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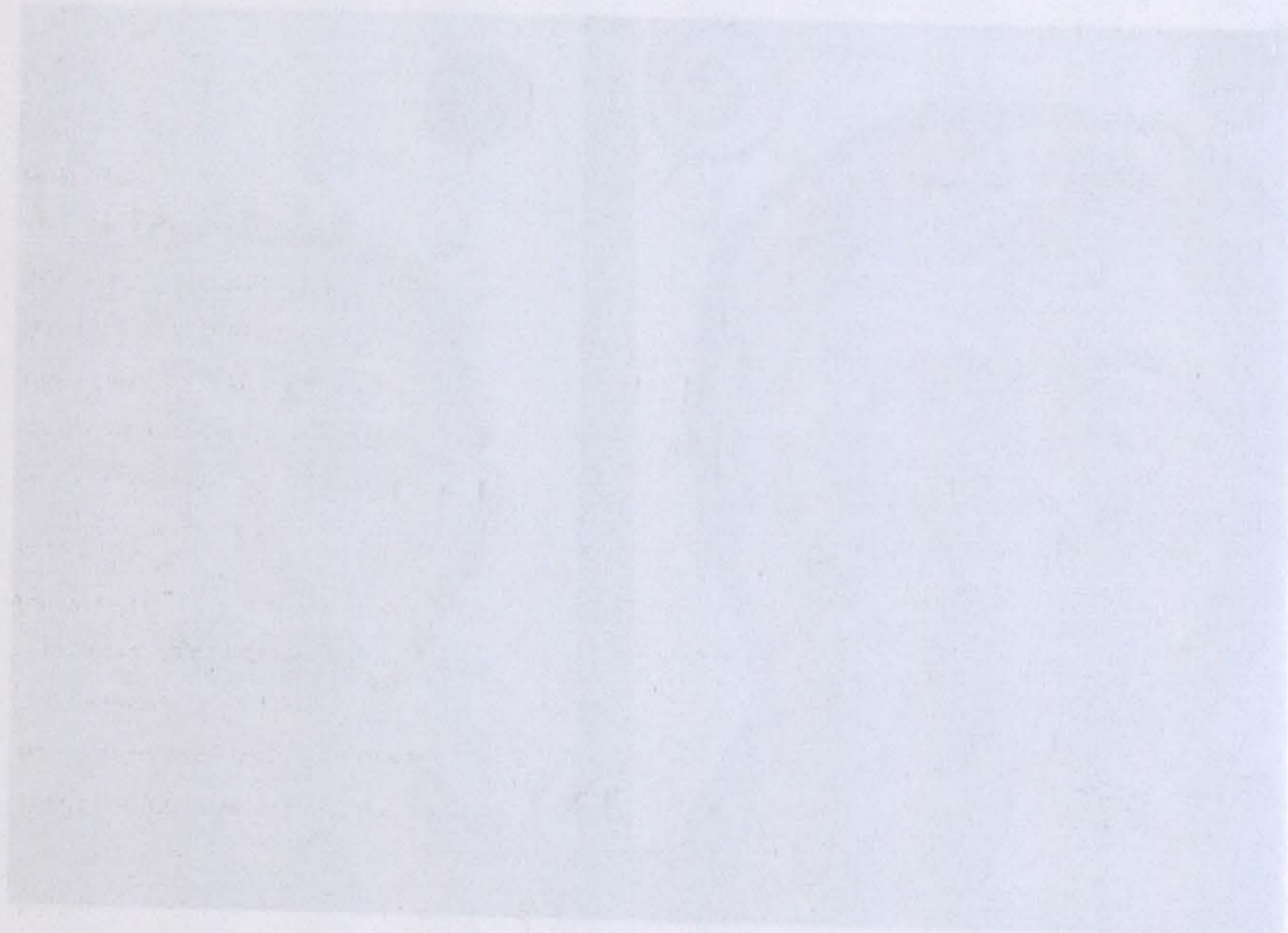
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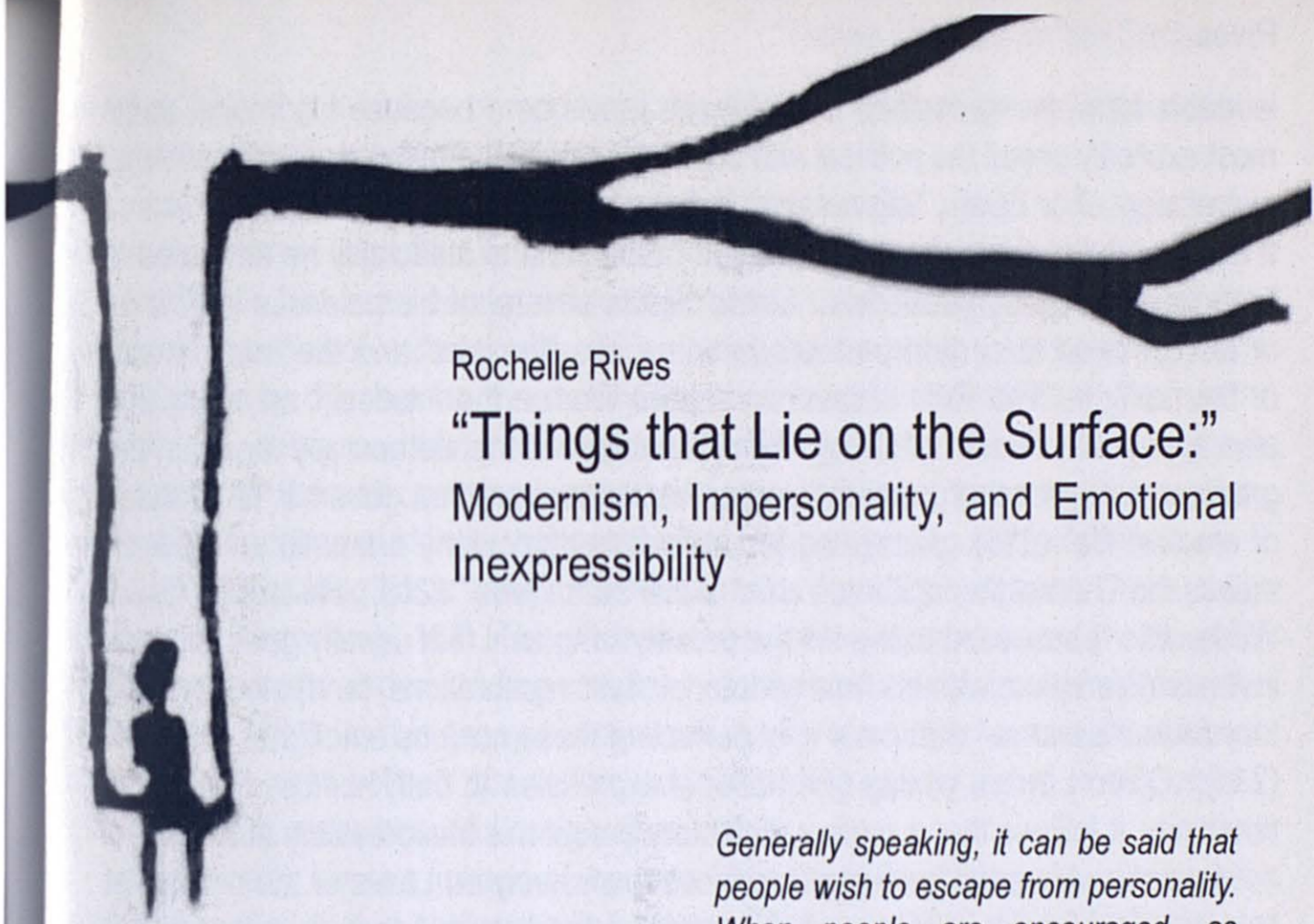
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Rochelle Rives

"Things that Lie on the Surface:" Modernism, Impersonality, and Emotional Inexpressibility

Generally speaking, it can be said that people wish to escape from personality. When people are encouraged, as happens in a democratic society, to believe that they wish "to express their personality," the question at once arises as to what their personality is. For the most part, if investigated, it would be rapidly found that they had none. So what would it be that they would eventually "express"? And why have they been asked to "express" it? -Wyndham Lewis, "The Contemporary Man 'Expresses His Personality'" (148)¹

In *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926), Wyndham Lewis bluntly dismisses the social ideal of the "personality" as a figment of the democratic imaginary. In addition to his feverish political distrust of democratic ideals, Lewis's rhetoric also casts doubt on the act of "expression" in general. While Lewis's disdain for the expression of personality and its popular pretense of individuality does not directly refer to emotional expression, his feelings about the subject are tied up within a larger modernist discourse of emotion that prescriptively deemed it, in its most ideal and

