Expanding the POOL Group: the fiction of Robert Herring and Oswell Blakeston between 1927 and 1934

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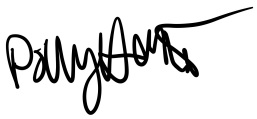
Declaration of Authorship

I, Polly Hember, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: 

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Abstract

This thesis recovers the works of two queer writers, Robert Herring (Robert Herring Williams (1903-1975)) and Oswell Blakeston (Henry Joseph Hasslacher (1907-1985)), in order to consider the creative exchange and the currents of queer intimacy that constituted and animated the POOL group. Since its scholarly revival in the late 1970s and 1980s by Deke Dusinberre and Anne Friedberg, the POOL group's composition has often been conflated with its founders and therefore presented as a group of three: H.D., Bryher and Kenneth Macpherson. Though aspects of the group's work have been examined, such as the feature film *Borderline* (1931), and H.D. and Bryher's contributions, there is still much about the POOL group's artistic activities that is yet to be explored.

This thesis offers an expanded view of the POOL group to include Herring and Blakeston, examining their neglected fictional works produced during POOL's most prolific period of production (1927-1934) alongside POOL's archives in order to expand current critical conceptions of the group and their modernist experimentation. By acknowledging POOL as a group that never defined its own boundaries, I argue for a more diffuse model based on connecting lines of queer intimacies within POOL's creative network, which includes works by Herring and Blakeston. These are: Herring's *Adam and Evelyn at Kew, or; Revolt in the Gardens* (1930) and *Cactus Coast* (1934); Blakeston's two POOL texts, *Through a Yellow Glass* (1928) and *Extra Passenger* (1929); and Blakeston's 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)' from the collection *Few Are Chosen* (1930), along with his short story *Magic Aftermath: A Romantic Study in the Pleating of Time* (1932). By considering these works as POOL texts written by two crucial members of the group, new insights into POOL's thematic dimensions are seen: from their queer modernist experimentation to their debates on cinema production, sound, and modernity. Engaging with discourses of new modernist studies and queer historicism, this thesis presents a revisionist study of the POOL group's composition, activities, and ethos, offering close readings of previously neglected texts to reveal POOL's queer articulations and their network of intimacy.

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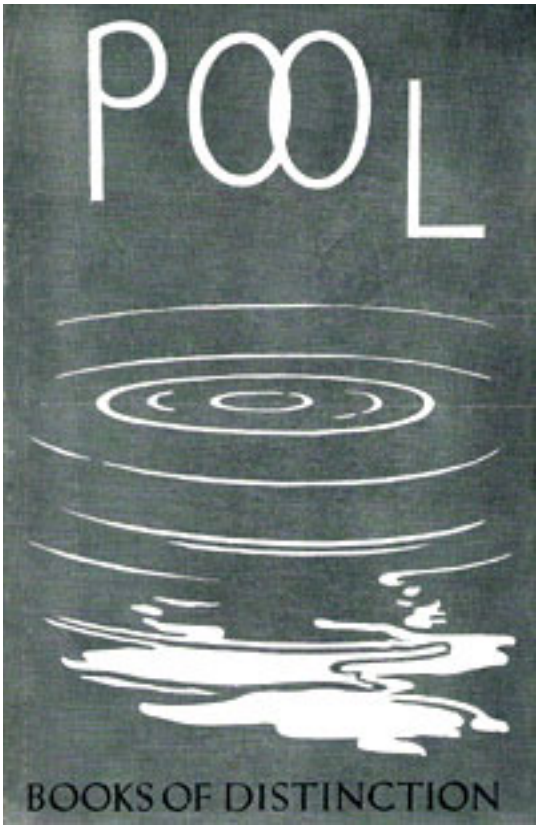

Figure 1: POOL's logo. Bryher Papers. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library, POOL bookplate, n.d., Box 170, Folder 5678.

> …The expanding ripples from a stone dropped in a pool have become more a symbol for the growth of an idea than a simple matter of hydraulics.
> … As the stone will cause a spread of ripples to the water's edge, so ideas once started will go to their unknown boundary.
>
> … These concentric expansions are exemplified in POOL, which is the source simply—the stone—the idea.
>
> … POOL is seeking to express new trends and new will. Not, as we have said before, to grind an axe, but to make a centre for new ideas and modern thought.[1]

The POOL group's logo and manifesto conjure images of moving ripples, distorted reflections, and hidden depths. These notions gesture to the varied creative interests that POOL held. Under the POOL banner, they produced ten books, five films and the film

[1] Bryher Papers. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library (hereafter referred to as 'BRBML'), POOL: Catalogues, n.d., Box 170, Folder 5679.

journal *Close Up* (1927-1933) were produced; all experimented in various ways with how reality can be reflected in cinema and literature, often motivated by exploring veiled desires or the submerged unconscious mind. Indeed, moving ripples inspired the creation of *Close Up* itself: Bryher, one of POOL's three founding members alongside H.D. and Kenneth Macpherson, reflects in her memoir *The Heart To Artemis*:

> [O]ne day as we were walking beside the lake and Kenneth [Macpherson] compared the ripples drifting across the water with an effect that should be tried on the screen, I remembered my Paris training of the early twenties and said, "If you are so interested, why don't you start a magazine?" So *Close Up* was born on a capital of sixty pounds.[2]

These images of rippling water are also appropriate for my own exploration of the POOL group. This thesis traces the thematic ripples and the 'unknown boundary' of the group, following the flow of 'new ideas and modern thought' through the network of creators.[3] In doing so, I seek to expand scholarly conceptions of POOL, mapping connections between collaborators and across neglected texts to explore the queer modernist currents that motivated the group. Just as their emblem hints to a larger ecosystem of eddies, currents and hidden life, I suggest that there is much about the POOL group and its activity that has yet to be explored. My study focuses on two relatively unknown figures—Robert Herring and Oswell Blakeston—and their creative involvement with POOL, seeking to explore further aspects of the group's queer creative practices and personal politics.

