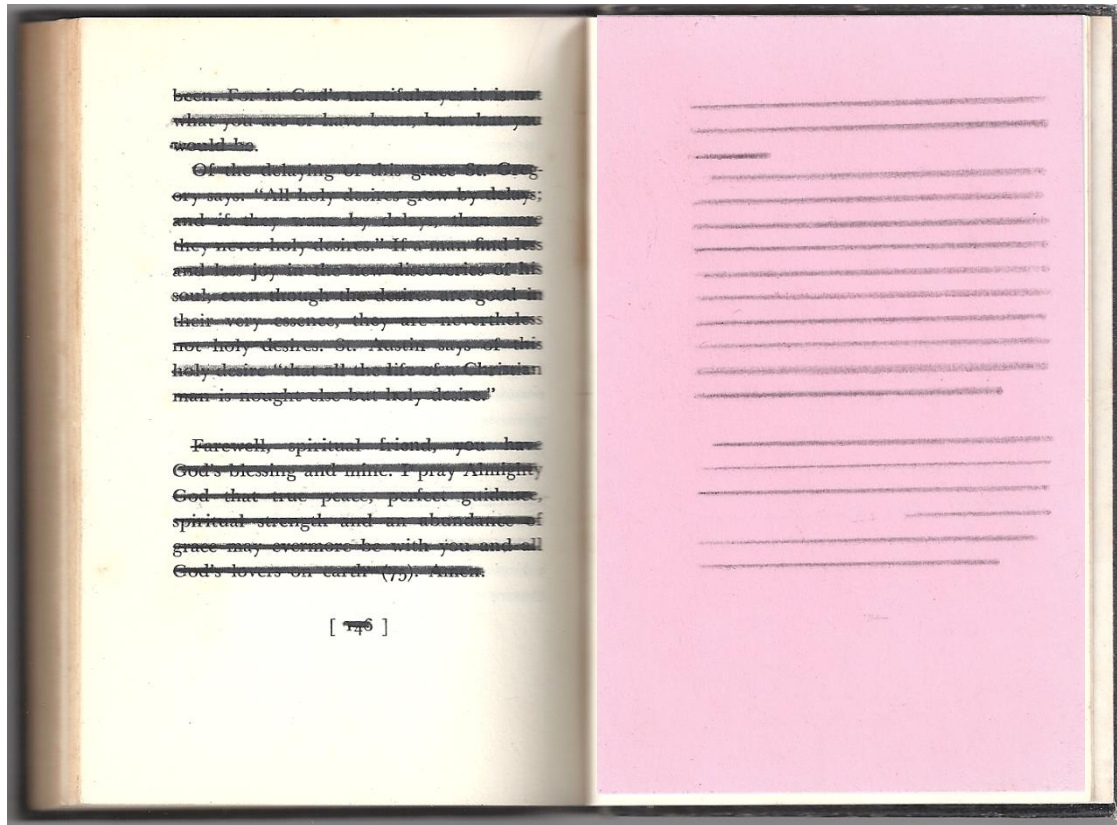
**Figure 9.1** Robert Machado, Materials for *Lining* (2013). Polaroid photograph by author (2013).

conventions of printing, writing, drawing, black-and-white photo-cinematic media, line/form, etc. Other elements, such as the black-topped jar, neutral (wood-colored) sharpener, and pink transfer paper, were given similar chromatic attention.

The selection of pink media involved additional consideration of questions and dilemmas foregrounded by the larger project. These included pink's susceptibility to gendered/queered references to cosmetic display, surface, embellishment, passivity, receptivity, fertility, intellectual inferiority, "cuteness" as an index of that inferiority or naiveté (the whiteness of paper, its obverse), and a perceived incompatibility of pink with seriousness. Pink also allows for references to flush skin and its suggestiveness (recall chapter two), sub-epidermal skin, "white" infant skin, and any number of tropes derived from these and other associations (e.g., "in the pink," "pinked-up," etc.). In addition, the "unnatural" or saccharine hue of this particular pink paper recalls the popularity of vibrantly pre-colored photo-cinematic media and cyanographs, whose "unnatural" chromatic monochrome base, and its relation to the line/form that it then might be said to "filter," remains

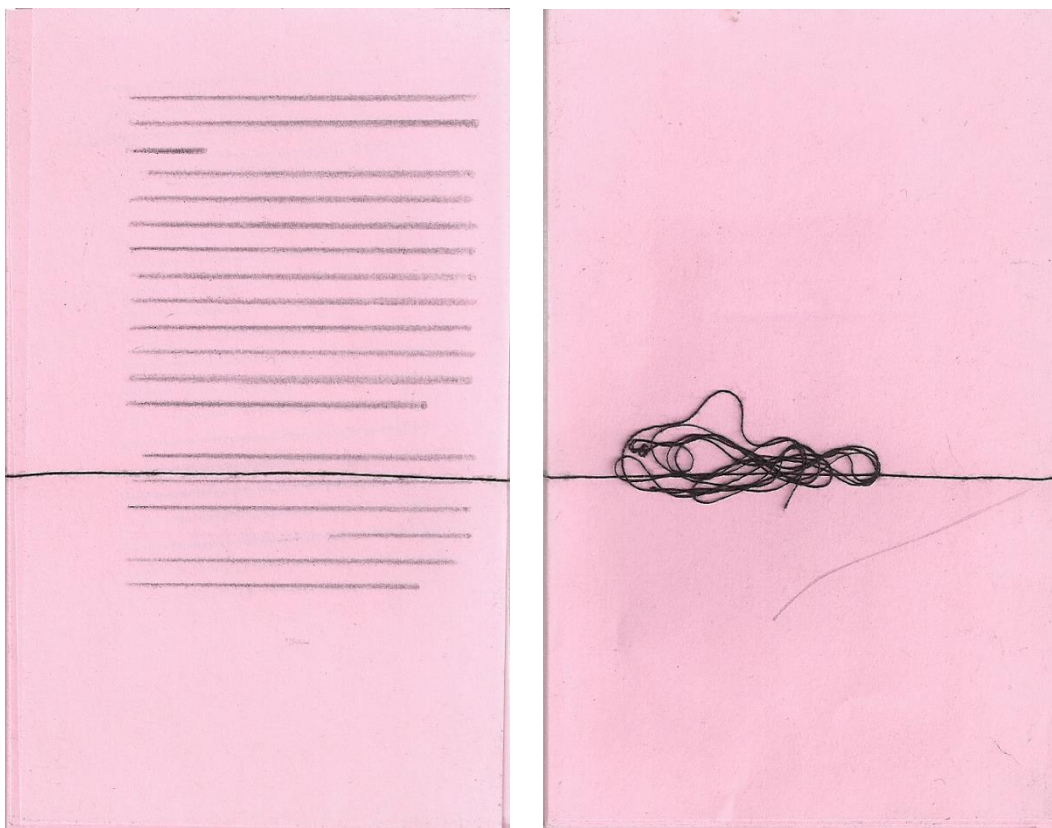
difficult to read. Like these media, pink here undermines, complements, or filters mimetic illusionism, and allows for effects of alternation between them.

## Process



**Figure 9.2** *Left:* Robert Machado, from *Lining* (2013, 46). *Right:* Robert Machado, from "Pink Translation," *Lining* (2013, [46]).

Based on preparatory experiments, it was determined that the lining process would require the sharpening of the lining pencil following every two completed lines. The shavings produced as a result of this sharpening were then to be collected in the glass jar. Preparatory experiments also indicated that a significant amount of pigment, as a fine dust or powder, would shed onto a source book following the production of each line. This material was subject to smearing or spotting. As a result, after each completed line, the source book surface was to be cleaned with air. The dust was



**Figure 9.3** *Left:* Robert Machado, “Pink Translation,” *Lining* (2013, 146). *Right:* Back of “Pink Translation,” *Lining* (2013).

then collected with a white cloth. Following each lining occasion (lining occurred nightly for one hour), these particles were funneled into the glass jar along with the pencil shavings.

After a page was successfully lined, the pencil shavings associated with that page were transferred from the sharpener to the jar. Adjacent to the source book, a steno book of equal depth was used to create an even surface in support of the length of the ruler. Pages of both were turned consecutively to maintain an equality of depth. Because black pigment pencil cannot be effectively erased, hands were rinsed before the turning of a successfully-lined page to avoid smudging. The relatively unforgiving nature of this black pigment demanded a sustained concentration during the lining process. No errors were correctable.

### **“Pink Translation”**

Following the completion of a page of lining, a leaf of pink paper was used to cover it. Pressure exerted by the lining of a subsequent page (its reverse) allowed for the transfer/collection of lines from the previous page onto the pink media: a process of imperfect “translation” that also entailed the “erasure” of the source book’s underlying text. Upon completion of the lining process, these pink pages were removed from the source book and bound with single black thread (fig. 9.3) to comprise another book (version, adaptation, “toned” print, etc.), its “pink translation.”