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laudable form, inexpressible. I begin with Lewis here because his critical tracts most explicitly unveil the political and cultural logic behind this distrust of emotional expression. For Lewis, "expression" is linked not only to the predictable wills of a mass populace, but also to the staged outbursts and artificiality he attributed to both women and homosexuals. Lewis directs several of his polemics in *The Art of Being Ruled* to certain partners in crime, the "feminist" and the "male-invert" or "homo."² In "The Role of Inversion in the War on the Intellect," an essay that also appears in *The Art of Being Ruled*, he observes that democracy requires "the greatest vanity for the greatest number," an imperative that governs "all features of emotive life" (216). According to Lewis, this particularly dramatic emotive life makes the "homo" the legitimate child of the "suffragette" (218). He credits Oscar Wilde, who "possessed to the full the proselytizing zeal that usually goes with sex inversion" complete with his "martyrdom, ecstatic recantations, [and] eloquent and tear-ful confessions," with most fully perfecting these noxious emotional outbursts (214). Given Lewis's yoking of emotional expression to both homosexuality and femininity, it follows that a more satisfactory emotion is inexpressibly masculine if not fascistic. My point here is not to focus exclusively on Lewis or the modernist link between fascist politics and misogyny. I begin with Lewis to suggest that this reductive, fascist logic also cloaks some potentially progressive ideas about emotion. In general, Lewis's imperative that emotion should not be expressed appears in a number of modernist texts with wildly divergent political and cultural aims. T.S. Eliot theorizes emotion similarly in his critical writings, which like Lewis's, have often been derided by critics as authoritarian and aesthetically doctrinaire. In addition to Eliot, I also look to the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and to Virginia Woolf to demonstrate how this sublimely inexpressible ideal of emotion might reinforce both reactionary and progressive political ideals, as evidenced by these figures' respective models of emotion as an ideal of masculine vorticist achievement, and as a reparative vision of collective empathy.³ I do not want to constellate these figures biographically, but to follow their adherence to an ideal of "impersonality," which I argue explicitly attends modernist tracts on emotion.

The modernist doctrine of impersonality, most famously articulated by T.S. Eliot in his critical essay of 1919, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," addresses the problem that personality, as a product of humanist individualism, presents for literary form. While modernist studies is currently benefiting from a much needed reconsideration of the term "impersonality," led by critics such as Tim Dean, this critical turn has yet to consider the explicit connections between impersonality and emotion. It has also yet to fully trace the genealogy of impersonality outside the modernist trinity of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound.⁴ Similarly, scholars of modernist emotion, such as Charles Altieri, have tended to downplay the historical specificity of aesthetic modernism in lieu of examining more generalizable features of

emotion, creating a picture of modernist emotion that does not include the more historically specific question of "impersonality."⁵

Yet, modernism aside, the word "impersonality" itself is suggestive of emotion, most logically, its absence. Although "impersonality" in its more general sense has been connected to objectivity and neutrality, I argue here that modernist theories of impersonality, authoritarian or otherwise, theorize emotional engagement by dismantling the duality between subject and object, inside and outside. In doing so, this modernist aestheticization of emotion disables the boundaries of the self-contained individual - or what Altieri terms the "romantic expressivist notions of identity, notions that emphasize getting in touch with some core self and locating basic values in how we make those deep aspects of the self articulate" ("Theorizing" 161). This distrust of psychology enables novel modes of thinking about and understanding emotion not predicated upon the individual self ("Theorizing" 161). In this essay, I explore more fully what it means to aestheticize our emotions, or to believe that certain ways of having emotions are simply more or less tasteful, more beautiful or ugly, than others.

Clearly, Lewis's linkage of the term "personality" to disastrous emotional outburst implies that a corresponding state of "impersonality" might facilitate a more aesthetically palatable form of emotion. If Lewis's distrust of "expression" lies in its relation to the democratic ideal of personality and all that it implies, he then implicitly aligns the term "impersonality" with a perceived lack of expression.⁶ I relate this question of expression to the term "psychology," which I use throughout this essay in an attempt to bring together a number of critical discourses, including those of humanism as well as critical theories of the self and emotion more generally. My intention is not to conflate these concepts, but to emphasize their historical and theoretical intersections. In general, I term the version of individualism Eliot confronts in his essay "psychology," primarily for the purpose of arguing that the critical writings of numerous modernists sought to disarticulate emotion, both aesthetically and more generally, from individual psychology.

In making the claim that modernists rejected the connection between the ability to have emotions and a unified self or psychology, I borrow from a number of discourses. First, my use of the term "psychology" reflects the modernist critique of humanism, a concept that, according to Frederic Jameson, equates individualism with "consciousness as such," particularly as it "purports to characterize the inner climate of the liberated individual and his relation to his own being."⁷ This self-consciousness, a product of modernity, contributes to the habit of forming "anthropological association[s]" that centralize subjects in terms of egos, psychologies, and subjectivities.⁸ For modernist critics such as T.E. Hulme, humanism is bound to a "conception of personality," a "new psychology, or anthropology" characterized by "a temper or disposition of mind which can[not] look at a gap or chasm without shuddering" (6, 61). Humanism

is a mantra, whose "fundamental error is that of placing Perfection in *humanity*, thus giving rise to that bastard thing Personality, and all the bunkum that follows from it" (33). The emotional shudder Hulme identifies reflects a prefabricated, copycat form of personality, a "new psychology" where emotion exists only in the realm of expression (33). This logic, which imagines human personality as a psychological ideal of unfathomed depths and recesses, reifies emotional expression and renders it meaningless. In contrast, the modernist texts I examine here theorize emotion as a collective phenomenon that is not necessarily related to an individual psychology. Rather, such emotion gains intensity only in the absence of expression.

Secondly, the rather pervasive modernist irritation with personality and the democratic sacralization of what Hulme terms "*humanity*" coincides with the widespread modernist distrust of "psychologism." According to Martin Jay, "psychologism" was the result of an "unprecedented preoccupation with the interior landscape of the subject, a no longer self-confident self functioning with increased difficulty in the larger world outside its threatened and vulnerable boundaries" (93). Developing its own attendant set of laws and associations for interpreting the human subject, this modern self-consciousness and self-reflexivity became a key source of anxiety in the development of aesthetic modernism (93). Jay offers a largely philosophical overview of anti-psychologism's evolution, discussing figures such as Kant, Husserl, and Hulme and their criticisms of the developing sciences of psychology. However, Jay suggests that T.S. Eliot, in his debt to Hulme, most fully incorporated this distrust into aesthetic modernism in his ardent promulgation of "anti-psychological arguments" (98). The arguments Jay identifies consist mostly of Eliot's famous injunctions against the personality, which I will discuss more fully later in the essay. However, Jay does not look closely enough at the terms of Eliot's dismissal of personal expression, particularly when he states that the poet "could be seen as championing self-reflexivity and self-absorption, in which the aesthetic object is rigidly segregated from anything outside its apparent boundaries" (101). Instead, I suggest here that Eliot's theory of impersonality, and his corresponding ideal of poetic emotion, enables both subject and object to escape their respective boundaries. If anything, an "anti-psychological" argument would be dismissive of self-reflexivity. In general, however, the logical-critical tendency is to suggest that a modernist aversion to "psychology" signals a corresponding modernist dislike of emotion as such.

Charles Altieri, in "Theorizing Emotions in Eliot's Poetry and Poetics," more clearly elaborates how an ideal of emotion in modernist tracts might act as an aesthetic alternative to what Jay terms "psychologism." Indeed, without referencing the term explicitly, Altieri adds an important dimension to the term "psychology" as I use it here. Without being historically specific, particularly to the modernist time frame, Altieri credits Eliot with fashioning an "alternative model

of affective life" in response to the "dominant ways of representing and valuing emotions" (151). He mentions the "received renderings of emotional life," which contribute to the corresponding notions of psychology and humanism I evoke here: a narrative or causal understanding of one's self or ego, identity as determined by how fully (actively or passively) one surrenders to emotion, a presumed tension between emotion and reason, and finally, the debate over the kinds of values "we attribute...to our emotional states" (157). While each of these criteria will not necessarily appear as salient features of my argument, they posit a core concept of self that experiences emotion, and secondly, a singular individual that is the repository of that emotion.