Mapping the nodes of connection that sustained the group also allows me to explore the context in which POOL emerged in the late 1920s. Laura Marcus describes this as the 'The Moment of *Close Up*', which spanned the strained shift from silent cinema to synchronised sound technology; changes in the British film production brought on, in part, by the 1927 Cinematograph Film Act and the "quota quickies" that followed; all set against the anxious interwar backdrop and the rise of the Third Reich.[4] Analysing the POOL group's network and close-reading Herring and Blakeston's literary experiments allows for further understanding of POOL's active engagement in their historical moment: what the group themselves described in an advertisement for *Close Up* as the 'battle for film art'.[5] Their

[2] Bryher, *The Heart To Artemis: A Writer's Memoirs* (Ashfield, Massachusetts: Paris Press, 2006), p. 289.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Laura Marcus, *The Tenth Muse: Writing About Cinema in the Modernist Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 319.
[5] 'Advertisement', *transition* (April, 1927).

activity represents a catalytic cross-section between cinema, literature, and modernist experimentation.

Marcus's exploration of cinema's emergence and impact on early literary commentators has laid vital groundwork for work on the relationship between cinema and literature, highlighting their shared themes and concerns.[6] These, Marcus writes, are questions of time, repetition, representation, vision, movement, emotion, sound, and silence.[7] Similarly, Lisa Stead's *Off to the Pictures: Cinemagoing, Women's Writing and Movie Culture in Interwar Britain* analyses how literary reflections of cinema-going can be used to uncover gendered experiences of modernity, stating that spectatorship and readership are 'not abstract, passive practices to be read from film and literary texts outwards: they are inseparable from the contextualising textures of everyday' life in the interwar period.[8] Much brilliant work has explored these 'inseparable' and interlaced mediums: David Trotter's work on the parallel histories of film and literary modernism; Andrew Shail's theories of cinema's architectural influence on literary modernism; and Jonathan Foltz's exploration of cinema's lasting aesthetic, cultural and institutional impact on the novel.[9] This thesis follows these studies, continuing to explore the relationship between literature, cinema and modernity and taking up questions of perception, vision, embodiment, sound, affect and experience within the fictional works the POOL group.

Herring expressed his concomitant frustration and excitement with cinema as an art form, writing in *Close Up* in 1929:

> We cannot approach to a new cinema unless we understand what is at the bottom of cinema [...] By "new" I do not mean something wild and exotic and altogether inapplicable, but a cinema that is the result of our realising what cinema is, or even of our trying to realise is (that would be something).[10]

Herring's evocation shows a desire to experiment and explore cinema as an art form, in order to represent the complex experience of modernity. Blakeston summarises the group's interest in film, where he reflects on his involvement with the group:

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[6] Marcus, *The Tenth Muse*, p. 2; also see: Laura Marcus, *Dreams of Modernity: Psychoanalysis, Literature and Cinema* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
[7] Marcus, *The Tenth Muse,* p. 2.
[8] Lisa Stead, *Off to the Pictures: Cinemagoing, Women's Writing and Movie Culture in Interwar Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 3.
[9] David Trotter, *Cinema and Modernism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007); Andrew Shail, *The Cinema and the Origins of Literary Modernism* (New York: Routledge, 2012); and Jonathan Foltz, *The Novel after Film: Modernism and the Decline of Autonomy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[10] Robert Herring, 'A New Cinema, Magic and the Avant-Garde', *Close Up,* 4.4 (April 1929), pp. 47-57 (p. 47).

> They saw that the cinema could utilise all the mechanisms of the mind, the condensations and displacements and symbolism, the visual metaphor and simile, and not only a dramatic but an overtonal rhythm. Yet it must be stressed that *Close Up* always took a stand against fossilisation. It saw the cinema as a medium which could publish many different kinds of works. It may sound very simple today, but all had to said and fought for in 1927.[11]

The POOL group was captivated by the possibilities that cinema provided. Their strand of modernist experimentation is rooted in interarts exchange and intermediality to best depict and experience the 'mechanisms of the mind'.[12] POOL's works—including their films, film criticism and books—therefore act as archival documents for the international discourse between cinema, literature and modernist cultures. They also exist as preserved fragments of queer modernist life. The POOL group's work and artistic ethos present glimpses into lives and creative work that questioned ways of being and imagined new modes of being together. This thesis therefore sits at the intersection of film, literary and queer studies in its attempts to retrieve Herring and Blakeston's contributions to the POOL group and to early twentieth century modernism.