### **Sourcebook**

The selection of a sourcebook entailed constraint-based research. This involved an initial framework that facilitated encounters with books, genres, scholarship, fields of research, and a methodological approach typically different from my own. Research in this case involved more than a customary degree of chance, accident, failure, and bias; research libraries, used book stores, etc. were navigated with a concerted improvisation that was, however, structured by ideas regarding the nature of the sourcebook.

The text was not to be part of the modern(ist) canon, nor published during the modern period. Ideally, it might predate early modernity to reduce *Lining’s* association with any postmodern reaction to modernism. It would predate the “invention” of artificial perspective (often now attributed to Alberti) to perhaps better accommodate the flat space produced by the lines of the completed book. It would predate: geographical explorations of North America by Columbus, again with the aesthetics and narratives of flatness in mind (e.g., global flatness, ground-to-sky relations and their influence on: world view, metaphysics, myth, ur-dialectics, etc.). It would predate: the invention of movable type (c. 1447) to involve possible associations with early/pre-mechanical reproduction and standardization, while still perhaps suggesting letters set and inked in “lines.” *Lining* in this way might reinforce attention to the predictability of reproduction and serialization,

and paradoxical emotions that can accompany it (such the experience of limitation and expandability, boredom and bliss, sameness and difference, etc.). Concepts such as predictability and serialization bear on the experience of visual repetition in *Lining*, and the repetitive movements required to produce it.

The desired subject matter and historical context of the sourcebook ideally would suggest visual discovery, “invention,” and would foreground reader orientation. They would somehow underscore angles of articulation and confrontation, and might implicitly address or invite transformation, or metataxis: “a metamorphism in which there is mechanical or physical change” (OED). They also would somehow be expressive of epistemology, dogma, absurdism, obsession, and issues of identity.

The sourcebook also would need to meet physical parameters. It would be hardbound in black cloth and without debossed (sunken) titling on its spine or cover so that any titling could be removed (with razor and tweezers). The book also would be free of extensive illustration. Its dimensions would be reduced to suggest a field guide, guidebook, translation book, devotional book, or diary. *The Cloud of Unknowing* (c. 1350–1400), by an anonymous Dionysian mystic, ultimately met this criteria.<sup>180</sup>

### **Reading/Reception of the Lined Object**

The process of lining and its results suggest the literal transformation of the “line/form” of prose into an archetypal long poem.<sup>181</sup> This poem, consisting of iconic groupings or stanzas of “end-stopped” lines, might be read (or unread) in any number of ways. The stated generic affiliation of *Lining* with poetry and visual art invites the play of exegesis and close reading. The difficulty or apparent resistance of its form also admits greater tolerance of novelty of approach. Just as narrative, however, might be understood as a cognitive frame rather than narrowly defined features inscribed within an artifact, modes of engagement more frequently deployed within the context of poetry or

art may be activated beyond the boundaries of these objects of study. Such engagement arguably occurs anyway, but can be confined to what, for example, Volosinov ([1929] 1973) described as “inner speech” muted by the unavailability of discursive outlet, or assumptions of “un-tellability” (discussed above), both dictated by conventions of reading/reception and socio-cultural situation.

In this case, at least three layers of signification, for example, might be readable, and can be explored with overlap and permutation. Dialogue between materials (e.g., ink, pencil, papers), production infrastructures underpinning texts (unlined, lined, and transferred), and texts (within layers 1–3), allow for commentary on such topics as book making, mass production, and the ceding of aesthetic effects to the “necessities” of commercial concerns.

### **Layer One: Original Text**

Awareness of this layer as a distinct unit entails the mental effort of “ignoring” the lining. In one sense, this might mean visually accepting the repetition of black lines as an indication of “non-signification” in much the same way that awareness of “black” and “white” in monochromatic film can be suspended, quieted, “zeroed,” or naturalized. One might ignore the lines, for example, by reading them as a polemical or political defacement unattached to the printed text, which can still be prioritized. Black pigment pencil, of a certain narrowness, provides a waxy, cloudy, or imperfect cover that allows for access to source text. Lining in this sense could promote Wittgensteinian inquiries such as What if all books were lined? And if so, could the graphic insistence of black lines over text be diminished or forgotten?

### **Layer Two: Sourcebook as Coated, or “Coded”**

According to this approach, black lines are understood as qualifying the signification of words and sentences. In this sense, words and sentences might be experienced as dressed, darkened, smeared, colorized, fogged, bisected, etc. Lining may affect tonality, for example, resulting in the perception of irony. Words and sentences also might be experienced as syntactically and semantically

“tightened” as the (white) space between letters, words, and non-verbal signs appears filled or bridged. Blackened space, however, still coexists with the readable white space that signifies between letters and words. Kandinsky’s ([1912] 1982, 165) apprehension of “voids,” in this instance, is useful to recall, along with its applicability to limited constructions of narrativity: “If a form produces an indifferent effect and, so to speak, ‘says nothing,’ then this should not be understood literally. There is no form, any more than anything else in this world, that says nothing.”

At this level of engagement, black lines over source text might suggest ineffective redaction or a dubious mask(ing) to be read.<sup>182</sup> The “masking” of words and sentences might be understood as described above, or even more imaginatively according to an experience of individual letters that themselves might bear meaning beyond their service to words—a concept challenged by the poetics, for example, of poets such as Kurt Schwitters ([1924] 1998).<sup>183</sup> For example, “masked letters” might pocket (S), hook (J), protrude (B), lean (A), jut (E), gorge (G), posture (H), submit (i), pose (K), summarize and portend death / sex (O), intimidate (V), etc. “Darkening” can be extended metaphorically, perhaps, to “scenting,” “heating” or “cooling,” etc. or to suggestions of puncture or leakage: black in this sense would be considered organic to the book or to graphic language itself, with darkening of white space between letters, words, and sentences suggestive of a type of excretion or bloodletting.

### **Layer Three: Black Lines, White Space-Lines, White Margins**

This layer is read spatially, formally, iconically, symbolically, metalinguistically, etc.<sup>184</sup> Recognition on this layer allows for the acknowledgement of visual structures precipitated by the lining process and their range of signification. For example, the precision, balance, and insistent horizontal parallelism of these lines, surrounded by white margins (or pink margins within the copy book), might be understood as conveying a type of calm trustworthiness, or dogmatic confidence, etc., which to some extent also might underpin any text printed in “standard” lines.

Examples of new approaches to reading, reinforced by this level of engagement, might include ways to consciously manipulate book-to-reader orientation and to note reception variations based on such shifts in the performance of reading:<sup>185</sup>

a) Open at 180 degrees, the book is held horizontally with two hands and faces the reader at eye level. Note effects such as: ego challenges, existential confrontations, and *Lining* as an absurd theater object drafting viewers to participate in transrational reading.

b) Open at greater than 90 degrees, the book is made to flop down and dangle vertically. Note: the lower page as an imperfect reflection of, or shadow cast by, the upper page. Note: the lower page as an appendage.

c) Open at 180 degrees, the book is held vertically with two hands and faces the reader at eye level. Note: the unification of pages; the lower page as a physical continuation of the upper page. Note: the experience of *Lining* as stylized-drip lines that appear to drip from upper to lower page. Perhaps contrast these rigid drips with the frenetic spread of abstract expressionism, or liken them to lines made later by Frank Stella, Hard Edge Painters, etc. Allow room for reading these stiff stylized drips that elide, ignore, dismiss, fear, or leap the book's central crease or invagination. Reconsider: the black lines as issuing or radiating from this invagination, "absence," cavity, or fertile dip.

d) Open at 180 degrees, the book is held vertically or horizontally with two hands and faces the reader. Note: opposing pages as combatants engaged in brinkmanship. Note: opposing pages as wings bearing camouflaging patterns.

e) Open at 180 degrees, the book is held horizontally or vertically with two hands and faces *away* from the reader. Note: angle of protest. Note: that vertical orientation of the book suggests that the participant is sending outward an *image*, while horizontal orientation suggests the sending outward of *words*.<sup>186</sup> Note: the experience of facing the back of a "sign," of looking "through" the sign toward imagined readers who face the sign as well as the participant's advocacy.

**Reading/Reception of “Pink Translation”**

Play with and against the “contact zones” of color and line/form; foreground and (re)consider the conceptual systems of harmony, discord, and visual effect that underpin and define the boundaries of normative and “transgressive” experience; “observe” micro-events, micro-stories, and test the meta-narratives governing their tellability; allow for the elaboration of a poetics that enhances this tellability; recognize the constraints, variables, and politics involved within these determinations of pragmatic situation; and consider the extension of “pink translation” to other metachromatic contexts and applications.

## Notes

1. For example, as Aristotle ([350 BCE] 2005, 29) explains, “. . . the first essential, the life and soul, so to speak, of Tragedy is Plot . . . . Compare the parallel in painting, where the most beautiful colors laid on without order will not give one the same pleasure as a simple black-and-white sketch of a portrait.”

2. Historicism here recognizes a process, following Armstrong (2011, 88) and others, which allows for the articulation of “different diachronicities and synchronicities.”