Because of its long-standing connection to the kind of "romantic expressivist" identity Altieri identifies, emotion has not, until recently, been a popular subject of social theory. Contemporary popular culture often sensationalizes emotions, connecting them to the self-revelatory sentimental confessions performed on daytime talk shows. Such venues predicate emotions on the presumption of intense individuality, where one's emotions generally reveal what it means to "be oneself." Generally, these emotions are connected to a number of specific actions or psychic processes; we are often repressing, denying, dealing with, or accepting our emotions, or attempting to liberate them from some secret inner dwelling to finally be "in touch" with them. This link between emotion and popular belief in individual uniqueness and sanctity not only explains Wyndham Lewis's disillusionment with the act of "expression," but also accounts for the post-structuralist suggestion that emotions are merely behavior, products of culture, socialization, and discourse.⁹ Literary studies in particular, with its emphasis on the social contexts of literature, has tended to overlook the question of emotion as though it is unrelated to social and historical formations. In many instances, this overt historical focus amounts to an attempt to legitimize literary studies as concretely reflective of social and historical reality, what really "matters" in the real world. As Charles Altieri remarks concerning his interest in the emotions, "I had always hated criticism that preferred context to text and insisted on situating works in relation to historical forces and sociopolitical interests" (*Particulars* 1). However, a number of theorists, including Altieri, have recently begun to re-examine the nature of emotions and their relevance for social theory, as books on topics such as affect, intimacy, empathy, shame, care, and even terror now occupy prominent positions within the oeuvre of social and cultural theory.¹⁰ Without addressing emotions directly, critics such as Tim Dean have challenged the insistent "rhetoricalist" view that sexuality must be understood as a product of "rhetoric, discourse, culture, history, and social relations" in order to resist the "conservative notion that sex is grounded in nature" (*Beyond Sexuality* 176).¹¹ Dean articulates an alternative to the pressure he identifies, using the term "intractable" to describe the "non-symbolic real" that transcends the idea of sexuality as a "sophisticated

form of voluntarism," which, he argues, is encouraged by the notion of sex or gender as solely discursively constituted (177). Similarly, in the modernist texts I examine, emotion is neither discursively constituted through behavior nor is it a feature of psychology, selfhood or individuality. These texts refuse to reify emotion as pre-given, existing prior to its surface presence; emotions are more "real" when they cannot be collated, organized, interpreted or expressed. Rather, emotions exist as surfaces, extending beyond the individual to a much larger, impersonal human consciousness.

Poetry's Emotional Concentrate: T.S. Eliot and Impersonality

To more concretely elaborate upon this modernist version of emotion and its relation to impersonality, I now turn to T.S. Eliot and his oft-invoked essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent." First published in 1919, the essay, which Eliot later termed "juvenile," speaks of depersonalization as a productive factor in literary tradition, counter-intuitively recasting the humanist critique of an impersonal and alienating modernity in the service of art and tradition.¹² That is, from Eliot's viewpoint, the very depersonalization implied by an impersonal aesthetic practice might overcome the fiction of individuality in modern society by leading back to the world of art, or tradition, itself. It is important here not to conflate the terms impersonality and depersonalization. For Eliot, depersonalization is a process by which "art may be said to approach the condition of science" (40). It is the actual "self-sacrifice," the "continual extinction of personality" from which impersonality emerges (40).

Like Lewis's and Hulme's, Eliot's distrust of modernity and bourgeois individuality fastens to the term "personality." Overall, Eliot demonstrates a greater faith than does Lewis in the ability of aesthetics to challenge the sway of personality, which compels him to contemplate "the poet's difference from his predecessors" (38). For Lewis, whatever "impersonality" might appear in social expression - for example, when a person "expresses" his personality by adopting someone else's - does not dissolve personality, but rather reiterates it through conformity. Furthermore, Lewis excoriates "personality" because it entails submission to the "group," and any desire to "escape" it inspires only the "crudest selfishness" (*Art* 148). Ironically, Eliot advocates poetic "impersonality" in similar terms, but "escape from personality" enables its bearer to understand what it means to have one and to inhabit a greater medium "in which expressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways" (42-43). The true artist understands impersonality when she or he joins the "group rhythm" of an order of dead poets through a "continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment" (40). Impersonality necessitates self-effacement; for Eliot, the artist must engage in "continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (40).

Because this theory of impersonality ostensibly appears to reinforce the

value of tradition over novelty, many critics have aligned it with the high-modernist authoritarianism often attributed to figures like Eliot, Lewis, and Pound, especially in terms of their later flirtations with fascism. Furthermore, feminist critics have interpreted the paradigm as promoting a neutrality and objectivity that nullifies the intense emotion they attribute to the more "experimental" work of women writers of the period. For example, Cassandra Laity's *H.D. and the Victorian Fin de Siècle*, affiliates the poet H.D. with the aesthetic decadence of Oscar Wilde while reducing impersonality to a masculine, "non-sexual poetic of gender-neutral images" that resists desire and prohibits "narrative strategies that might allow for a female 'I'" (42). In contrast, I emphasize the potential of impersonal strategies for women's writing, arguing that intellectuals such as Virginia Woolf employ the same model of impersonality as their masculine counterparts to explore structures of emotional attachment and empathy. As I will argue more thoroughly in what follows, Virginia Woolf, whether deliberately or unconsciously, extended and often complicated the same ideas about impersonality, emotion, and expression that Eliot promulgated in his doctrinal literary criticism. In doing so, she disturbs the binary created by Lewis's critical affronts to femininity and democratic idealism.

Among the classic accounts of modernist impersonality is Maud Ellmann's *The Poetics of Impersonality: T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound*, which helped to establish high-modernism as staunchly doctrinaire and anti-democratic. In her discussion of the term, Ellmann rightly argues that Eliot resurrected the doctrine of impersonality for modernism as a "crusade against Romantic individualism in society" (5). Though Ellmann's formalist readings of Pound's and Eliot's poetry are often riveting, her failure to historicize impersonality more broadly explains her assertion at the end of the book that the words "'impersonal' and 'personal' have probably outlived their usefulness" (197). Impersonality, she argues, "was born conservative" (198). For Pound, as Ellmann provocatively suggests, impersonality "opens up the whole psychopathology of fascism" (199). By ending on this dismissive note, however correct, Ellmann abandons the radical potential of what her pointed criticism often unveils. Her reading of Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" in particular highlights the more radical possibilities of impersonality, as she sees it bound up in the oxymoronic authoritarian control the poem's diffuse yellow fog, "remorseless and impersonal," exercises over Prufrock, intensifying his "general unease of otherness" (69). If the "yellow fog" of the poem surrounds Prufrock in the ultimate impersonal relationship, that fog can signify anything from the complete dissolution to the "apotheosis of the self," depending on whether Prufrock experiences it as intrusive or as part of himself, which would be much more radical (69). The fog's threat to Prufrock's personal boundaries reflect the "interiorizing" gestures of the impersonal poem that, according to Ellmann, enable both "self-love" and "self-oblivion," where "the other always takes the subject by surprise," reflecting the emotive aspects of an impersonality bound

up with the "vagaries of 'love'" (68, 71). While Prufrock attempts to defend himself from the assaults of the voyeuristic other, evident in his fear of "eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase," the ideal state of impersonality would result from his submission to it (Eliot "Prufrock" 5).

Several critics, including Tim Dean, have attempted to save impersonality from the consequences of Ellmann's critical censure by investigating these more progressive possibilities. Arguing that most misconceptions about impersonality stem from Eliot's "own contradictory and ambivalent pronouncements on the subject," including his focus on the mask as a tool for concealment, Dean claims that Eliot's theory instead enables "access" rather than "evasion" and is an "experiment with self-dispossession rather than self-advancement," thus disputing the claim that the doctrine of impersonality is necessarily authoritarian (45, 51). Similarly, critics such as David Chinitz have also sought to demystify Eliot's presumed authoritarianism by reading popular song as a conduit of emotion that shapes Eliot's conceptions of love and sexual attachment. Chinitz's essay, "In the Shadows: Popular Song and Eliot's Construction of Emotions," argues that, in poems such as "Portrait of a Lady," Eliot employs popular song as a narrative intrusion that "assails" the speaker's "self-possession" and aloofness, his "apparently secure distinction from ordinary people and their emotions." In disturbing the speaker's boundaries of self-containment, the ideal of emotion Chinitz identifies is structurally similar to the "poetic emotion" Eliot presents in "Tradition and the Individual Talent." However, Eliot more explicitly theorizes emotion in his critical writings, and while this version of emotion does promote the kind of "access" Dean identifies in his account of impersonality, it complicates Chinitz's appraisal of the role of popular song in generating emotion, since that access still only extends to the select few, the "poets" whose mastery of the craft grants them this affective achievement. "Tradition" more explicitly defines emotion as an aesthetic necessity, reached through rigorous self-abandonment, rather than the result of a random popular intrusion.