In expanding critical conceptions of a network that never defined its own dimensions and engaging in what Carolyn Dinshaw defines as a queer 'touching across time', my study is underpinned by questions about the genealogy of modernism and queer historicism.[13] The 'expanding ripples' of the group's logo is not only an apt metaphor for POOL's activity and my critical reading, but it also speaks more broadly to issues surrounding new modernist studies.[14] As Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz set out in their seminal article 'The New Modernist Studies' in 2008: 'Were one seeking a single word to sum up transformations in modernist literary scholarship over the past decade or two, one could do worse than light on *expansion*'.[15] This expansion, they continue, operates on temporal, spatial and vertical axis: a questioning of the temporal markers of modernity; a broadening that looks beyond the Eurocentric notions of the avant-garde; and a cultural

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[11] Oswell Blakeston, 'Retrospect 14: Close Up', *Ambit*, No. 22 (1964/5), pp. 37-40 (p. 37).
[12] Ibid., p. 37. For more on intermediality and modernist form, see Cara L. Lewis, *Dynamic Form: How Intermediality Made Modernism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020).
[13] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 39.
[14] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, POOL's catalogue, n.d., Box 170, Folder 5679.
[15] Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, 'The New Modernist Studies', *PMLA,* 123.3 (2008), 737-45 (p. 737). See also, *The New Modernist Studies,* ed. by Douglas Mao (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021) and Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, 'Introduction: Modernisms Bad and New', in *Bad Modernisms,* ed. by Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 1-18.

reassessment of the artificial high/low divide; all of which has necessitated a questioning of canonicity and allowed for the study of marginalised groups and voices.[16] However, this expansion has been accompanied by what Claire Barber-Stetson describes as a feeling of 'insecurity' around the loosening or 'dilution of modernism'; what Paul Saint-Amour explores as a 'steady weakening' of theory; and what Luke Seaber and Michael Shallcross discuss as the 'trouble' with modernism as a term and as a scholarly field: '[o]nce it stops growing, it risks collapse'.[17]

By analysing Herring and Blakeston's texts and how they resonate with modernist contexts, forms and cultures, and by positioning them within a network of avant-garde activity, this thesis actively participates in the expansion inspired by new modernist studies, whilst also seeking to engage with the tensions that the expansion entails. These texts are: Herring's two novels, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew, or; Revolt in the Gardens* (1930) and *Cactus Coast* (1934); and Blakeston's two POOL publications, *Through A Yellow Glass* (1928) and *Extra Passenger* (1929), as well as his short story collection *Few Are Chosen: Studies in the Theatrical Lighting of Life's Theatre* (1931) and his novella *Magic Aftermath: A Romantic Study in the Pleating of Time* (1932).[18] I have narrowed my analysis to Herring and Blakeston's literary publications between 1927 and 1934, to allow an extended exploration of the works they produced during their engagement with POOL.

As I will explore in my first chapter, the POOL group was nearly forgotten before a renewed critical interest in the late 1970s and 1980s. References often resurfaced in relation to H.D. and Bryher, as part of the pioneering feminist scholarship of the 1980s that brought the works and lives of the two women to light. This thesis is indebted to those studies, the crucial connections between gender and cinema, as well as explorations of H.D. and

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[16] Mao and Walkowitz, 'The New Modernist Studies', p. 737.

[17] Claire Barber-Stetson, 'Modern Insecurities, or, Living on the Edge', *Modernism/modernity*, 3.4 (December 2018) <https://modernismmodernity.org/forums/posts/modern-insecurities> [accessed 10 February 2022]; Paul Saint-Amour, 'Weak Theory, Weak Modernism', *Modernism/modernity*, 3.3 (August 2018) <https://modernismmodernity.org/articles/weak-theory-weak-modernism> [accessed 10 February 2022]; Luke Seaber and Michael Shallcross, 'The Trouble With Modernism: A Dialogue', *The Modernist Review* (June 2019) <https://modernistreviewcouk.wordpress.com/2019/06/28/the-trouble-with-modernism/> [accessed 10th February 2023].

[18] Robert Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew; or, Revolt in the Gardens* (London: Mathews & Maret, 1930) (hereafter referred to as *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*); Robert Herring, *Cactus Coast* (Dijon, 1934); Oswell Blakeston, *Through A Yellow Glass* (Territet: POOL, 1928); Oswell Blakeston, *Extra Passenger* (Territet: POOL, 1929); Oswell Blakeston, *Few Are Chosen: Studies in the Theatrical Lighting of Life's Theatre* (London: Eric Partridge, 1931); Oswell Blakeston, *Magic Aftermath: A Romantic Study in the Pleating of Time* (New Barnet: Herbert Jones, 1932).

Bryher's essential roles within the POOL group's composition, operations and its art. However, such a keen focus has inadvertently obscured a full picture of the POOL group's network. I contend that a further exploration—an expansion—of the group is necessary, one that assesses Herring and Blakeston's involvement and their literary contributions, in order to map a more comprehensive idea of POOL's intimate dynamics and its artistic ethos.