3. “Ekphrasis” here refers to its narrower usage within twentieth-century analyses of verbal representation and painting employed by scholars such as Dubois (1982), Heffernan (1993), and Hollander (1995). As Webb (1999) explains, however, ekphrasis within classical rhetoric and for most of history has been used to refer to any vivid description of visual impressions.

4. Refer also to Hagstrum’s (1958) landmark study on literary pictorialism.

5. Joseph Frank’s “The Idea of Spatial Form” (1945) most often is cited as beginning this discussion within literature.

6. For an early narratological demonstration of this approach, see Bal (1997).

7. Transmediality here refers to the essential media independence of narrative (Wolf 2005, 462) and its discursive formations. For more on contemporary methods within transmedial studies, see for example Ryan (2004), and Wolf and Bernhart (2007). For an earlier iteration of the concept of transmediality within the context of structuralism, see for example Barthes (1977).

8. As an additional way to flesh out the arbitrariness of this “oppositional” relation and the ontologies that its dynamics help to articulate through the production of associated contraries and implications, see Greimas (1987) and his “semiotic square,” which provides a constructive framework through which to consider the processes involved in the conceptualization of possibility.

9. Here and throughout, references to “pragmatics” follow its recent definition by Archer and Grundy (2011, 9) as the study of meaning in context, where context is understood as always both presumptive and emergent. Pragmatics, traditionally a branch of linguistics, here suggests a broader or transmedial approach to objects of study based on this heuristic notion of context. For more on this interactive approach to context, see for example, Duranti and Goodwin (1992).

10. Comments such as those by Talbot ([1912] 1970, 287) reinforce a sense of the limited cultural influence of these developments on popular assumptions about the achievement of “natural color” within photo-cinematography. As Talbot explains in 1912, “Indeed, commercial cinematography in the *true* colours of Nature appears to be as far from realization as a simple process of still-life colour photography.” He continues, “We see colour pictures upon the white screen, but with one or two exceptions the tints are the result of the artist’s handiwork.” Even as late as the mid-1970s, for example, William Gass (1976, 62) asserts, “colors came to the movies as they came to the comics, and there they remain—surreal in their overlays—like bad printing.” It is worth noting here, however, that while the year 1908 did not mark a significant commercial shift from added to natural color within photo-cinematography, it did however correlate with cinema’s advancing transition from an early stage dominated by composite programs of short visual spectacles or “attractions”—often brightly and “crudely” colored by hand according to ambiguous codes familiar from nineteenth century photography—to a phase in which longer story films began to be developed and privileged, with color bearing new technological effects and increased narrative integration. The topic of cinematic attractions will be discussed more below. For an historical overview of color technologies within photography during this period (1840–1940), see Coe (1978).

11. The realization of three-strip Technicolor feature films did not of course signal the decline of black-and-white cinema, which retained a significant cultural presence until well after WWII. Nor, as

Misek (2010, 25) explains, is Technicolor color, strictly speaking, “natural color”; its color is, in fact, superadded through a dye transfer process that resembles the Handschiegl process of 1916. Technicolor did, however, popularize a technological achievement that allowed for the appearance of the enhanced mimetic integration of photo-cinematic color and line/form, and thus claims for the fulfillment of a telos that posited an evolution of still and moving photography toward “total” realism. More on this topic will be discussed below. For more on the history of Technicolor and the dye transfer process, see Haines (1993).

12. It also underestimates what Mitchell (2005) discusses as photography’s lasting vitalism: Irrespective of the historical susceptibility of photography to manipulation, and of knowledge that photographs are not what they represent, viewers may often still accord a measure of “life” to photographic representations, such that, for example, tearing up a picture of a person may involve anxieties beyond those related to (mere) symbolic destruction.

13. Mirzoeff’s (1999) “Age of Photography” (1839–1982), premised on a medium-restrictive conception of photography and its historical resistance to manipulation until the availability of digital imaging and editing technologies by the early 1980s, also might benefit from increased nuance based on this recognition. As it stands, this periodization offers limited attention to the widespread practice and popular knowledge of (non-digital) photographic manipulation throughout photography’s history, and to still and moving photography’s popular status as a composite form of representation well-into the latter half of the twentieth century.

14. For example, the adjacent masses of flat (rather than graduated) hues within collectible ad cards, product posters, and cheap chromolithographic reproductions of paintings overshadowed line/form and inspired publications such as *The Nation* by the 1870s to warn of the threats of “unnatural” color to morality in the general population in the US.

15. For example, the painter Léger ([1943] 1958, 46) remarked that “liberated color” likely begins with modern forms of publicity and advertisement (dismissed by Greenberg [1939] as “kitsch”).

16. The Venetian faction, led by Titian (c. 1488/1490–1576) and “successors” such as Tintoretto (1518–1594) and Veronese (1528–1588), were inspired by, among other things, colorful Byzantine art brought west from Constantinople following the crusades of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (Ball 2003, 123). They also were influenced by the introduction of oil painting techniques to Venice by the 1470s through figures such as Giovanni Bellini (1430–1516) (124). Venetians were said to prefer applications of bright hues that aroused self-reflexive “detraction” from linear form. Represented by painters such as Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), Raphael (1483–1520), and Michelangelo (1475–1564), the Florentine school, seeking divergence from the flat planes and schematic color codes of medieval artistic orthodoxy, arguably insisted instead on expressions of beauty through the linearity of mathematically-determined *disegno* focused on proportion.

17. Within the late seventeenth century in French academies, the two sides were represented by the chromatically “sober” Poussinistes (Nicolas Poussin, 1594–1665) and the more florid Rubenistes (Peter Paul Rubens, 1577–1640).

18. For a detailed history of the concepts underpinning the division between design and color within sixteenth and seventeenth century Italian art and theory, see Poirier (1976).

19. For more on perception as shaped by discourse and models of vision, see for example, Cray (1990).

20. Gage (1999, 36) explains this philosophical debate as one over the determination of color as either an unreliable attribute of visual phenomena (ancient sceptics or Locke) or perceptual information that mediates our knowledge of the world (Berkeley or Goethe).

21. Hegemony here is meant in the sense defined by Raymond Williams (1977, 110). He explains that hegemony is “not only the articulate upper level of ‘ideology,’ nor are its forms of control only those seen as ‘manipulation’ or ‘indoctrination.’ It is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves in the world. It is a lived system of meanings and values—constitutive and constituting—which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming.”

22. Here I follow Eagleton (2007, 58–59) in understanding naturalization as a process that renders the beliefs of a particular ideology “natural and self-evident,” and that identifies them with “the common sense of a society” such that it becomes difficult to imagine how they might ever be different. It is the process by which an ideology is able to offer itself as an “Of course!” or “That goes without saying.”

23. So-called achromatic colors, distinguished by their “desaturation” (or lack of dominant hue, the dominant wavelength in a color), typically include black, white, gray, and brown. Navy in this case, however, is understood as bearing a perceptual nearness to black (and thus to achromaticity) based on its low degree of “brightness”: the amount of light reflected by a color. Hue, saturation, and brightness (value, lightness) are measures of color frequently used to categorize the “three-dimensionality” of color space. Color perception, however, more broadly is an intersection of physics, psychology, linguistics (i.e., color *lexa*, color naming, color naming systems), philosophy, aesthetics, and cultural experience.

24. Woodall (1997, 5), for example, explains the notion of black-and-white as an especially modern aesthetic in part due to its heritage, which involves reference to the utilitarianism of an urban work environment, and a sober disciplined lifestyle. Black-and-white as an aesthetic discourse also refers back to its widespread use within seventeenth century Dutch Burgher portraiture, in which black-and-white bore connotations of virility. For Woodall, bourgeois identity gains a heritage of community and spiritual uprightness in part through this use of black. For more on the history of the color black, see Pastoureau (2009).

25. For an early discussion of this negotiation of forms of “capital” and its influence on cultural relations and constructions of identity, see Bourdieu (1984).

26. A “pregnant moment” refers to a depicted moment from which a viewer/reader infers a before-and-after. Lessing ([1766] 1984), for example, sees this moment as one that invokes the imagination of the viewer. The concept of the pregnant moment often is associated with a mode of pictorial narrativity activated within single pictures understood to depict a scene of action. For more on this form of narrativity, see for example Thomas (2000).

27. As Frizot (1983, 33) explains, the earliest photographs of landscape were “amenable to calculations and to domination . . . arranged and delineated” by the photographer’s mediation. So too, of course, were portraits’ new narrative spaces for encoding desire and projecting power. For more on the social and discursive practice of constructing essences within photography, see, for example, Nickel (2001) and Batchen (1997).

28. While grayscaling here preserves the added emphasis of coloration, which is especially visible, for example, on the subject’s darkened cheeks, this process at least provides a monochromatic image for comparison. It should be noted, however, that any reproduction of a daguerreotype—a one-of-a-kind image whose almost holographic effects are difficult to represent—entails compromises.

29. “Coloration” here and throughout this chapter loosely applies to a variety of manual coloration techniques, including retouching. Of primary interest here, however, is the hand-painted daguerreotype.