Indeed, modernists such as Pound more directly characterize emotion as disciplinary and aesthetic, particularly in his claim that "[e]motion is an organiser of form" ("Affirmations" 350).¹³ Pound's meaning gains concreteness in the context of Eliot's thoughts about impersonality and poetic emotion, which converge more clearly and explicitly at the end of "Tradition and the Individual Talent," where he more fully elaborates his concept of poetic emotion. Because these terms are slippery, I refer to "poetic emotion" and impersonality separately, in such a way that "impersonality" comprises the larger rubric that defines poetic emotion. Furthermore, in reference to Eliot's ideal of impersonality, poetic emotion should be impersonal; in this sense, impersonality is also a characteristic of poetic emotion. These kinds of distinctions become even more complicated and difficult as Eliot introduces the topic of emotion by describing the poet's mind as a type of catalyst

that remains "inert," "neutral," and "unaffected" in the presence of two elements: "emotions and feelings" (41). Eliot does not explicitly distinguish between "feeling" and "emotion," but treats them as separate categories:

The effect of a work of art upon the person who enjoys it is an experience different in kind from any experience not of art. It may be formed out of one emotion, or may be a combination of several; and various feelings, inhering for the writer in particular words or phrases or images, may be added to compose the final result. Or great poetry may be made without the direct use of any emotion whatever: composed out of feelings, solely. Canto XV of the *Inferno* (Brunetto Latini) is a working up of the emotion evident in the situation... (41)

Judging from this passage, Eliot distinguishes feelings from emotion, but he does not explain the nature of that difference. However, the lines that follow suggest that whereas feeling attaches itself personally to the poet, emotion develops from the artistic process itself. In other words, feeling, which enters the poet's mind and aids the creative process, is a means to emotion as an end. As such, the two concepts, feeling and emotion, function dialectically rather than oppositionally. For Eliot, emotion is the end product of a process of "transmutation," in that: "In the *Agamemnon*, the artistic emotion approximates to the emotion of an actual spectator; in *Othello*, to the emotion of the protagonist itself" (44). In no way does this emotion have an individual referent, such as the poet. Because this form of emotion is free from a relation to causality or origin, it supports Altieri's claim that Eliot's theorizes emotion outside of its conventional narratives of selfhood and identification.

While the poet himself helps generate poetic emotion, according to Eliot, he must ultimately remain detached from the final product as "[i]mpressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry" (42). This is not to say that these personal factors are not important. Eliot distinguishes "ordinary," psychological emotions from poetic emotion, which involve "feelings which are not in actual emotions at all" (43). While his terminology is a bit confusing here, these "feelings which are not in actual emotions at all" are poetic emotion. They are not "actual" in that they are not related to individual, personal "[i]mpressions and experiences (42)." Thus, "personal emotion," or "the emotions provoked by particular events in [a poet's] life, is a necessary catalyst of poetic, impersonal emotion, even though no trace of the earlier form of emotion should appear in the latter, extra-psychological state. I use the term "extra-psychological" rather than "anti-psychological" to describe a dialectical process that does not altogether disregard individual psychology, what is "personal," but uses it to catalyze an impersonal state that extends beyond psychology. In this sense, following the same kind of relationship Eliot envisions between feeling and emotion, the individual self is not totally annihilated, but transformed into a different medium. In defining poetic emotion as both extra-psychological and

impersonal but dependent on the boundedness of individual psychology in the first place, Eliot's ideal emotive state combines the fluid otherness of Prufrock's poetic fog with concentrated mathematical precision. Poetic emotion is, explicitly,

a concentration, and a new thing resulting from a number of experiences which to the practical and active person would not seem to be experiences at all; it is a concentration which does not happen consciously or of deliberation (43).

According to Eliot's logic, emotion is singular, concentrated, and amenable to order because of its role in uniting a cacophony of experiences - much like a less violent version of Pound's vortex.¹⁴ In likening poetic emotion to a "concentration," Eliot's counter-intuitive claim is that emotion moves outward, away from psychology as an interpretive depth model of selfhood in a form that cannot be expressed, recollected, collated or analyzed. Each of these actions only reconstitutes the self and the individual that impersonality purportedly dissolves, thus enabling another point of coherence between Eliot's and Lewis's disapprobation of people's wish to "express their personality" (Lewis 148). Despite this absolute imperative that personal experience should not enter the realm of artistic production, Eliot's theory of impersonality and poetic emotion does demonstrate the necessity of safeguarding a version of the individual, because, however unconscious or lacking in deliberation, emotions and creative acts still grow out of individual initiative. Nonetheless, Eliot's partial respect for the boundaries of individuality is tied up in his understanding of form and tradition. A poet who gives up his or her individual personality to inherit a "particular medium" submits to a greater sense of tradition that dissolves his or her singularity. This impersonal process of de-individuation seemingly posits tradition as an engulfing imperative, offering little room for experimentation or novel inventions in literary form. However, by maintaining the importance of individuality as a catalyst in the impersonal poetic process, Eliot manages to synthesize his respect for the new with the old, where the new is synonymous with the individual. The creation of a "new work of art" modifies the order of "existing monuments:"

for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is a conformity between the old and the new (32).

This particular order, or "conformity between the old and the new," maps onto the dialectical relation Eliot imagines between personal and poetic emotion. While personal emotion, the emotion related to the individual's particular experiences, is essential in creating poetic emotion, only the smallest trace of it remains in the final product. In this way, Eliot promotes poetic emotion as a collective phenomenon that resists individualizing psychology or subjectivity at the same time that it holds the boundaries of individuality intact. Without this synthesis, the very parameters of poetry as an individualized form would disappear within the universalizing

impulse of collective emotion.¹⁵

Eliot both appears to solve this intellectual quandary and unleash the radical potential of his theory of emotion by describing it as a "concentration" that does not "happen consciously or of deliberation" (43). Significantly, this impersonal conception of emotion does not depend on the idea of shared personal experiences or exhaustive self-revelation. Instead, it allows us to imagine forms of emotional connection that do not solidify identity or difference. Eliot's use of the term "concentration" is particularly crucial in describing a form of individuality or difference that does not accord with commonly held ideas of identity and selfhood. Additionally, the process of concentration implies a spatial movement both to the inside and outside, which disturbs the boundaries between protected inner emotional space and external bodily surface. To concentrate means to reduce a number of common factors to their simplest and most intense element *without* altering the particular composition of each one. In this process, however, the whole takes on a new composition.

The concentration we see here also conforms to what Eliot designates as "the new" and the individual (38). In more general terms, this sense of newness or individuality could stand in for a number of designations, such as gender, sexuality, or race, that relate to personal experience. Therefore, despite its homage to tradition and poetic doctrine, Eliot's theory of impersonality and poetic emotion offers a way of imagining emotional connections that transcend the identity of their participants. Thus, it offers a radical form of emotional connection that transcends the boundaries of humanistic ideals of selfhood, psychology, and identity. Further, this particular emotional register does not dismiss personal experience and identity altogether. Rather, it takes the form of a collective forum or "medium" that resists individual psychology but which also emerges from the *trace* of individual experience. This miniaturist trace of individualized structure functions beyond psychology, allowing one to express the "grains" of difference within an abstracted impersonal space. Since this emotional plane is anti-psychological, not subject to interpretive narratives of individual development or expression, it provides an alternative to the conventional, anthropomorphic humanism both Hulme and Lewis denigrate. For the purposes of critical theory, this impersonal understanding of emotion allows one to both confront a poststructuralist de-centering of the subject that reads human depth and affect as constructed fictions at the same time that it refuses to center the subject as a repository of psychological depth that can be interpreted, collated, or analyzed. Since this impersonal emotionality addresses the question of depth, it is can also be interpreted as a spatial phenomenon. The process of "concentration" Eliot outlines narrows, even flattens "expressed" or psychological forms of emotion. Because this emotion does not apply to a centralized subject that can be the source of study, expression, or interpretation, it occasions a movement in space that disturbs the barriers that separate inside

from outside. The poetic emotional interior exists externally, and vice-versa. Accordingly, Eliot's poetic emotion can be thought of as a surface or plane that enables collective emotional experience.