Within this expansion, I also acknowledge the limits of my study. As we will come to see, POOL was a vast network comprised of many moving parts. Seven different authors published under the banner of POOL Books, their films were collaborative endeavours, and over a hundred writers contributed to *Close Up* over its six-year run.[19] *Close Up* itself was presented as a large, international outfit, listing film correspondents in Paris, Moscow, Geneva, New York, Hollywood, Berlin, Vienna and London.[20] Although there are unifying themes that flow through their body of work, the style, content, approaches, opinions and form can vary dramatically between different contributors. POOL's oeuvre ranges from film criticism and history, cinematography guides, fiction, poetry, psychoanalytic texts, films exploring racial prejudice and sexual identities, a film following the movements of two of Macpherson's pet monkeys, as well as books on war and educational reform. Through my focus on Herring and Blakeston, I aim to explore their significant presence within the group and analyse their literary works to trace the rippling model of influence and exchange that constituted POOL's dynamic. However, there is much more of POOL's network to be

[19] The authors of POOL books were Kenneth Macpherson, Bryher, John Ellerman Jr (who wrote under the pseudonym of E. L. Black), Eric Elliott, Oswell Blakeston, Hanns Sacks, and Trude Weiss who co-wrote *The Light-Hearted Student* (1930) with Bryher. Dorothy Richardson also contributed a foreword to Ellerman's *Why Do They Like It?* (1927).

[20] *Close Up* listed its international film correspondents in each issue's contents page, with new correspondents added throughout the journal's lifespan. Most correspondents were journalists or film critics prior to their appointments at *Close Up.* Marc Allégret was listed as the Paris correspondent in August 1927; Robert Herring was added as the London correspondent in November 1927; in March 1928 listed Clifford Howard as Hollywood correspondent and Symon Gould as the New York editor; Freddy Chevalley was added as the Geneva correspondent in July 1928; Andor Krazsna-Krausz as correspondent for Berlin in September 1928; Jean Lenauer as a second Paris correspondent in November 1928; Symon Gould removed in January 1929 and Pera Attasheva added in April 1929 as the Moscow correspondent; Harry A. Potamkin joined as New York correspondent in September 1929; Trude Weiss joined as the correspondent in Vienna in April 1930; in March 1931, Marc Allégret was dropped from the list, as was Potamkin in September 1933. Correspondents were not always featured in each issue, with contributions ranging from Howard's 33 contributions over the course of the journal's six years to Gould, who wrote none. For brief biographical notes on the correspondents, see Anne Friedberg, 'Appendix 2: Notes on the Contributors and Correspondents', in *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism,* ed. by James Donald, Anne Friedberg and Laura Marcus (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 315-317 (p. 317).

explored and further connections abound. The tensions inherent within new modernist studies are present in analysing such a rich and extensive network of contributors and connections: what gets included in studies of the POOL group? What is left out? To think about POOL's watery model as a mirror of their diffuse network, which ripples are relevant? How far away from the 'source simply—the stone—the idea' can the movements be considered part of POOL's modernist activity?[21] How are these decisions complicated by the absence of certain archives? Where and how do these ripples exist and engage with a wider pool of modernist currents and influence? Engaging with these questions raises broader questions about modernism itself, as Susan Stanford Friedman sets out:

> What is modernity? What is or was modernism? Why is the energetic, expanding, multidisciplinary field of modernist studies so filled with contestation over the very ground of study? Definitional activities are fictionalizing processes, however much they sound like rational categorization.[22]

Many critics have explored modernism as a loose, capacious, and polymorphous term.[23] As Friedman writes, it is 'perpetually unsettled, unsettling' and dependent on the framework, vantage point or story being told.[24] Cautious of totalising narratives with regard to both modernism and the POOL group, I use Herring and Blakeston's literary texts and POOL's archival materials to trace the untold tales that thread through, expand and inform further elements of the POOL group's activities and ethos.

[21] Bryher Papers. General Collection. BRBML, POOL's catalogue, n.d., Box 170, Folder 5679.
[22] Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 19.
[23] See Sean Latham and Gayle Rogers, *Modernism: Evolution of an Idea* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).
[24] Ibid., p. 3.

Chapter One

What was POOL?

The Formation of the POOL Group

The POOL group was a group of writers and filmmakers who actively produced books, films, and the "little magazine" *Close Up* between 1927 and 1933. They announced themselves in July 1927 in *Close Up*'s first issue as:

> The new publishing house. Only distinction and progression can appeal here. Only virility. There will be vital books, biting at the future, minds bright with bold vision, climbing across tradition and outworn ways. POOL books will match POOL films, clear in determining to mean what they *mean*, to be real or exquisite of gay, and great always.[25]

They were motivated by modernity, with a manifesto-like proclamation denouncing 'tradition and outworn ways' and instead aligning themselves with a self-conscious experimentalism: they were 'biting at the future'.[26] They presented their films in much the same manner, with an advert for *Wing Beat* declaring itself:

> A POOL film. A study in thought. The screen has had all these equivalents:
> the epic,
> the novel,
> the chronicle,
> the fantasy,
> the play.
>
> But no free verse poem. WING BEAT is the first. Telepathy and attraction, the reaching out, the very edge of dimensions in dimensions, the chemistry of actual attraction, of *will* shivering and quivering on a frail, too-high, too inaccessible brink.
>
> WING BEAT shakes and trembles from its first moment, wings beating, ploughing, wet clouds; sky and space as it were, chains and layers of interminable journey, wings driven, tired but desperate. Of minds and spirits, not of persons.[27]

These adverts provide a glimpse into POOL's artistic ambition: the interplay between cinema and literature, where formal experimentation was deployed to access and represent the experience of being in the world and the depths of the human mind, all the while propelled by notions of desire: the 'chemistry of actual attraction'.[28]

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[25] 'Advertisement for *Why Do They Like It?* and *Poolreflexion*', *Close Up*, 1.1. (July 1927), p. 56.
[26] Ibid.
[27] 'On the Way: *Wing Beat*!', *Close Up*, 1.1. (July 1927), p. 58.
[28] Ibid.