30. Important to note also is that academic art theory at this time was opposed to literalism in painting. Many colorists, who were often trained miniaturists, likely would have been aware of conventions that favored idealization.

31. To get a sense of just how valuable tinting at this time could be, according to N. P. Lerebours (quoted *ibid.*), in London the extra charge for tinting a daguerreotype amounted to “about the daily wage of a semi-skilled laborer.”

32. For more on this record, see Pellerin (2000).

33. As Arnheim ([1954] 2004, 337) reminds us, “Shape [is often] identified with the traditional virtues of the male sex, [etc.] [and] color with the temptations of the female.”

34. Refer to chapter one of Henisch (1996) for a useful introduction to various early attempts to render daguerreotypes in color.

35. By disrupting the symbolic order of photographic denotation—by occupying, with paint, territory reserved for indexicality—applied coloration can be seen on one level as attacking the “rational order” of the photographic, an order likely tied to what Kristeva (1986, 109) (drawing on Sergei Eisenstein) theorized as the order from which the power of patriarchy, the state, property, and god derive. As Eisenstein (1929, 34–5) explains,

The representation of objects in the actual (absolute) proportions proper to them is, of course, merely a tribute to orthodox formal logic. A subordination to an inviolable order of things. . . . Absolute realism is by no means the correct form of perception. It is simply the function of a certain form of social structure.

For Kristeva, when poetic language meaningfully “transgresses grammatical rules” it subverts the order that supposedly controls meaning. As unschooled, “irrational,” and transcendent coloration complicates, and in a sense, interferes with the transmission of “pure” photographic rationality, attempts made to rationalize and systematize it, or remove it from the photographic process by relegating its discourse to an inferior position, might be understood within this context. By encroaching on the patriarchal underpinnings of photography’s scientificity, coloration threatened to undermine photography’s autonomy and its authority to keep other discourses at bay.

36. This intervention also recalls color’s historical identification as deceptive “temptress,” *vis-à-vis* line/form, a discourse more often associated with masculinity and intellect.

37. See also Snelling (1854, v–vi), which sought to address photography’s insufficient appreciation in the art world by educating or attacking “most” daguerreotypists who suffered from “incompetence . . . bad taste, ignorance, and egotism.”

38. Another contemporary, Charles Martel (1860), also objected to the “bad” (untrained) taste of operators throughout his twelve part essay (June 1–August 17) on the relation of color to photography. See also Edwards (2003) on Martel’s perspective on color.

39. Isenburg’s reference here to the colorist’s ability to breathe life into “his” sitters suggests either historical neglect of female colorists, or perhaps an attempt to use “his” as a gender-neutral possessive.

40. This particular stereoscopic image apparently has yet to make its way into any exhibition or study. The reproduction included here is courtesy of an auction on May 13, 2007 through Ebay. The object was sold by a vendor in Germany to an undisclosed recipient for \$7,095.00. Attempts are still being made to secure other reproductions of the image.

41. Among the many important elaborations and critiques of Mulvey’s famous “Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema” (1975) that have sought to redress its transhistoricity and gender essentialisms, Solomon-Godeau (1991) usefully posits male/female subject positions as constructs of psychic and

social “determinants of sexual difference” rather than biological expressions of gender. According to Solomon-Godeau,

the feminine—differently conceived as Other to the masculine norm—takes *its* place in visual representation as object-of-the-gaze, while the position of the active subject-of-the-gaze is generally the masculine prerogative. . . . A woman can thus look from a masculine subject position. . . . Images do not causally produce a world of female objects and male subjects; rather, they may articulate, naturalize, and confirm an oppressive order whose roots are elsewhere. (220–21)

In Solomon-Godeau’s theorization, the pornographic constitutes a way of looking, rather than exclusively denoting a class of objects bearing inherent meaning. While perhaps problematic in strictly gendering the gaze according to a monolithic conception of hegemony as patriarchal, Solomon-Godeau’s model enables the reconsideration of disparate objects and rhetorics of the pornographic (including the rhetoric of applied coloration). It also prompts investigation of the shared visual rhetorics that mobilize the pornographic gaze in disparate contexts, and the ideological implications of this sharing. Within this context, it is useful to apply to Solomon-Godeau’s conception of patriarchy Warhol’s (2012, 9) third-wave feminist assertion, “that dominant culture and society are organized to the disadvantage of everyone who does not fit a white, masculine, middle- or upper-class, Euro-American, not-yet-disabled, heterosexual norm.”

42. Chapter titles, listed here, elaborate on the nature of this reach:

I. Directions How to Obtain the Divine and Moral Vertues of Piety, Meekness, Modesty, Chastity, Humility, Compassion, Temperance and Affability, with Their Advantages, and How to Avoid the Opposite Vices. II. The Duty of Virgins, Directing Them What They Ought to Do, and What to Avoid, for Gaining All the Accomplishments Required in That State. With the Whole Art of Love, &c. III. The Whole Duty of a Wife. IV. The Whole Duty of Widow &c. Also Choice Receipts in Physick, and Chirurgery. With the Whole Art of Cookery, Preserving, Candyng, Beautifying, &c.

43. Cinema’s earliest productions, such as the many serpentine, butterfly, and sun dances that featured Annabelle Whitford by 1894, used hand-tinting to confer essence, drama, spectacle, fantasy, wealth, etc. (discussed more below).

44. As Misek (2010, 18) explains, this “80 to 90 percent” estimate originates from Blair (1920, 45). It is considered accurate for films produced during the 1910s and 1920s; the number might be slightly lower for films produced between the 1890s–1900s. See also Harris (1990, 324) and Limbacher (1969), who argue that by 1920, 80% of Hollywood’s feature films were colored in some way, either by hand or through the use of pre-colored film stock.

45. For example, as Giovanna Fossati (1996, 14–15), assistant researcher at the Nederlands Filmmuseum archives in 1995, explains, “it’s sometimes impossible to transfer very light pink tinting to acetate stock without unacceptably distorting the color in toned areas; the colors on a safety print are different from those on the nitrate prints; pink colors, for example, disappear, or tinting on the nitrate looks like toning in the acetate. And of course the colors have changed on the nitrate too.” Colors fade, black-and-white images through solarization become “colored,” etc. For more on recent treatments of color in early cinema, see Yumibe (2012), Koszarski (2009 and 2000), Everett (2007), Dalle Vacche and Pierce (2006), Hanssen (2006), McKernan (2003), Usai (2000), Quaresima (2001), Berriatúa (1998), and Aumont (1995). The valuable contributions of Misek (2010) and Gunning (1995) in particular will be addressed below.

46. Such comments can be accessed within any number of early publications on cinema, such as *Variety* or *Moving Picture World* after 1906.

47. References to film periodization here and below follow Ben Brewster's (2004, 66–75) three-phase model. According to Brewster, the first phase, often referred to within other models as “early cinema,” is the variety-theater/fairground period (until 1906–7). This phase is stylistically dominated by “cinematic attractions” (discussed more below). Phase two (until about 1912) and three (which continues to the present) involve more elaborate film narrative.

48. Before the institutional dominance of “natural color” processes in cinema, color typically was added to cinema through hand application (freehand or through stencils), the bathing methods of tinting and toning, or combinations of all three. For more on these processes, see Usai (2000, 21–43).

49. The concept of the cinematic “attraction,” adapted and developed in large part by Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault from Sergei Eisenstein ([1923] 1988; [1924] 1996), applies to the predominant address of early cinema, or “kine-attractography” (1890–1910) (Gaudreault 2011), before the rise of longer story films c. 1906–1907. It refers generally to a film segment that seems to prioritize visuality for the audience. From cinema's inception through about 1903, “attractions” consisting of loosely-integrated combinations of single-shot films, slides, stage acts, etc., which foregrounded the appeal of discursive variety, were frequently presented by exhibitors and lecturers. For more on these cinematic programs, see Musser (1990). For more on the attraction in cinema, see Gunning (1989) and Strauven (2006).

50. Classical narrative approaches generally are understood as following the work of French Structuralists such as (early) Roland Barthes (1966), Tzvetan Todorov (1968), Claude Bremond (1973), A.J. Greimas ([1966] 1983), and Gerard Genette ([1966] 1982).

51. The term “postclassical narratology” derives from Herman (1999) and refers generally to the shift from text-based Structuralist theories of narrative to greater considerations of reading contexts and their socio-cultural influence. Postclassical approaches also integrate thematic emphases, such as feminist, queer, ethnic, postcolonial approaches to narrative. For an introduction to “phase two” of the postclassical approach, see Alber and Fludernik (2010, 15–23).

52. For Chatman (1978) and Prince (1987), events and existents are the fundamental elements of a story.

53. Prang's comment here derives from a context of argumentation in favor of his commercial reproduction of art through chromolithography. For more on chromolithography during this period, see Last (2005), Clapper (2002), Rotskoff (1997), and Marzio (1979). See also Yumibe (2012) for more on Prang.

54. Refer to Saunders and van Brakel (1997), for example, for a review of relevant literature on the cultural determinacy of color categories.