An "Arrangement of Surfaces:" Gaudier-Brzeska's "Sculptural Feeling"

I SHALL DERIVE MY EMOTIONS SOLELY FROM THE ARRANGEMENT OF SURFACES, I shall present my emotions by the ARRANGEMENT OF MY SURFACES, THE PLANES AND LINES BY WHICH THEY ARE DEFINED—Gaudier-Brzeska (qtd. in Pound *Memoir* 27-28)¹⁶

I now turn to a modernist figure whose critical writings even more literally concretize the version of emotion Eliot articulated in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," the young modernist sculptor, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska. Given Gaudier-Brzeska's death in 1915, his work actually pre-dates "Tradition and the Individual Talent." I am not concerned here with whether Eliot had any knowledge of Gaudier-Brzeska's letter from the trenches of World War I, which I analyze more closely in what follows, but with how the sculptor's manifestic declarations about emotion capture both its progressive potential as well as its fascistic downside, as the relation between an aesthetics of emotion and an aesthetics of fascism becomes quite clear in the young artist's thoughts about emotion. In his essay, "'Surrounded by a Multitude of Other Blasts': Modernism and the Great War," Paul Peppis explains exactly how Gaudier-Brzeska's death provided the "ultimate authorization of Vorticist collaboration and resistance" while cementing the "demise of the defiant soldier-artist" to what has become "fascist modernism" (61,62). According to Peppis, vorticists mythologized the young sculptor's death as a means of fulfilling the movement's own "contradictory doctrine," where the soldier's "destruction is the final validation of his cause" (62). I would argue that this contradictory logic offers a more extreme articulation of the contradictions in Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent." The vorticist "celebration of annihilation as the fullest proof of manly life" not only "anticipates what has come to be called fascist modernism," as Peppis rightly claims, it also functions as the reactionary arm of Eliot's doctrine (62). While Gaudier-Brzeska does not mention the term explicitly, his conception of emotion is bound up within this same concept of aesthetic impersonality that Eliot would later articulate, where aesthetic disinterestedness and personal obfuscation is a necessary precondition for creating an emotionally connected artistic community.

Ezra Pound's *A Memoir of Gaudier-Brzeska*, first published in 1916, mourns its subject, the young French sculptor who died in the trenches of World War I at age 23, "as part of the war waste" (17). The memoir itself is a concrete manifestation of the paradox Vorticism supports, where the annihilation of the

young soldier is memorialized as the ultimate aesthetic achievement. In this homage, the poet counts the sculptor's work as, more so than contemporary painting, "peculiarly a thing of the twentieth-century" (29). "Sculpture, of this new sort," he adds, is "more moving than painting" because of its ability to create an "austere permanence" with "some relation of life and yet outside it" (29). In ascribing this feature to Gaudier-Brzeska's sculpture, Pound describes a relationship that pre-dates and foregrounds the poetic emotion T.S. Eliot would later theorize in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919). In ascribing emotion to different works of art, Pound implicitly suggests that sculpture is more "emotional" than painting because it is a multi-dimensional surface that flattens the distinction between inside and outside. While sculpture is three-dimensional, it simultaneously has no depth, no psychology. Rather, the "arrangement" of its exterior surfaces, or flat planes, comprises its totality. Of course, Pound's conclusion is both counter-intuitive and paradoxical, since painting is generally considered more "flat" than the three-dimensional volume of sculpture. Gaudier-Brzeska, as Hugh Kenner explains in *The Pound Era*, also saw sculpture as an "expression of certain emotions," but only in so much as the work did not resemble his actual subject, as in his famous sculpture, produced in 1913, of the "Hieratic Head of Ezra Pound" (256). This conception of sculpture is an impersonal one, in that it conceals the actual person, the physical characteristics that contribute to an identity, in favor of a more general form of emotion present in the cold planes of stone. "You understand it will not look like you, it *will...not...look* like you," wrote Gaudier-Brzeska. "It will be the expression of certain emotions which I get from your character" (quoted. in Kenner 256). Here, character should not be confused with personality or identity. Rather, in keeping with Eliot's terms, character appears to be an aspect of the "personal" that might be transformed into a more abstract, generalizable aesthetic unity, or form.

In his letter, "Written from the Trenches," which appears in Pound's memoir, Gaudier-Brzeska appears to be working though the same kinds of distinctions, if in different terminology, between personal emotion, as related to one's individual experience, and a more impersonal form of poetic emotion. Ironically, the essay, originally handwritten in a combination of lower- and upper-case scripts, enunciates its message in a staccato format of objective injunctions that ostensibly appear to chastise emotion rather than embrace it. While he appears to be defining sculpture as merely an "ARRANGEMENT" or "SIMPLE COMPOSITION OF LINES AND PLANES," he is also presenting a theory of aesthetic emotion that paradoxically hinges on his callous disrespect for human lives (*Memoir* 28). Indeed, the essay definitely solidifies the connection between modernist intellectual elitism and fascist authoritarianism by asserting that "THIS WAR IS A GREAT REMEDY," having taken "AWAY FROM THE MASSES NUMBERS UPON NUMBERS OF UNIMPORTANT UNITS, WHOSE ECONOMIC

ACTIVITIES BECOME NOXIOUS AS THE RECENT TRADE CRISES HAVE SHOWN US" (28). In its unfathomably crude and utilitarian vision of the world and art as an efficiently functioning machine that must eradicate "UNIMPORTANT UNITS," one cannot overlook the connection between such a statement and the latter fascist leanings of figures such as Pound, Eliot, and Yeats. Again, far from conveying emotion, this statement appears to reflect cold disengagement from the surrounding human environment.

Nonetheless, the sculptor's thoughts can offer alternative routes for thinking about emotion, which, as I have argued of T.S. Eliot's "poetic emotion," might actually contribute to an impersonal theory of emotion that establishes collective emotional bonds that exist outside of shared personal experience and identity. This possibility is more evident in the sculptor's stark admission that within "the chaos of battle," which does not "ALTER IN THE LEAST the outlines of the hill we are besieging...IT WOULD BE FOLLY TO SEEK ARTISTIC EMOTIONS AMID THESE LITTLE WORKS OF OURS" (27). Much like Eliot, the sculptor professes his disbelief that individual emotions, desires and aspirations could affect his turbulent surroundings, which are ironically and imperturbably anchored by the earth's natural surface, the hills around him. However the machinations of war might literally sculpt the earth, through "volleys, wire entanglements, projectors, motors" and most importantly, the digging of trenches themselves, its surface remains unphased by these human actions (27). Accordingly, individual artistic emotions are also "folly," and Gaudier-Brzeska counts the war itself as integral in killing the "ARROGANCE, SELF-ESTEEM, [and] PRIDE," all "personal" characteristics, that have contributed to its own furrowing of the earth (27). War functions on two levels, both as a leveler of humanity's overall ignorance and arrogance and as an index of humanity's stupidity. Gaudier-Brzeska's idea of "artistic emotion" runs parallel to this latter function of war. According to Gaudier-Brzeska, an artist's belief that artistic or personal emotion can produce a true aesthetic medium is as foolish as faith that man's battle will somehow alter the earth's impermeability.

As an alternative to the ineffectiveness of artistic emotion, the sculptor outlines an ideal of emotion that exhibits no pretense to "ARROGANCE, SELF-ESTEEM, [or] PRIDE" (27). This statement parallels Wyndham Lewis's similar tirade against personality, where personality is characterized by "vanity" that "governs all features of emotive life" (*Art* 214). In opposition to this personal model of a self characterized by a complex accretion of motivation and experience, emotions "present" themselves on an arrangement of surfaces, so that depth itself is only an illusion. Similarly, Gaudier-Brzeska refers to the "ARRANGEMENT OF MY SURFACES" as the means by which he "present[s]" his own emotions, indicating his belief that he is not a psychologically three-dimensional being comprised of secret depths and recesses (28). Like Wyndham Lewis in *The Art of*

Being Ruled, he distrusts "expression." His emotions are not expressed, but rather "present[ed]" as surface phenomena that confuse any distinction between inside and outside. In stating that emotions are more accurately "presented" or "defined" through an objectively precise arrangement of surfaces, Gaudier-Brzeska denies the possibility of a self that exists prior to their expression. Rather, the sculptor counts emotions as always and already on the surface. As with Eliot's concept of impersonality and poetic emotion, Gaudier-Brzeska's dictum effectively erases the meaning of a self or identity in determining emotive life.