Progressive ideas surrounding intimacy that challenged 'tradition and outworn ways' constituted not just their artistic work but also their group dynamic.[29] The POOL group was founded by novelist and poet H.D., the writer and modernist patron Bryher and the Scottish 'pen and ink designer' Kenneth Macpherson.[30] The complex interpersonal dynamics between the founding trio drove the group's creative production. Discussing the relationship between Bryher, Macpherson and herself, H.D. observed in 1928 that 'we seem to be a composite beast with three faces', playfully riffing on the Shakespearean image of the 'beast with two backs', which gestures to how closely intertwined their lives were during this time.[31] I start by mapping out how this 'composite beast' came to be, and how POOL was formed, before examining the generative scholarship that has recovered and renewed interest in the group's activity.[32]

POOL took shape at some point during 1926 or 1927, when H.D. and Bryher met Macpherson. However, to understand the group's formation, we must look further back into the personal histories of the founders. H.D., born Hilda Doolittle in 1886 in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, arrived in London on October 1st, 1911, after stints at Bryn Mawr College, Greenwich Village in New York, and an engagement to Ezra Pound.[33] In London, H.D. was part of the Imagist movement: she published poems under the initials "H.D." in Harriet Monroe's *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* (1913), *Des Imagistes: An Anthology* (1914), edited the *Egoist* from 1916-1917, and married Richard Aldington in 1913.[34] H.D.'s *Sea Garden* was published in 1916. It was this collection of poetry that Amy Lowell recommended to the young writer Bryher.[35] Bryher was the illegitimate daughter of Hannah Glover and the shipping magnate John Ellerman, born in 1894 as Annie Winifred Glover in London to great

[29] 'Advertisement for *Why Do They Like It?* and *Poolreflexion*'.
[30] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Borderline Pamphlet 1930, Box 168, Folder 5637.
[31] Letter from H.D. to Havelock Ellis 1928, quoted in Susan Stanford Friedman, *Penelope's Web: Gender, Modernity, H.D.'s Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 230.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Louis Silverstein, 'H.D.'s Chronology, Part One (1605-1914)', *Louis Silverstein's H.D. Chronology* <https://www.imagists.org/hd/hdchron1.html> [accessed 14 February 2022]. For more biographical information on H.D.'s early life before moving to London, see Nephie J. Christodoulides and Polina MacKay, 'Chronology of H.D.'s life and work', in *The Cambridge Companion to H.D.*, ed. by Nephie J. Christodoulides and Polina MacKay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. xiii-xviii; Susan McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher: An Untold Love Story of Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021) and Barbara Guest, *Herself Defined: The Poet H.D. and Her World* (New York: Doubleday, 1984).
[34] Christodoulides and MacKay, p. xiv.
[35] Gillian Hanscombe and Virginia L. Smyers, *Writing for Their Lives: The Modernist Women 1910-1940* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987), p. 35-36.

wealth, with Ellerman having the largest recorded fortune in Britain at his death in 1933.[36] In *The Heart To Artemis,* Bryher recounts her childhood, which was filled with international travel, yet restricted by rigid gender norms overhanging from the Victorian era.[37] Of this 'Puritan age', she writes:

> In the early nineteen hundreds, so many harmless things were forbidden us. We might not feel water nor sand nor earth, when "two kinds of drawers and two kinds of petticoats, a pinafore and serge frock imposed, as I can still remember, a very real strain on one's vitality". Prohibitions were imposed for whose reason we might not ask. We were pruned of every form of self-expression, like the single flower on an exhibition stem, until everything in us went into a single desire, freedom, which we saw only in wind or in the breaking waves and as we could not hold these, into what was nearest to them, poetry.[38]

It was indeed within poetry and experiments through language where Bryher found freedom. From her chosen name—taken from what Susan McCabe calls the 'wildest island in the Scilly archipelago', interpreted by Diana Souhami as a decision 'to be defined by the sea, the cliffs and by a landscape beyond gender'—to H.D.'s poetry in *Sea Garden,* language offered Bryher alternative modes of being and experience: 'a single desire, freedom', and inspired her to contact H.D. in hopes of meeting.[39]

Bryher met H.D. on July 17th, 1918, in Bosigran Castle in Cornwall where H.D. had been staying with her then-lover Cecil Gray.[40] Bryher recounts:

> The door opened and I started in surprise. I had seen the face before, on a Greek statue or in some indefinable territory of the mind. We were meeting again after a long absence but not for the first time.[41]

From this initial meeting, H.D. and Bryher became lifelong partners. Bryher funded H.D.'s life, championing her writing. She cared for H.D. through a traumatic pregnancy in 1919 and through ill-health in H.D.'s later life, until her death in 1961. This was a lifetime of collaboration and commitment that McCabe describes an 'untold love story' of