55. For a useful survey of these systems, see Kuehni and Schwarz (2008). See also Riley (1995) and Hardin (1988) for an overview of modern theories of color in philosophy, which Riley (1995) also extends to color in painting, architecture, literature, music, and psychology. See Theroux (1994) on “primary” colors (blue, yellow, red).

56. See Smith (1984, 17–19) for a consideration of the single page as a type of display.

57. “Metamerism,” a concept named by Edwin Land (1977), designates the perceptual condition by which color is subject to change based on lighting conditions. A green rectangle, for example, can be made to appear an entirely different color by manipulating ambient light. Although Land provides a more formal understanding of this condition, awareness of color's susceptibility to perceptual change based on variations in light can be found in Aristotle ([350 BCE] 1952), Goethe ([1810] 1970), Chevreul ([1839] 1967), and others. “Color constancy,” which arguably does not

physically exist, designates the opposite of “metamerism”: the ability of colors to stay the same under different lighting conditions.

58. As Pier (2005, 322) explains, metalepsis constitutes a disruption of narrative “levels” in which, for example, an extradiegetic narrator becomes inserted into the story world. For more on metalepsis, see also Genette (1988) and Malina (2002).

59. Other stories by Freeman, such as “A Patient Waiter” (1887) and “Emmy” ([1891] 1992), also reconsider marriage, which is a theme that recurs throughout many of her writings. For more on the issue of gender and sexuality within the work of Freeman, see for example, Terryberry (2002), Glasser (1996), and Reichardt (1992).

60. As Lanser (1989, 427) explains, for example, by the last decade of the nineteenth century, the color yellow also “readily connoted” a variety of qualities frequently attributed to marginalized groups, such as “inferiority, strangeness, cowardice, ugliness, backwardness,” etc.

61. We should include within this postclassical designation the foundational work of Bakhtin (1981, 293), whose concept of dialogism argues for the inevitability of “contextual overtones (generic, tendentious, individualistic)” in language. As Bakhtin explains, “Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially-charged life.”

62. For more on these narratologists, see the online unnatural narratology project: [unnaturalnarratology.projects.au.dk/narrativeresearchlab/unnatural/](http://unnaturalnarratology.projects.au.dk/narrativeresearchlab/unnatural/)

63. As Wolf (2007, 36) explains, “as with all frames, stimuli that reside in the object can only be successful if the recipient cooperates, for it is in his or her mind that the medially transmitted descriptions must be realized in order to be efficient in the first place.” The notion of “successful” stimuli and of recipient “cooperation” toward an “efficient” realization of description, however, presupposes and defers to a homologous authorial intentionality that artificially constrains reception practices. It also implies judgment of readers/viewers who stray from the perceived guidelines established by this assumed intentionality as “unsuccessful, uncooperative, and inefficient,” which again, arbitrarily delimits experience and warns of punishment.

64. See, for example, Esrock’s (1994) meta-study of clinical tests on readers, which demonstrates that readers visualize differently, not at all, or can be encouraged or discouraged to visualize, in part based on situational conditions of reading. See also Scary (1999), which assumes a more determinative correlation between visualization and textual effects.

65. Within the context of poetry, understood as always in a state of becoming and potentiality co-constituted by author and reader, Collins (1991, 119) explains “enactive interpretation” as the “performance” of a poem (the processing of text) by which “a reader will hold in peripheral awareness a number of textual components simultaneously but will not necessarily retain a given component at the same level of salience from one reading to the next.” This notion of text as an inexhaustive site of potential salencies, contingent on decisions or accidents of foregrounding and selection (etc.), and the openness of performability, offers insight, beyond poetry, to considerations of “reception” as an instance of co-creation.

66. According to Wolf (2011), who builds on Ryan (2005), medium is a conventionally and culturally distinct means of communication; it is specified not only by technical or institutional channels (or one channel) but also and primarily by its use of one or more semiotic systems to transmit its contents, in particular within the public sphere; according to the nature and format of their constituents, different media have different capabilities for transmitting as well as shaping narratives. (166)

See also Heusser, Fischer, and Jucker (2008) for recent constructions of media/intermediality.

67. See Nagel (1980) for more on Crane and literary impressionism, and Matz (2001) for a more general treatment of literary impressionism and modernist aesthetics.

68. Gaskill (2009) provides perhaps a more apt comparison of Crane's use of "flat" colors to those popularized by Art Nouveau and the covers of *Harpers Magazine* (1889–92). See also Halliburton (1989, 113), who considers the influence on Crane of the concept of primary colors as articulated by Goethe; and Hough (1962), who also discusses Goethe's influence.

69. The concept of additive mixing allowed for developments in early "naturally" colored photography, as well as early "naturally" colored moving pictures.

70. Refer to Brougher (2005) for more on synaesthesia in art and music at the turn of the twentieth century, and since.

71. See Allen (1980) for more on the relation between vaudeville and film from 1895–1915.

72. Primary colors are those not able to be derived from the mixing of other colors. Although green can be produced by subtractively mixing yellow and blue, it tends to be considered psychologically "unique" and thus often "primary."

73. Rimbaud's chromatic experimentation can be understood within a broader context of interest in color experience within poetry during this period. See, for example, Cronin (1988) for his study of color within nineteenth-century poetry.

74. For a recent study of such narratives and metanarratives, see for example *The Materiality of Color: The Production, Circulation, and Application of Dyes and Pigments, 1400–1800*, by Feeser, Goggin, and Tobin (2012).

75. For Kristeva, color is constituted by an index of value (of a referent), instinctual pressure (cathexis), and a (larger) symbolic order of which it is part. For more on deconstruction and color, see for example, Derrida (1987) and Melville (1994).

76. Take for example Eugen Sandow (in the 1894 Edison film) as he passes through a routine that displays certain parts of his covered and uncovered body from front to back, top to bottom, flexed and released. His gestures and actions interact with cultural expectations for a Prussian + strong + man + "on display"—a performance of normativity that likely invokes and reinforces masculinist, exoticist, and even nationalist narratives (among others). Imagining challenges to such invocations, initiated through "unexpected" costuming, gesture, dance, etc. that violate typological expectation (one can imagine many alternatives), helps to foreground the "constructedness" of identity, whose narratives, to some extent, Sandow performs.

77. For a useful summary of this more pragmatics-centered approach to narrativity, see Mey (2005, 493–98). For a deconstruction of "the frame," see Derrida (1987).

78. Musser (1994) also clarifies, within the context of attractions, that many early-cinema surprises and displays are in fact functions of narrative or imbricated with narrative.

79. For more on aesthetics within the context of early cinema, see Yumibe (2007).

80. The de-contextualization, de-storification, and purification of appearance itself also comprise a narrative whose genealogy might be traced in a variety of ways. It recalls, for example, Heidegger's ([1927] 2010) notion of a "present-at-hand," Barthes's (1977) "message without a code," the aspirations of any number of avant-gardes, and Pater's (1888, 143) assertion of art as always "striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of the responsibilities to its subject or material." It also may be considered part of the longer history of the desire for *enargeia* and the so-called natural sign. For more on this history, see Krieger (1992).

81. These and similar dance spectacles were popular within Kinetoscope parlors and later as projections. They were offered by all major production companies in the 1890s following the popularity of Loie Fuller's illuminated dance performances in France.

82. See also commentary on the factory conditions and pay structure of female colorists in “The wages of girls who color slides” (1909).

83. For more on the relationship between Pathé, Thuillier, and Florimond, see Yumibe (2012, 84).

84. Yumibe (2012, 84), however, estimates the number to be more likely between 130 and 200 female colorists.

85. See Kalmus’s own “Color Consciousness” (1935), which articulates, according to her, the theory of color upon which her decisions were based.

86. From the full title of Harris & Ewing’s photograph, *Color Expert for Uncle Sam* (1938), for example, we learn more about such a technology :

When it was discovered that color plays an important [role] in marketing of cotton, Miss Dorothy Nickerson, Color Technologist of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, developed a method for measuring the color of raw cotton mechanically. The equipment comprises a comparator, a motor on which to spin standard color discs, the color discs, and standard artificial daylight. When looking through the comparator, the operator sees a circular field, the upper half made up of the color of the cotton and the lower half made up of the disc colors.

87. This is not to suggest, however, that the effects of this mismatch within still and moving photography are identical. The ontological difference in temporality between the two media might allow, for example, for a greater sense of color’s agency through its sudden appearance and disappearance, movement, transgression or observance of boundaries of line/form, etc.

88. The concept of the cultural series can be understood (briefly) as a medial and generic situation that explains the relation between forms of representation.

89. See, for example, William Henry Fox Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature* (1844–6); and M. A. Root, *The Camera and the Pencil; or, The Heliographic Art* (1864).

90. It is important to note, however, that not everyone accepted this notion of technological evolution. As Needham (1884, 83) argued, “the camera’s work, perfect and truthful as it is, can [n]ever supplant the nerve line of free-hand drawing.” Also involved in the negotiation of realism, graphic art, and emergent photo-cinematic indexicality in the nineteenth century is the legacy of resemblance to prototype as a way to constitute “unmediated” realism. As Woodall (1997, 3) explains, for example, within sixteenth-century portraiture, the identity of a sitter was produced through a process of emulation that presumed reference to prototype as a guarantor of realism.