Both figures posit emotion as a collective phenomenon, an abstract aesthetic medium that diminishes the importance of individual aesthetic creation. Eliot's understanding of poetic emotion is similar to Gaudier-Brzeska's concepts of "[s]culptural energy," "[s]culptural feeling" and "[s]culptural ability," which he elaborated in his contributions to the first issue of Wyndham Lewis's *Blast*, originally published in 1913 (155). Rather abstractly, Gaudier-Brzeska defines sculptural energy as "the Mountain," whereas "[s]culptural feeling is the appreciation of masses in relation," and "[s]culptural ability is the defining of these masses by planes" (155). My point here is not to exhaustively distinguish between these three modes of "sculptural" activity, but to demonstrate how the sculptor conceives each mode as a form of collective relation or engagement, as he indicates quite explicitly in his definition of sculptural feeling. Indeed, sculptural feeling and ability depends on the existence of an intense empathy that draws relations and connections between monuments of sculptural energy. These relations are purely immediate. They do not arise from any sense of depth, which must be represented or expressed. Rather, the relations between "masses" are defined "by planes," flat surfaces, that in their rejection of soul, psychology, and selfhood, are never "derivative or secondary" (156). Echoing the imagist tenets of Pound and foregrounding Eliot's latter version of poetic emotion, Gaudier-Brzeska's last paragraph defines the form of impersonal collectivity established through sculptural energy, feeling, and activity:

We have been influenced by what we liked most, each according to his own individuality, we have crystallized the sphere into the cube, we have made a combination of all the possible shaped masses—concentrating them to express our abstract thoughts of conscious superiority (158).

The "we" Gaudier-Brzeska invokes is not exactly a democratic community but a collective assembly of like minds, "the moderns" he affiliates himself with in an earlier statement in the essay: "Epstein, Brancusi, Archipenko, Dunikowski, Modigliani" (158). As with Eliot's concept of poetic emotion, individuality is a catalyst that only exists residually in the emotional and aesthetic medium it produces. Borrowing from imagist rhetoric, Gaudier-Brzeska describes how each individuality is "crystallized" from a sphere into a well-defined cube. Whereas a sphere is composed of curves, a cube is an "arrangement of surfaces," an

assemblage of flat planes that theoretically eradicates depth. Only in this arrangement is a collective assembly of like minds possible. As with Eliot's poetic emotion, these "possible shaped masses" have been "concentrate[ed]," reduced and flattened to an essence that exists both within and without, allowing them to realize their "conscious superiority" (158).

Despite the pretense of this politically unpalatable statement, this model of surface and concentration not only informs Eliot's thoughts about poetry and emotion, but also appears in a kinder, more empathically and ethically engaged type of modernist critical tract. Both Gaudier-Brzeska and Eliot display an intellectualized and theoretical, if not programmatic understanding of emotion that ostensibly aligns their thoughts with those of Lewis as critical of femininity and its relation to emotional expression, theatrical affectation, individuality, and selfhood. Likewise, the texts I have examined thus far conceive of an emotion that is both anti-humanist in its strong distrust of anthropological associations and impersonal in its desire to disable the boundaries of individual selfhood and psychology. As both an antithesis to and extension of this ideology of emotion, I now turn to Virginia Woolf, who, I argue, drew a more concrete and socially reparative vision of the same model of emotion elaborated by Eliot, Lewis, and Gaudier-Brzeska. As opposed to the this group's understanding of emotion as a marker of aesthetic superiority, Woolf's impersonal ideals extend the scope of humanity itself to encompass those who fall outside it, most specifically the deformed and disabled. Woolf's understanding of emotion as an extra-psychological surface reworks the theory of emotion I have discussed so far by contributing to an anthropology of city life that envisions emotion not as the possession of individuals, but as entangled networks of care, support, and anonymity.

Virginia Woolf, Scale, and Emotional Atmospheres

In particular, I turn to Woolf's essay, "Street Haunting: A London Adventure" written in 1930, where the narrator joins "the vast republican army of anonymous trampers" that comprises the impersonal yet emotionally engaged network of London life (155). Generally, anonymity has been connected to the depersonalization of city life, as in Georg Simmel's famous essay, "The Metropolis and Mental Life." Again, I want to distinguish here between impersonality and depersonalization. Whereas impersonality exchanges humanist ideals of selfhood and individuality for collective emotional and aesthetic presence, Simmel credits depersonalization with "the leveling down of the person by the social technological mechanism" (409). For Simmel, depersonalization results in a particular set of psychological conditions that ostensibly sedates emotionality, most specifically a "blasé attitude" that reduces the world to a "flat and gray tone" (414). This psychological condition, as a specific lack of emotionality, quells aesthetic perception and "hollows out the core of things, their individuality, their specific

value, and their incomparability" (414). While Simmel does not mention the word emotion explicitly, he does imply that the conditions of metropolitan life and the blasé indifference they create also threatens the fabric or texture of "unity" that can be created by close-knit, emotionally engaged connections. The promise of individual and personal freedom granted by the metropolis ultimately wears away the "inner unity" of group identity, familial ties, and religious affiliation. Thus, according to Simmel's logic, the blasé indifferent attitude the metropolis engenders exists in stark contrast to an emotionally united collective being bound by shared identity.

In its descriptions of city life, Woolf's essay transcends the binary Simmel elaborates - anonymity is a mode of emotional and observational engagement that neither reifies shared experience nor produces a depersonalized state of disengagement. Quite famously, Woolf opens her treatise in a moment of conventional desire, where she is "set upon having an object," a pencil, which operates as a mere guise for the freedom of perpetual movement, of not "having an object" (155). The object, however frail in the reality of its existence, occasions the movement from an interior architectural space to becoming "part of that vast republican army of anonymous trampers" (155). It is easy to slip into reading Woolf's words as a salute to the powers of female flaneurie and omniscience or conversely, as representative of Woolf's own narratorial intrusion, her slumming into the cultural undergrowth that dispels her own experience of privilege. In contrast to these two narratives, I read Woolf's observations as creating an alternative emotional scale by which she measures the objects of her observation. These objects, in their extreme empathy for others, both participate in and create that scale. The movements and perpetual reconfigurations of surface and space occasioned by Woolf's non-intrusive observations create points of connection that emphasize how radical emotional atmospheres of care and empathy exist on the surface of things. Woolf's specific style of flaneurie demonstrates how emotional registers are glimpsed from the objective stand-point of a casual passerby, not interpreted or gleaned by a psychologist of human behavior.

Rather than phenomenological certainty, the rhetoric of Woolf's cruising hinges on the term "atmosphere" as the grounds for visual display. Woolf's atmosphere assures that scale is often perceived but rarely "fixed" beyond the moment of perception. For example, the sudden appearance of a dwarf in the essay physically alters the scale of human perception. Escorted into a shoe store by women of normal size, the dwarf, as the marker that lends the space its meaning, turns the women into "benevolent giants," while displaying her "perfectly proportioned," "arched," and "aristocratic" foot to the shop-girl before her (157). What occurs is a change in the "angles and relationships" of observation, or as Gaudier-Brzeska might observe of a similar situation, the "arrangement" of "planes" and "surfaces" that create such an atmosphere are re-defined.¹⁷ As Woolf

so eloquently states, the dwarf had "called into being an atmosphere which, as we followed her out into the street, seemed actually to create the humped, the twisted and the deformed" (158). Such an "atmosphere," or "arrangement of surfaces," is transient, itinerant, subject to change. This idea of "atmosphere" also stands in for the kind of emotion I am describing here, or what Charles Altieri would call a "mood," or mode "of feeling where the sense of subjectivity becomes diffuse and sensation merges into something close to atmosphere, something that seems to pervade an entire scene or situation" (*Particulars* 2). In this scene, the dwarf's actions are not self-contained, but rather influence a whole range of exchanges. This particular arrangement is built around a form of emotional engagement, a kind of "being with" that, neither firmly detached nor resolutely united, collapses the binary Simmel envisions between a depersonalized modernity and a united, tribal society. That is, the dwarf is powerful only in her attached relation to others. The atmosphere she creates, where "the humped, the twisted and the deformed" define the scale of normal humanity, only arises through her literal positioning beside others. The three are a relaxed unity, an intensely empathic arrangement of surfaces that cannot exist independently.

This atmosphere mirrors the more theoretical version of emotion both Eliot and Gaudier-Brzeska articulated earlier, defining a form of engagement that mirrors the "concentration," not expression, both figures deem necessary in emotion. This collective extra-psychological network of emotion is especially evident in the next scene, where Woolf's observation shifts to another threesome, a company of "[t]wo bearded men, brothers, apparently, stone-blind, supporting themselves by resting a hand on the head of a small boy between them, marched down the street" (158). Again, I use the term extra-psychological here to describe a movement that transforms or diffuses identity and self rather than completely obliterates it. Woolf describes this group as a "convoy," passing by tremulously and unyieldingly, as if evading the observer's objectification, yet "holding straight on" in a sense of absolute direction:

the little convoy seemed to cleave asunder the passers-by with the momentum of its silence, its directness, its disaster. Indeed, the dwarf had started a hobbling grotesque dance to which everybody in the street had now conformed (159).