[36] Diana Souhami, *No Modernism Without Lesbians* (London: Head of Zeus, 2020), p. 115. Souhami notes that although Bryher's parents lived together, they were not married at the time of her birth. They wed when Bryher was fifteen, when Bryher's younger brother John Ellerman Jr was born, to ensure his legitimacy; McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher,* p. 62.
[37] Bryher, *The Heart to Artemis,* pp. 1-129.
[38] Bryher, *The Heart to Artemis,* p. 1; Bryher, 'Recognition Not Farewell', *Life and Letters To-Day,* 17.9 (Autumn 1937), pp. 159-163 (p. 161).
[39] McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher,* p. 3; Souhami, p. 113; Bryher, 'Recognition Not Farewell', p. 161.
[40] McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher,* p. 3. See also Bryher, *The Heart to Artemis,* p. 216-217.
[41] Bryher, *The Heart to Artemis,* p. 217.

modernism.[42] Feminist scholars have worked to recover H.D.'s work since the 1980s, from Friedman's demand, 'Who Buried H.D.?' in 1975, and 'H.D.—who is she?' in 1990, which are questions that critics are still unravelling today in a generative exploration of her mythopoeic fiction, poetry and essays.[43] Bryher's work is also undergoing a similar recovery, which Fiona Phillip describes as a 'cultural renaissance of Bryher and POOL'.[44] As Phillip remarks, Bryher has often either been 'cast as H.D.'s foil' or else repeatedly tethered to one another in critical works.[45] Similarly, McCabe argues that Bryher's complex contributions to modernist cultures are often configured through her patronage and support of others.[46] Recent scholarship has sought to, as Jean Radford urges, 'take [Bry]her out of the shadow of H.D.', reading Bryher's novels and exploring her active role within modernist histories, contributing to an ongoing and rich field of study.[47]

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[42] McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher,* p. 311. The intricacies of their intertwined lives have been the subject of much attention, from Lawrence Rainey's assertion that Bryher's patronage 'ruined [H.D.'s] career, encouraging her to indulge in the evasive complacency of coterie poetics', to recent scholarship by Souhami, who dedicates a chapter to Bryher in *No Modernism Without Lesbians,* and McCabe's dual biography, *H.D. & Bryher: An Untold Love Story of Modernism.* See Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 168; Souhami, pp. 111-212; McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher.* Studies that focus on biographic readings of H.D.'s life and her relationship with Bryher include Friedman, *Penelope's Web*; Guest, *Herself Defined* and Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *H.D. The Career of that Struggle* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986). On H.D.'s relationship to lesbian identities, see Diana Collecott, *H.D. and Sapphic Modernism 1910-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) and Georgia Johnston, *The Formation of 20th-Century Queer Autobiography: Reading Vita Sackville-West, Virginia Woolf, Hilda Doolittle, and Gertrude Stein* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 95-126. For explorations of queerness in Bryher's early novels and writing, see Fiona Phillip, 'Veiled Disclosures and Queer Articulations: Readings of Literary and Cinematic Works by Bryher and POOL (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Leeds, 2010).

[43] Susan Friedman, 'Who Buried H.D.? A Poet, Her Critics, and Her Place in "The Literary Tradition", *College English,* 36.7 (March 1975), 801-814 (p. 801), Friedman, *Penelope's Web*, p. 33.

[44] Phillip, 'Veiled Disclosures and Queer Articulations: Readings of Literary and Cinematic Works by Bryher and POOL', p. 5.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Susan McCabe, 'Close Up & Wars They Saw: From Visual Erotics to a Transferential Politics of Film', *The Space Between,* 8.1 (2012), 11-35 (p. 12). See also: Susan McCabe, 'Bryher's Archive: Modernism and the Melancholy of Money', in *English Now: Selected Papers from the 20th IAUPE Conference in Laud 2007,* ed. by Marianne Thormählen (Lund: Wallin & Dalholm, 2008), pp. 118-125 (p. 119).

[47] Jean Radford, 'A Transatlantic Affair: Amy Lowell and Bryher', in *Amy Lowell, American Modern,* ed. by Adrienne Munich and Melissa Bradshaw (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2004), pp. 43-58 (p. 44). See, for example, Phillip, 'Veiled Disclosures and Queer Articulations: Readings of Literary and Cinematic Works by Bryher and POOL'; Souhami, pp. 111-212; *Networking Women: Subjects, Places, Links Europe-America: Towards a Rewriting of Cultural History. 1890-1939,* ed. by Mariana Camboni (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2004) pp. 376-371; McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher*; Susan McCabe, '"Let's Be Alone Together": Bryher's and Marianne Moore's Aesthetic-Erotic Collaboration', *Modernism/modernity,* 17.3 (September 2010), 607 – 637; McCabe, 'Close Up & Wars They Saw: From Visual Erotics to a Transferential Politics of Film'; Susan McCabe, 'Writing H.D. and Bryher in double dimensions' – an invitation to H.D. and Bryher: An Untold Modernist Love Story', *Feminist Modernist Studies,* 4.1 (2021), 22-35; Shari Benstock, 'H.D. and Bryher: *En passant', Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986),