91. For more generally on the processes through which media emerge, see Gaudreault and Philippe (2005).

92. Debate over photography’s indexical truth value still is prominent within contemporary theory. See for example, Elkins (2007).

93. Beaumont Newhall (1961, 96) underscores the historical concern over missing color, which can be found frequently within commentary on early photography.

94. Scholarly consensus has now distanced itself from any binding notions of the chromatic consistency of “reality effects” across early cinema, acknowledging the wide-ranging functional contingencies of tint and tone now reflected in the archives. Earlier scholarship, however, such as Kracauer (1960, 136), found the signification of color within cinema less problematic, arguing that “shades of red helped to amplify a conflagration or the outbreak of elemental passions, while blue tints were considered a natural for nocturnal scenes involving the secret activities of criminals and lovers.” For Kracauer, hues “established audience moods in keeping with the subject and action” (136). This generalization, however, does not hold across films.

95. See, Snelling (1849, 137–38), for example, for guidelines on gender-specific color codes in tinting.

96. See, for example, “The Cooper Union” (1866).

97. As Gover (1987, 17) explains, “photography, a male bastion before 1880, emerged as a career option and avocation for women. By 1900, more than 3500 women worked as professional photographers.” These women, however, notes Naomi Rosenblum (2010, 7), until just recently had been “scanted in the histories of the general histories of the medium.” Histories of photography still generally scant “paraphotographic” labor(ers), and their contribution to nineteenth century “photography” as a more composite than singular medium.

98. For more on networks of women communicating through various photographic journals, see Gover (1987).

99. “The Photographic Album Collection,” assembled by collector Barbara Levine at the International Center of Photography, New York, is beginning to redress this deficiency. This collection of vernacular photograph albums, dating from 1887–1938, is considered by ICP to be “the most comprehensive collection of photograph albums in the country” (ICP 2012).

100. See *British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions* (1843–53). Atkins was among the first to put cyanotype into practice. See also Ware (1999) for a history of the medium.

101. See Woodward (1961) for more on the literary source material of *Illumination*.

102. Because, as Stanton Garner (1977, 65) explains, a return to the title of *Illumination* “would in all probability rectify an error which has . . . misrepresented Frederic’s final intention,” this title will be given priority here. The history of this double-title will be discussed below.

103. Yardley’s *Second Reading: Notable and Neglected Books Revisited* (2011) is among the more recent, although still infrequent, calls for the renewal of this once regarded “masterpiece.”

104. Examples of scholarship that treat this topic include Adams (2011); Mislin (2011); Urbanczyk (2006); MacFarlane (1996); Lackey (1990); Oehlschlaeger (1986); Graham (1976); Stein (1972); and Suderman (1969).

105. Frederic employs the word “effect”—to introduce “a (pleasing or remarkable) combination of colour or form in a picture or a landscape” (OED)—on at least fifty-two different pages over the course of the novel, recalling some of the intricate descriptions made by Wilde, Huysmans, and James during this period when this usage became prominent. See Perrin (2008) and Bredahl (1972) for more on the topic of aesthetics within *Illumination*.

106. For analyses of Theron Ware’s “downfall” attributed to temptations embodied by Celia Madden (aestheticism), Father Forbes (skepticism), Dr. Ledsmar (philistinism and rational science), and Sister Soulsby (commercial fraudulence) refer to Suderman (1986); Donaldson (1975); Briggs (1969); Garner (1969); Williams (1969); Ziff (1966); Johnson (1962–63); O’Donnell and Francherel (1961); Carter (1960); and Raleigh (1958). Notwithstanding the value of these critical assessments of the external forces that destabilize Ware, it is useful to recall that his complications precede direct exposure to the competition of ideas embodied by Madden, Forbes, Ledsmar, and Soulsby. In fact, it is first within the “remote country” (26) of his youth where his future wife Alice introduces awareness of modernity. As Ware recollects, “fresh from the refinements of a town,” she made “everything [in his village] a hundred times more countrified than it had ever been before” (27). “She read books”—an intellectualism later experienced in Forbes and Ledsmar; and “she played the piano” (27)—a faculty suggesting class and artistry deployed, with tempting effect, only later by Madden. Alice also first exposes Ware to the trappings of class and wealth. His sentiments, expressed after their marriage and his citification, but before his encounters with Madden, Forbes, Ledsmar, and Soulsby, underscore the timing of his acculturation:

. . . He admitted to himself, it would not be the same if he were to go back there [to the country] again. He was conscious of having moved along—was it, after all, an advance?—to a point where it was unpleasant to sit at table with the unfragrant hired man, and still worse to encounter the bucolic confusion between the functions of knives and forks. But in those happy days—young, zealous, himself farm-bred—these trifles had been invisible to him . . . .  
(26)

Resembling perhaps Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900), in which Carrie's attraction to increasing degrees of wealth and sophistication motivates sequential relationships with men able to satisfy this hunger (Druet, Hurstwood, Ames—each more or less eclipsing the other), Ware's transformation starts with Alice and climbs to Celia. This internal change also appears to be facilitated by new photo-cinematographic ways of thinking and seeing (discussed below).

107. See, for example, Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature* (1844–6); and Root, *The Camera and the Pencil: or, The Heliographic Art* (1864).

108. This is not to say that Frederic's *Illumination* shares Münsterberg's belief in film as a tool for moral improvement, or identifies with Baudry's ideological position.

109. For more on the periodization of film during this era, see Brewster (2004: 66–75).

110. Similar to Bazin, contemporary scholars, such as Trachtenberg (1992, 187), also have argued that “resemblance, likeness, [and] verisimilitude” are misapplied in photographic discourse because the photograph and the model are of the same “identity”; the photographic process “reproduces” the model. This popular conception of “photography” arguably still is relevant today despite the proliferation of digital imaging and editing technologies. For more on this contemporary debate, see for example, Elkins (2007).

111. Nineteenth-century “beauty spots” were vantage points from which picturesque views could be attained. They prefigured views commonly associated today with picture postcards.

112. For more on methods for integrating “description” and “narrative”—concepts, recall, not necessarily easy or even possible to distinguish (Genette 1966; Riffaterre 1986)—see, for example Copley (1986); Nünning (2007); and Wolf and Bernhart (2007).

113. For more on recent theories of anti-mimetic or antirealist narrativity, see the “unnatural” narratologies of Alber and Heinze (2011); Alber, Iversen, Nielsen, and Richardson (2011); and Richardson (2011).

114. Samuel Coale (1976, 34) gets closer to relaying the significance of Frederic's word pictures when he comments that Frederic's “pictorial and cinematic prose buttresses the communal and social vision, and accounts for the realistic texture of the story.” Frederic's pictorial effects, however, play a greater and more complicated role within the novel.

115. It is arguable that the “framed image” of Soulsby's gardening might have little to do with the “illumination” of Alice's putative affair, but rather, gardening itself could be responsible for provoking the idea. The prevalence of diegetic framing within *Illumination*, however, suggests otherwise. Frederic makes clear that the effects of framed images, here strengthened by the use of the window frame, are central to the novel.

116. The juxtaposition of yellow and blue, especially within the context of synesthesia, also suggests an influential chromatic polarity, posited by Goethe ([1810] 1970), by which all colors tend to be associated with either yellow or blue, which bear oppositional physical and psychological properties.

117. Other examples include, “Blue dome, radiant with light” (23); and “broad hoops of a copper-like metal” from which hung “a thick curtain, of a uniform color which Theron at first

thought was green, and then decided must be blue” (282). More on the topic of this polarity will be discussed within chapter six.

118. See Boime (1991) for a broader contextualization of what might be understood as Ware’s “magisterial gaze” and its associations with notions of manifest destiny within US landscape painting during this period. See also Carrington (1987) on Ware’s “vision.”

119. Through the title of *Illumination*, Frederic to some extent “advertises” its pictures. In its earliest period, cinematic exhibitions also promoted films not primarily or solely by their content, but by the novelty of its projection apparatus.

120. This notion perhaps presages Baudry’s thesis that cinema’s nearness to psychological processes—cinematic images being roughly analogical to mental images—might impact psychic constitutions.

121. Refer to Eggers (1997) for a more detailed investigation of the nature of this narrative perspective within *Illumination*.

122. Other devices include the phenakistiscope, the chronophotographic gun, and the Kinetoscope.

123. The year 1895 also marked Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen’s discovery of X-rays, and the continuing popularity of the “science” of phrenology, which like X-rays, promised access to “interior” information. During this era, portrait photography also proved a useful means to create illusions of elevated social status based on the notion that surfaces could reveal “essential” aspects of character.

124. For more specifically on relativity within *Illumination*, see Carter (1988).

125. These binaric relations also suggest any number of psycho-social drives and anxieties for which the *fin-de-siecle* is now famous. For more on “*fin-de-siecle* consciousness,” including issues regarding sexuality, religion, and the imagination, see Pierrot (1981).