Woolf's use of words such as "convoy," "cleave," and "conformed" reinforce the seamless connections of the "human spectacle" she describes, united by the very particularities that attract the author's attention in the first place. Her use of the word "supporting" to describe the relationship between the two men and the boy indicates the specific emotional register, or atmosphere, this connected situation creates, which is not limited to the psychology of one person or the other. The three are a unit; the boy prosthetically extends the two brothers, creating a surface that denies what it means to be an independent emotional being. Rather, the

bond of support between this triad derives from their arrangement beside each other. Similarly, the men and the boy appear to objectively pass through the observer's field of vision, indicating that they have nothing particular to express. Neither does the crowd that surrounds them. As with Eliot's poetic impersonality, where a concentrated trace of individuality bolsters a collective aesthetic medium, the peculiarities of this assemblage create an impersonal, extra-psychological network that defines emotion in its most modernist sense.

By the end of the essay, Woolf, echoing Eliot, frames the effects of her cruising as an "escape" from "the straight lines of personality...into the heart of the forest where live those wild beasts, our fellow men," as if transcending personality offers a heightened aesthetic perception and pleasure that solidifies her connection to others (165-6). Much like Lewis, Hulme, Eliot, and Gaudier-Brzeska, the particular style of Woolf's observations points to an impersonal version of emotion that displays a profound distrust of the humanistic sciences of psychology and personality. In essays of the same time period, such as "Flying over London," Woolf seriously considers the limitations of this kind of perspective, which grants the individual too much supremacy in defining and perceiving the world and in creating engaged social connections. Her aerial voyeurism in the essay critiques what is also the target of "Street Haunting," the "inveterately anthropocentric... mind" that creates a "welcoming, accepting" social "harbour" for the airplane's imminent landing, which it will define within a "natural" scale of human proportion (167). However, the technological precision of the plane occasions a shift in proportion away from the humanistic perception:

Everything had changed its values seen from the air. Personality was outside the body, abstract. And one wished to be able to animate the heart, the legs, the arms with it, to do which it would be necessary to be there, so as to collect; so as to give up this arduous game, as one flies through the air, of assembling things that lie on the surface (17).

In language that very closely parallels that of Gaudier-Brzeska, Woolf describes the extremely arduous task of "assembling things that lie on the surface," particularly from the air, because the position violates one's anthropocentric need to assemble perceptions according to a human scale of psychological depth. For Woolf, being in the air also produces a disturbing sensation of disembodiment, where the body's component parts do not "work" as they would normally. The "arduous game" she identifies, where one's own "personality" exists outside the body, reflects a modernist ideal of impersonality where having a personality or personal feelings allows one to "know what it means to want to escape from these things" (Eliot 43). However, unlike the work of Eliot or Gaudier-Brzeska, the goal of Woolf's "arduous game" and its corresponding anti-humanism, is precisely to re-humanize a world that, in its self-absorption, has lost its humanizing perspective.

Both Gaudier-Brzeska and Woolf, whether explicitly or implicitly,

understand emotion as it presents or displays itself on a "surface." While Gaudier-Brzeska often uses the word "plane" in tandem with surface, these surfaces are by no means flat or dimensionless. Rather, as Woolf suggests in "Flying over London," a surface is composed of things that have been strategically assembled in a way that transcends the humanistic desire for one's surroundings to reflect the self. Eve Sedgwick's use of the term "texture," in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Performativity, Pedagogy*, best describes the kind of assembly Woolf invokes in the threesomes of "Street Haunting" and in her view from the airplane. For Sedgwick, this idea of texture is one way of looking beyond the logic of "depth or hiddenness, typically followed by a drama of exposure that has been such a staple of critical work for the last four decades" (8). This description corresponds both to the term I have opted to use throughout this essay, "psychology," and to Altieri's notion of a "romantic expressivist" identity. According to Sedgwick, the idea of texture evokes a number of physical scales, which include both the sense of touch and visuality, where the perceived object is "sedimented, extruded, laminated, granulated, polished, distressed, felted or fluffed up" (15). Similarly, textural perception is highly empathic, for it means "to know or hypothesize whether a thing will be easy or hard, safe or dangerous to grasp, to stack, to fold, to shred, to climb on, to stretch, to slide, to soak" (14). Here, Sedgwick describes an almost telepathic means of engaging with the objects that is primarily phenomenological; to apprehend the object, one must empathize intensely with its surface, not its imagined depths.

In modernist terms, this aspect of perceiving texture corresponds to Gaudier-Brzeska's concept of "structural feeling" (*Blast* 155). For Gaudier-Brzeska, the French trenches epitomize texture, sculpturally crystallizing the emotional resonances and residues of war, which explains his letter's immediate proclamation: "Written From The Trenches" (*Memoir* 27). Similarly, the emotional registers of Woolf's "Street Haunting" follow the specific processes of textural perception Sedgwick identifies, by creating visual and verbal texture through experimentation with shifting technologies of scale. Inherent to Woolf's understanding of the textural social fabric is the emotional register such texture creates, which she evokes through images of various threesomes ballasted together in a common network of support. For Woolf, texture arises more from relation than sensation; much like Eliot's or Gaudier-Brzeska's crystallized emotional concentrate. The texture of the social situations Woolf describes develops from a form of relationality that distinguishes the individual only through literal connection to others. The dwarf appears only in the proximity of her cohorts, and the blind men appear only through the support of the young boy. It is also important to note that Woolf's most intense textural perception occurs from the cockpit of an airplane, an image that later, with the impending human disaster of World War II, becomes a haunting symbol of technological indifference and mass

murder in texts such as *Between the Acts* (1941) -embodying the threat of Nazi violence that would hasten her eventual suicide. Likewise, Eliot's concentrated trace of impersonal emotion exists only within a multi-dimensional aesthetic network that dictates the poet's surrender of himself to a greater medium. This medium is itself a texture, as is reflected most clearly in Eliot's decision to term poetic works "monuments," literal sculptures carved by the impersonal addition of the new ("Tradition" 38).

In theorizing forms of emotion that transcend individual psychology by moving beyond a "topos of depth or hiddenness followed by a drama of exposure," (Sedgwick 9) these texts also outline a phenomenological relation as Jean-Paul Sartre defines it, which gets "rid of the dualism which in the existent opposes interior to exterior."¹⁸ Yet as various scholars have observed, including Dean and Ellmann, the progressive possibilities of these impersonal formulations are always unstable. On one hand, what we see from Gaudier-Brzeska's fascist leanings is that erasing the duality between subject and object can be a dangerous and ethically bankrupt procedure, as the subject can end up subsuming the object (or vice versa) in violent annihilation. On the other, Woolf's affectionately drawn trios simultaneously suggest that a phenomenological perspective might more ethically replace relationships of depth, which depend on the opposition of interior to exterior, with relations of breadth, or, in the terminology of this essay, surface. Such a perspective assaults the Cartesian tradition and its impulse, according to Merleau-Ponty, "to disengage from the object" (198).

An impersonal understanding of emotional relations, in keeping with T.S. Eliot's imperative that emotion is neither conscious nor deliberate, "runs counter to the reflective procedure which detaches subject and object."¹⁹ To move beyond "anthropological association" means to move beyond the ego, psychology, and personality to an emotionally invested impersonal relation that "discover[s] the origin of the object at the very center of our experience" (Merleau-Ponty 71). We can see this relationship in modernist texts as they explore how the collapse of subject and object, inside and outside, might structure our emotional experience. While figures such as Gaudier-Brzeska and Lewis demonstrate how this logic might support authoritarian fantasies, in Woolf's texts, the same model grounds relations of care, intimacy, and love. Ultimately, the ideals of emotion these texts present run counter to our assumptions about emotion, leading us to wonder about the practical, ethical, or theoretical reasons safeguarding emotion as a private phenomenon predicated upon the individual. But as Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" makes clear, the aim of "poetic emotion" is not to blot out the individual, but rather to dialectically transform "personal emotion" into a different medium altogether, albeit one that preserves the trace of individual difference.