Following their first meeting, H.D. and Bryher travelled widely together. From their trip to the Scilly Isles in July 1919, which inspired H.D.'s *Notes on Thoughts and Vision,* to their trip to Corfu in 1920, where H.D. experienced her 'writing-on-the-wall' visionary episode alongside Bryher, which she recounts in *Tribute to Freud.*[48] In this reflection, H.D.'s psychic and creative collaboration to Bryher is highlighted: 'perhaps in some sense, we were "seeing" it together, for without her, admittedly, I could not have gone on', which speaks to their emotional connection also.[49] On their travels they were sometimes joined by H.D.'s daughter Perdita or by friends, although as H.D. remembers about their trip to Greece: 'Travel was difficult, […] We were always "two women alone" or "two ladies alone," but we were not alone', because they had one another.[50]

The shape of their relationship seemed to change once they met Macpherson in December 1926. Much less is known about Macpherson's life, especially in the years prior to meeting H.D. and Bryher. He seems to have come from an artistic background: H.D. mentions that his father, John "Pop" Macpherson was a 'delicate portrait painter, with sure artistic talent', who Friedman refers to as a 'Scottish miniaturist', with Mary V. Dearbon remarking that Macpherson was 'descended from six generations of artists'.[51] Macpherson was born in Runwell, Essex in 1902 to John Macpherson and Clara Macpherson.[52] Growing

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pp. 311-356; Zlatina Nikolova, 'Images in Prose and Film: Modernist treatments of gender, education and early 20th century culture in Bryher's *Close Up* essays, her volume *Film Problems of Soviet Russia* (1929), and her autobiographical fiction' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2019).

[48] H.D., *Tribute to Freud* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1985), p. 42. For further mediations on this episode and this period by H.D, see also: H.D., 'H.D. by Delia Alton', *The Iowa Review*, 16.3 (Fall 1986), 180-221 (p. 192) and H.D., 'Compassionate Friendship', in *Magic Mirror, Compassionate Friendship, Thorn Thicket: A Tribute to Erich Heydt,* ed. by Nephie J. Christodoulides (Victoria, B.C.: ELS Editions, 2012), pp. 83-160; and Claire Buck, *H.D. and Freud: Bisexuality and a Feminine Discourse* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

[49] H.D., *Tribute to Freud,* p. 49. For more information about their travels, see Guest; McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher*; Souhami; Friedman, *Penelope's Web*; and Hanscombe & Smyers.

[50] H.D., *Tribute to Freud*, p. 50.

[51] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Borderline Pamphlet. Box 168, Folder 5637; Susan Stanford Friedman, *Analyzing Freud: Letters of H.D., Bryher, and Their Circle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 567; Mary V. Dearborn, *Mistress of Modernism: The Life of Peggy Guggenheim* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), p. 210. Dearbon's claim seems to stem from Bryher's brief biographical comment about Macpherson in *The Heart To Artemis,* where she writes: 'In the autumn of 1927, I married Kenneth Macpherson. It was natural that he was passionately interested in films because his ancestors had been professional artists for six generations, his father was a painter and he had himself received a thorough training in art'. See Bryher, *The Heart To Artemis,* p. 289.

[52] The Census of England and Wales, 1911 provides Macpherson's birthplace in Runwell, Essex, as well as birthdates and birthplaces for his parents (John Macpherson was born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1869; Clara Macpherson was born in County Tyrone, Ireland, in 1874) and his older sister Eileen (who was born in 1898 in Hampstead, London). See: 'Kenneth Macpherson' (1911). *Census of England and Wales, 1911, Slough, Eton, Buckinghamshire, England.* Public Record Office: RG14/7844, District 21, Family 93, Line 4 (1911). Available at <https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-10446-9790341/kenneth-macpherson-in-1911-england-wales-census?s=1541019902> [accessed 15 December 2022].

up, he lived in Essex, Slough and Windsor with his parents and older sister, Eileen.[53] By 1921, the Census for England and Wales lists him as working as an 'industrial clerk' at Pinner's Hall in London.[54] From here, Friedman notes that he started at a 'commercial art school' in 1923, 'doing posters and illustrations for commercial catalogues' until 1926. This aligns with H.D.'s brief comment about Macpherson's artistic beginnings being rooted in 'pen and ink', 'poster[s] and advertisement'.[55] It was during this time that Macpherson met and became romantically involved with Frances Josepha Gregg.

Barbara Guest describes Gregg as H.D.'s 'first and strongest love': they had met in 1910 and travelled to Europe together in 1911.[56] In April 1924, Gregg moved her family into a ground-floor flat in a large London house, where the Macphersons were living in the flat above.[57] By May 1925, Gregg appears enamoured with Macpherson, writing that he 'sweetens everything in life for me', yet by June, Macpherson seems to have 'fail[ed]' her: 'My love for that boy, - over and done with, - seems to have purged my heart and soul as a bad illness will sometimes do, […] I am through with love forever and forever and forever'.[58] Although this relationship seems to have ended on bad terms, with Gregg parodying Macpherson in her scathing short story 'The Apartment House' as having 'so much corrupt knowledge of life' which 'will destroy him'; and Macpherson portraying Gregg as a 'dead