126. While media differences between these two paintings certainly contribute to their differences, the luxury and preciousness of Moreau’s watercolor painting cannot be wholly attributed to diluted pigment; many of his oil paintings, such as *The Apparition* (1874–76) or *Jupiter and Semele* (1894–96), reflect a similar fantastic presence.

127. For more on differences between Romanticism, Symbolism, and Decadence, see Pierrot (1981).

128. Here I agree with Gage (1999, 7) who argues for a diachronic rather than universalizing study of color symbolism. Without wholly dismissing any potential neurological insights offered by historical investigations that attribute inherent psychological resonance to colors, such as Goethe ([1810] 1970) and Kandinsky ([1912] 1982), claims of transcultural chromatic perception also frequently reflect problematic socio-cultural bias.

129. Kristeva (1980, 216) approaches this “escape” more generally through her observation that, “‘color’ is difficult to *situate* within the *formal system* of painting . . . . Although semiological approaches consider painting as a language, they do not allow an equivalent for color within the elements of language identified by linguistics. Does it belong among phonemes, morphemes, phrases, or lexemes?”

130. As Busst’s (1967, 4) classic text on the androgyne reminds us, woman’s “essence” within nineteenth-century representation frequently is founded upon gendered notions of “love and feeling” that were reinforced by August Comte’s system of logical positivism and many other nineteenth-century philosophies. A female figure, here coded by an emotionally-charged “red” as she dies or mourns the death of a young bride, might draw upon such essentialization.

131. This picture also invokes color's historical function as deceptive "temptress," vis-à-vis line/form more frequently associated with the "masculine domain" of rational intellect.

132. As Deak (1993) notes, while the text does not make extensive use of scenery, it does stipulate lighting.

133. As Blanc (1874, 146) argued, for example, "Color is *par excellence*, the means of expression, when we would paint the sensations given us by inorganic matter and the sentiments awakened in the mind thereby."

134. For more on the history of blue as a color word used to intensify expressions of ambiguous suffering and pleasure, see Morris (1976).

135. The heterodiegeticity of both narrators is relevant insofar as the disembodied, omnipresent, "omniscient" voice bears an insidious authority that potentially emboldens prescriptions, rendering them more difficult to dismiss outright.

136. The history of the novel's reception supports this conclusion. As Hackett (2004, 42) explains, Schreiner (and specifically *African Farm*) "strongly influenced the feminism of the early twentieth century and informed Virginia Woolf's, Willa Cather's, and Sylvia Townsend Warner's thinking about gender, sexuality, and women's roles and work." *African Farm* was of great importance to feminist readers who helped make the novel a best seller in the 1880s (Lerner 1983, 67–79).

137. Gertrude's incisive deconstruction of religious "duty" in Henry James's *The Europeans* ([1878] 2005, 188) is worth recalling in part because it so nearly parallels Otto's willing submission. Redefining (the lay priest) Mr. Briand's act of "selflessness," she remarks: "He wanted to be magnanimous; he wanted to have a fine moral pleasure. . . . He thought of it a great deal, night and day. He thought it would be beautiful. At last he made up his mind that it was his duty, his duty to do just that—nothing less than that. He felt exalted; he felt sublime. That's how he likes to feel."

138. Panken (1983, 5) provides a gloss of the sadist as one who "seeks total control over others, is intent on self-aggrandizement and the acquisition of power, lives aggressively through others, and hopes to destroy or exploit their partners."

139. According to Panken (1983, 3), the masochist individual is one who "frequently exhibits a need for drama, crisis, sensation, stimulation, heightened tension, abandonment to misery, and self-degradation which brings about a spurious sense of vitality."

140. This also invokes the political argument that "social origins [in part] lie in the fact that some groups of men are willing to submit to other groups who hold the keys of power . . ." (Panken 1983, 12).

141. For a comparison of pessimism in Schopenhauer and Schreiner, see LeFev (1993).

142. This is subtly and ironically portended by her childhood promise, "When I am strong, I will hate everything that has power . . ." (51).

143. From a Hegelian ([1807] 1998, 31) position, this supports the argument that suffering itself rather than true "love" draws characters to suffering within *African Farm*. According to Hegel, "True union, or love proper, exists only between living beings who are alike in power and thus in one another's eyes living beings from every point of view; in no respect is either dead for the other." This furthers Schreiner's critique that institutionalized patriarchy constitutes romantic relations according to asymmetric divisions of power that force "untrue" unions between the "living" (men) and the "dead" (women).

144. Although all poems within *Secession* 4 (a magazine issue to be discussed below) originally featured titles rendered in all capital letters in keeping with its style guide, references to these poems will preserve this original capitalization given the emphasis of this chapter on signification lost

through editorial “streamlining.” Ellipses within square brackets also will be used to avoid ambiguity within citations of poetry.

145. Refer to the Introduction (above) regarding the definition of ekphrasis.

146. The term “paratext,” consisting of epitext and peritext, designates textual material that “supports” and institutionally authorizes text that it “frames” (Genette [1987] 1997). In doing so, paratext can influence the expectations and reception practices of readers. Peritextual material includes titles, epigraphs, dedications, prefaces, afterwords, copyright page, jacket information, etc. that are physically part of a text. Epitext constitutes auxiliary elements, such as authorial interviews, which are not physically part of a text, but which still might frame it. The concept of paratext arguably builds on the earlier work of Lanser (1981), whose articulation of “extrafictional” material makes similar discriminations.

147. See, for example, “The Waitress” (1934, *CP 1921–1931*, 28), in which chromatic effect, by line break, is emphasized: “The black dress makes the hair dark, strangely / enough, and the white dress makes it light”; or the poem “Nantucket (1934, *CP 1921–1931*, 42), in which “Flowers through the window / lavender and yellow /” are “changed by white curtains.”

148. Although Williams himself was involved in the decision to publish the “poetry” of *SA* separately, *SA* also undermines a clear demarcation between poetry and prose through the generic indeterminacy of its language and organization.

149. See figs. 7.4–7.5 for a comparison of five major iterations of the poem.

150. Although it exceeds the parameters of this study, “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT” also might be considered in relation to the history of Williams’s attention to lighting conditions within his poetry. For example, Williams’s emphasis on light might add saliency to the argument that many of his poems reflect a classical painterliness. Just as he “paints” a “picture” here from the top down, suggesting an approach based on classical training, he also attends to directional light as it plays upon the subject. Williams’s use of chiaroscuro (here and elsewhere) also might be evaluated according to its ability to encode desire and valuation. Beyond strictly painterly implications, ethical, political, sexual, and simply ideational presuppositions might be understood as implicit in the binarism of “transpiercing light” (line 13) / “Wholly dark” (line 21), and what this binarism might hold in place, restrict, hide, or activate. Williams’s poem “Light becomes Darkness (1934, *CP 1921–31*, 93), which begins “The decay of cathedrals / is efflorescent,” might be considered within this context.

151. Either by fault of memory or shifting intent, Williams’s late recollection of *SA* works against reclamation of “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT.” About the poems of *SA*, he remarked “they are numbered consistently; none had any titles though they were to have titles later when they were reprinted in *Collected Poems* [1934]” (1958, 36–37). *I Wanted To Write a Poem*, while useful, is full of such errors. For more on the general study of titles within the context of paratext, see Ferry (1996).

152. As discussed above, chromatic abstractions within Crane’s “Travels,” Edison’s *Serpentine Dance—Annabelle*, etc. suggest forms and modalities associated with aesthetic modernism within the US much earlier than 1913. Other major US expressions of experimental writing, such as Gertrude Stein’s *The Making of Americans*—begun in 1903 and completed by 1911—reinforce this presence. For more on recent reassessments of early avant-gardism within US literature and painting, see for example Fagg (2009); see also the collection *Unseen Cinema: Early American avant-garde film 1894–1941* (Posner 2005).

153. Prior to *Poetry*, magazines such as *The Atlantic*, *Scribner’s*, and *Harper’s* only published a few short, commercial verses per month. These major magazines continued to publish primarily non-modernist poetry through 1922.

154. This group identity also was demonstrated within *Secession* 4, discussed more below.

155. This poem, like “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT,” acquired a new title in *SA* (“XVI”) and yet another title in *CEP* (“To an Old Jaundiced Woman”).

156. See also, for example, his poem “The Flower” (*CEP* 1951, 322), in which “A petal, colorless and without form” is used as a metaphor for an “oblong tower.”

157. As Tashjian (1975, 105) remarks, “Williams wanted to involve the reader intimately in this quest for creativity.” In this way, Williams saw himself taking after Juan Gris. According to Williams (*SA*, 107, 110), Gris makes the attempt to “separate things of the imagination from life, and obviously, by using the forms common to experience so as to not frighten the onlooker away but to invite him. . . . Thus they are still ‘real’ they are the same things they would be if photographed or painted by Monet, they are recognizable as the things touched by the hands during the day, but in [his] painting they are seen to be in some peculiar way—detached.”