This is not to say that the expression of individual emotions is unimportant or politically useless and insipid. Charles Altieri, for example,

argues that the expression of emotions grants political being and voice to those who might otherwise be overlooked: "If we do not heed even the impulse for careful articulation of individual feelings, we deprive ourselves of basic resources that orient us toward hearing what matters to other people" (*Particulars* 12). In particular, Altieri emphasizes how the "articulation of individual feelings," might ratify one's political and social existence, and this is a very compelling point. As critical components of our process of identity formation and individual narratives of selfhood, emotions are both the result of and an explanation for the social contexts in which we operate. While this understanding of emotion is certainly crucial in maintaining the dignity of selfhood and in acknowledging the claims of others, it is possible to imagine an emotion that serves the same function - that allows us to hear "what matters to other people" - without positing the individual as the repository of feeling and identity. Furthermore, it is possible to theorize emotional connections and bonds that do not rest upon shared experience and identity. Despite the flaws, contradictions, and instability of their formulations, the modernists I have discussed attempted to work through these possibilities by understanding emotion as an aesthetic practice.

Notes

¹ Lewis also contends that:

If they were subsequently watched in the act of "expressing" their "personality," it would be found that it was somebody else's personality they were expressing. If a hundred of them were observed "expressing their personality," all together and at the same time, it would be found that they all "expressed" this inalienable, mysterious "personality" in the same way. In short, it would be patent at once that they only had one personality between them to "express"—some "expressing" it with a little more virtuosity, some a little less. It would be a group personality that they were "expressing"—a pattern imposed on them by means of education and the hypnotism of cinema, wireless, and press. Each one would, however, be firmly persuaded that it was "his own" personality that he was "expressing": just as when he voted he would be persuaded that it was the vote of a free man that was being cast, replete with the independence and free-will which was the birthright of a member of a truly democratic community (148).

² See "The 'Homo' the Child of the 'Suffragette,'" in *The Art of Being Ruled* 218.

³ I make an implicit association here between this inexpressible ideal of emotion and the idea of the "sublime" as articulated by thinkers such as Kant and Longinus. While this connection is definitely plausible, the scope of this article does not permit me to explore it in detail. Perhaps a point for further inquiry into modernist emotion is its theoretical and historical relation to theories of the sublime.

⁴ I am much indebted to Tim Dean and his graduate seminar on "Poetic Impersonality" for many of my thoughts about impersonality. See his essay "T.S. Eliot, Famous Clairvoyante" which appears in *Gender, Desire, and Sexuality in T.S. Eliot*. As Laity suggests in her introduction to the book, the essays in the collection go beyond the "polarized versions" of the poet that have led to his critical repudiation and sequestering as the "oppressor" of all things progressive (5, 7). Other essays of note in this collection include Colleen Lamos's "The Love Song of T.S. Eliot: Elegaic Homoeroticism in the Early Poetry," and Charles Altieri's "Theorizing Emotions in Eliot's Poetry and Poetics." Altieri's essay is of extreme importance to my argument; however, it does not link emotion explicitly to Eliot's theory of impersonality nor does it extend the genealogy of impersonality beyond Eliot. For one of the only studies that does read impersonality outside of Yeats, Eliot, or Pound, see Daniel Albright's *Personality and Impersonality: Lawrence, Woolf, and Mann*.

⁵ I am not mentioning this omission as a flaw or oversight in Altieri's work but as a more general absence in the critical historicization of both impersonality and emotion. In fact, in "Theorizing Emotions in Eliot's Poetry and Poetics," Altieri openly admits to the limitations of his work by announcing his "worry that it will be too easy to dismiss my arguments as too abstract" (168). However, Altieri grants himself immunity by arguing that his abstraction allows him to separate "the thinking on affect within Eliot's work from three specific charges regularly leveled against him" (168). These charges are, according to Altieri, "that all of Eliot's ideas are contaminated by the politics they so

seamlessly supported, that Eliot's very concern for unified sensibility makes him an anachronism in a postmodern culture now able to thrive on contraction and multiplicity, and that Eliot was simply aggrandizing his own imaginary identity in his laments about dissociated sensibility as a historical crisis" (168).

⁶ Warren I. Susman's classic essay, "'Personality' and the Making of Twentieth-Century Culture" establishes "personality" as an explicit cultural and historical term in early twentieth-century America. According to Susman, this shift from a "culture of character to a culture of personality" rested on a "spiritual vision" of self-realization, new discourses of sociology and psychology, and the rise of self-help culture. Whereas one is born with the seeds of character, which can then grow or develop, personality must be built. Thus, says Susman, personality warranted a host of descriptors: "*fascinating, stunning, attractive, magnetic, glowing, masterful, creative, dominant, forceful*" (italics in original; 218). According to Susman, such words distinguish "personality" from "character," which was generally defined in terms of good or bad. For Susman, "personality" addresses the importance of "being different, special, unusual, of standing out in the crowd" yet likeable at the same time (218). He observes that in America, the possession of personality became a prerequisite for successful political leadership and social authority. One can then assume that the meaning of personality circulates around distinction, spatial fixity, and forms of social demarcation.

⁷ Jameson's *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* pinpoints the individual as a key feature in the "classical celebration of modernity," which invokes individuality as an "illicit representation of consciousness as such" (54). Jameson's maxim, and what appears to be that of both Eliot and Lewis, is that "the narrative of modernity cannot be organized" around such categories of consciousness, subjectivity, and individualism (55). In mounting a tradition that "cannot be organized around categories of subjectivity," Eliot further subverts the rhetoric of humanism by fracturing the very ideal of modernity that grounds Jameson's critique: one that builds subjectivity around an imagined and nostalgic relation to the past.

⁸ M. Merleau-Ponty uses the term "anthropological association" to refer to a space oriented around the notion that humans possess a "depth" or "interior" not granted to the objects surrounding them (101).

⁹ Moreover, the wide critical reception of ideas of performance and performativity, most famously articulated by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* led to an understanding of emotional behaviors as performed only within the matrix of social intelligibility. Consequently, the idea of emotions themselves, generally attributed to a logic of origin and telos, slid onto the backburner of theoretical conversation.

¹⁰ See, for example Teresa Brennan's *The Transmission of Affect*, Eva Feder Kittay's *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency*, Lauren Berlant's collection *Intimacy*, and Saidiya V. Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*.

¹¹ In general, I am deeply indebted to Dean for many of my thoughts about modernist ideals of impersonality.

¹² I credit Joanna Gill for noting in her "'My Sweeney, Mr. Eliot': Anne Sexton and the 'Impersonal Theory of Poetry'" Eliot's apology for his "juvenile" tone in "Tradition and the

Individual Talent," which appeared in his preface to the 1964 edition to *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England*.

¹³ In wrongly attempting to distinguish Eliot's interest in poetry "that begins with self-expression," Ellman includes this quotation in *The Poetics of Impersonality* as suggestive of Pound's lack of interest in the "experiencing subject" and his focus on the "kinetic power that his feelings represent" (168).

¹⁴ The kind of emotion I am detailing here reflects the vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis in publications such as *Blast I* where the vortex perfects, edits, concentrates, and organizes the feminine excess of culture.

¹⁵ In *Beyond Sexuality*, Tim Dean elaborates an impersonal form of desire that exists beyond psychology. This claim follows his project of "outmoding the individual as a tenable category of analysis," whose subjectivity exists separately from the "public realm of social life" (1).

¹⁶ For an interesting essay on this text, see Marysa Demoor's "From Epitaph to Obituary: The Death Politics of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound" which argues that both Eliot and Pound wrote memorials to dead men that served to "enshrine and encapsulate" their own achievements (254).

¹⁷ Woolf's reference to the "angles and relationships" of observation parallels Eliot's assessment of impersonal form in the "Tradition and the Individual Talent," where the emergence of the new modifies the existing order of art, "and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted" (38). The similarity here suggests that Eliot also understands the value of atmosphere.

¹⁸ See chapter three, "Phenomenology," of Sartre's *Basic Writings*. Similarly, in line with Sedgwick, Tim Dean's *Beyond Sexuality* espouses the ideal of experiencing social and sexual relations horizontally rather than vertically in his notion of "[e]cological thinking," which considers how human relations work within networks of cause and effect (155).

¹⁹ Merleau-Ponty also makes clear that the blurring of subject and object erases the idea of a specific bottom and a top:

But what meaning could the word 'against' have for a subject not placed by his body face to face with the world? It implies the distinction of a top and a bottom, or an "oriented space." When I say that an object is *on* a table, I always mentally put myself either in the table or in the object, and I apply to them a category which theoretically fits the relationship of my body to external objects. Stripped of the anthropological association, the word *on* is indistinguishable from the word "under" or "beside" (101).

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