158. A description of nature within *SA* (121) here is apt to recall: “Nature [is] the hint to composition not because it is familiar to us and therefore the terms we apply to it have a least common denominator quality which gives them currency—but because it possesses the quality of *independent* existence, of reality which we feel in ourselves. It is opposed to art but *apposed* to it” (italics mine).

159. As Sayre (1989, 313) explains, the origins of this idea derive from as early as 1919 within an article published within *Others*.

160. Williams (1957) expressed the purposefulness of each aspect of composition beyond commentary within *The Wedge* (1944). His letter to Harriet Monroe of *Poetry* in 1916, for example, vents anger at editorial changes that violate his authority over even “minor” areas of style:

I cannot understand the feeling that wants to change and rearrange according to some yardstick which has not the slightest application to the work of some person who has spent time and attention and even more important substances to bring that piece of work into the exact mould in which it is presented. What can it matter to you what my theory of line construction happens to be? In any case, it has nothing to do with articles, nouns, verbs or adjectives. . . . I sincerely regret giving that ten dollars to *Poetry*, for I believe with my whole soul that the policy you have evidenced even in such a slight matter as the elimination of my small letters at the beginning of lines . . . eats the heart out of honest expression. . . . I heartily object to your old-fashioned and therefore vicious methods. (39)

161. In keeping with the move to reframe poems according to evolving desires, Crane’s “Poster” is retitled “Voyages” within *White Buildings* ([1926] 2001).

162. Grogan (1972, 272–73) argues that “for the majority of Americans [in the 1920s] who called themselves Cubists, Cubism meant little more than sharp lines and acute angles. . . . Many blithely set about super-imposing directional lines and fragmented shapes on top of essentially realistic compositions.” Given that this description might accurately describe the cover of *Secession* 4, this take on Cubism might also have factored into *Secession*’s broader approach to the balancing of iconic realism and abstraction.

163. Williams’s work is generally divided into four phases: early-1913; Imagist: 1914–21; Objectivist: 1922–50; and late: 1950–63. For an objection to this periodized assessment, see Schmidt (1988).

164. Munson argued that after two years, publications lose essential vitality. To avoid this compromise, Munson started *Secession* intent on ending it two years later.

165. Critics such as Myers (1972, 228) regard *SA*'s "The Rose" as "written in imitation of a Juan Gris etching." Others such as Dijkstra (1969, 172), for example, consider "The Pot of Flowers" to be a transcription of Demuth's *Tuberoses* (1922).

166. Paradoxically, Miller publishes the prose without the poems. It is a dubious premise, however, that the prose of *SA*, divorced from intervening poetry, suffers no loss of meaning.

167. What Miller misses within this early appraisal, however, is that Williams ([1939] 1954, 198) also defines an artist/poet as: "a compactor" of "the sensuality of his materials," which if effectively inscribed, embody "universals of general applicability" that teach and persuade readers how to "better see, touch, taste, enjoy their own world [. . .]." For Williams, when art "mirrors," it also should symbolize or metaphorize to (didactically) contour "essentials" that might exceed the synecdoche of objects. In this sense, a speaker's orientation to focalization, as well as the object of that focalization, advocate for a more general relation to perception. When invoking Williams's famous dictum "No ideas but in things" (1950, 7) it is therefore also useful to remember its original context within "A Sort of Song":

–through metaphor to reconcile  
the people and the stones.  
Compose. (No ideas  
but in things) Invent!  
Saxifrage is my flower that splits  
the rocks.

Within this context, "ideas" and "things" are not of the same order; "ideas" precede "things," and the distance between them is underscored here by line break. Williams's parenthetical and normative precept, which argues for a mode of compact transmutation that perhaps recalls Coleridge's ([1817] 1907, 256) concept of "Secondary Imagination," predicates "Invent!" In this way, Williams does not "resist analysis" as Miller claims; rather, his poems, and very likely his prose, enact through metaphor a reconciliation of people and things. In *SA*, Williams declares that

everything I have done in the past—except those parts which may be called excellent—by chance, have that quality [‘crude symbolism’] about them. [. . .] Crude symbolism is to associate emotions with natural phenomenon such as anger with lightning, flowers with love it goes further and associates certain textures with / Such work is empty." (100)

Williams continues, "What I put down of value will have this value: an escape from crude symbolism, the annihilation of strained associations [. . .] The word must be put down for itself, not as a symbol of nature but a part, cognizant of the whole—aware—civilized" (102). Williams's repeated objection to "crude symbolism," rather than "symbolism," reflects his belief that poetic observation should demonstrate a relation to the universal. As Williams explains, "The artist does exactly what every eye must do with life, fix the particular with the universality of his own personality—Taught by the largeness of his imagination to feel every form which he sees moving within himself, he must prove the truth of this by expression" (105).

168. Also important here is Marling's (1980, 32) observation that Demuth's *Aucassin et Nicolette* (1921) is a poetic narrative emblematic of his reunion with Williams after Demuth's hospitalization for diabetes. For Marling, it embodies a message to "the fledgling poet [Williams] who introduced him to the minstrel's lay so long ago."

169. See also Myers (1972, 230), who contends that typically "Williams's imagery is at once social, sexual and a description of art . . ." Similarly, Halter (1994, 88) later suggests that "The pounding rhythm of these lines creates a mood of energy and excitement urging us onward; at the same time we are held back by the heavy pauses at the end of these lines." For a very detailed

investigation of how viewers arguably process these enjambments, see Dolin (1993) and Collins (1983).

170. In his *Autobiography* (1948), Williams recounts a time when Demuth called upon his professional capacities to:

inspect his back, which looked as though a young tiger had clawed it from top to bottom. They were deep, long digs, recently scabbed over. . . . “What in God’s name happened to you?” I asked him. . . . “How did you get such digs?” “A friend” [he said]. “Charming gal,” said I *thoughtlessly*. (151, italics mine)

Williams’s admitted “thoughtlessness” here suggests a rare and oblique reference to Demuth’s sexuality (discussed below).

171. For more on Williams and Brueghel, see for example Hollander (1995).

172. Also useful to recall is that in a letter from Williams to Marianne Moore (1957, 107), he mentions that Demuth, like himself, absolutely revered his mother (who served as a foil to his unromantic, overbearing father). Williams writes, “His mother is his patron saint.”

173. Referring back to *The Figure 5 in Gold*, it is noteworthy that “hidden” just under the “chin” of the largest “5” (in shadow) is the word “Carlos” (fig. 7.2). While “Bill” and “W.C.W.” also appear, the askew “Carlos” appears lurking, recessed, hesitant, and a little private.

174. Cirasa (1995) also makes this mistake, citing “The Pot of Flowers” as “originally” titled “The Pot of Primroses.”

175. Cushman (1985) is perhaps more persuasive in positing that later changes to the *SA* poems (printed in the *CEP*) reflect Williams’s desire to distance himself from eccentricity.

176. For further discussion of this light source in “THE HOTHOUSE PLANT,” see Annotation 5.

177. Ollier’s account of the purchase of the painting is not definitive. Others, such as Sayre (1984), propose that Williams might have bought the picture after the show at the Daniel Gallery in New York (December, 1922).

178. Non-verbal signs within the sourcebook, such as the crest appearing on page iii, count as one line. These signs were lined using a magnified photo-editing loop. The razing and tweezing of the gold embossing on the spine of the sourcebook is not included as a line, insofar as its removal did not require the physical act of lining.

179. In this sense, “unnatural” refers to an application of “unnatural” narratology that broadens the pursuit of anti-mimetics to the process of investigation itself.

180. For research on *The Cloud of Unknowing* that influenced its selection as the sourcebook for *Lining*, see Lees (1983), and Honda (1981).

181. This also includes categorical challenges to its postmodern poetics, including those that predate it, such as Poe’s “The Philosophy of Composition” ([1846] 1984, 15), which argued “What we term a long poem is, in fact, merely a succession of brief ones—that is to say, of brief poetical effects. . . . A poem is such only inasmuch as it intensely excites . . . , and all intense excitements are, through physical necessity, brief.”

182. The *almostness* of this “strict” veiling also might suggest, as Barthes (1973, 10) explained within the context of the “pleasure” of the text, that “intermittence . . . is erotic. . . . It is this flash itself which seduces, or rather: the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance.” Words also might be considered as “smooched” on the yellowing paper, recalling this word and the context of “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Gilman (1892). This then might suggest *Lining* as a “pathological” reaction to closed systems or privileged discourses suggested by both texts.

183. Schwitters argued in *G* (1924), for example, that “letters have no conceptual content” (Richter [1965] 1997, 149).

184. Recall Kepes’s *Language of Vision* (1944), which describes the mental process of imposing order onto information; and consider Arnheim’s ([1954] 2004, 55) argument that the external world does in fact bear order, a skeleton of order that the mind perceives.

185. For more on reading/reception possibilities afforded by engagement with the physicality of books, including aspects such as reading distance, point of view, and page turning, see Smith (1984).

186. This effect, among others, may vary according to the participant’s predominant language affiliation. For example, a Japanese orientation to text (read vertically in columns) likely prompts different associations.

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