[53] In 1911, the family listed as living at 43 Westham Road, Slough and by 1921, the family is living at 8 Trinity Road, Windsor. See 'Kenneth Macpherson' (1911). *Census of England and Wales, 1911, Slough, Eton, Buckinghamshire, England.* Public Record Office: RG14/7844, District 21, Family 93, Line 4 (1911). Available at <https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-10446-9790341/kenneth-macpherson-in-1911-england-wales-census?s=1541019902> [accessed 15 December 2022] and 'Kenneth Macpherson' (1921), *Census of England and Wales, 1921, Trinity, Windsor, Berkshire, England.* Public Record Office: RG15/06107, District 9.2, Schedule 283 (1921) Available at <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1921%2FRG15%2F06107%2F0593%2F04> [accessed 15 December 2022].

[54] 'Kenneth Macpherson' (1921), *Census of England and Wales.*

[55] Friedman, *Analyzing Freud,* p. 567; Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Borderline Pamphlet. Box 168, Folder 5637.

[56] Guest, p. xi. H.D. and Gregg's love was also triangulated by Pound's presence, as Guest quotes from Gregg's diary: 'two girls in love with each other, and each in love with the same man. Hilda, Ezra, Frances.' (p. 26).

[57] *The Letters of John Cowper Powys to Frances Gregg,* ed. by Oliver Marlow Wilkinson and Christopher Wilkinson, vol. 1 (London: Woolf, 1994), p. 223fn1.

[58] 'Letter from Frances Gregg to Jack Cowper Powys, May 6 1925', in *The Letters of John Cowper Powys to Frances Gregg,* ed. by Oliver Marlow Wilkinson and Christopher Wilkinson, vol. 1 (London: Cecil Woolf, 1994), p. 152; 'Letter from Frances Gregg to Jack Cowper Powys, June 18 1925, in *The Letters of John Cowper Powys to Frances Gregg,* ed. by Oliver Marlow Wilkinson and Christopher Wilkinson, vol. 1 (London: Cecil Woolf, 1994), p. 153; 'Letter from Frances Gregg to Jack Cowper Powys, September 1925', in *The Letters of John Cowper Powys to Frances Gregg,* ed. by Oliver Marlow Wilkinson and Christopher Wilkinson, vol. 1 (London: Cecil Woolf, 1994), p. 156.

satyr' in *Gaunt Island,* Gregg introduced Macpherson to H.D. in December 1926.[59] From this meeting, H.D. and Macpherson became lovers and the intimacies underpinning the POOL group's dynamic commenced.[60]

Macpherson slipped easily into Bryher and H.D.'s shared life. They formed a chosen family. In H.D.'s short story 'Narthex', which drew inspiration from what she calls their 'un-official honey-moon à trois' in Venice during May 1927, she writes of Raymonde, Gareth and Daniel (who are ciphers representing Bryher, Macpherson and herself): 'We're not three separate people. We're just one'.[61] Blurring lines of identity through intimacy in 'Narthex', H.D. recasts corporeal bodily borders as permeable: she feels her 'mind reaching out and out, perceiving and apperceiving… soul tentacles stretched to their furthest like a harp wire breaking', providing some insight to the ways that ideas and affects circulated and swirled between the three collaborators.[62] In September 1927, Macpherson and Bryher entered a marriage of convenience.[63] This allowed Bryher to divorce her first nominal husband, Robert McAlmon, and maintain her independent lifestyle away from her parents. Marcus also speculates whether Bryher's marriage 'was ostensibly motivated by the need to provide a front for H.D.'s liaison' with Macpherson, suggesting that 'it also ensured that she was not excluded from the relationship'.[64] Souhami suggests that the marriage may have also been driven by the desire to prevent Richard Aldington, H.D.'s estranged

[59] Frances Gregg, 'The Apartment House', *Second American Caravan,* ed. by Alfred Kreymborg, Lewis Mumford, and Paul Rosenfeld (New York: Macaulay, 1928), pp. 285-294 (p. 290); McCabe suggests this autobiographical reading of *Gaunt Island,* see McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher,* p. 132. Gregg's close friend John Cowper Powys critiqued *Gaunt Island* and 'Kenneth's caricature of you! I kept dipping into it – at once interested because it *was* you – and violently repelled', deeming that 'you must have made an indelible and deeply branded impression on this youth's sensibility. He is like a young steer with a great "F" branded on his forehead between his horns', see 'Letter from Jack Cowper Powys to Frances Gregg, August 30 1927', in *The Letters of John Cowper Powys to Frances Gregg,* ed. by Oliver Marlow Wilkinson and Christopher Wilkinson, vol. 1 (London: Cecil Woolf, 1994), p. 165.

[60] Gregg's son, Oliver Marlow Wilkinson, reflects: 'There is no doubt that my mother was in love with Kenneth Macpherson… Kenneth Macpherson was in love with her […] My mother introduced him to Hilda Doolittle, and he fell in love with Hilda', quoted in Guest, p. 179.

[61] H.D., 'Narthex', *The Second American Caravan* (1928), pp. 225-284 (p. 273). H.D. reflects on the autobiographical nature of the story in her essay 'Compassionate Friendship', writing: 'I don't think I ever talked over the story with Bryher-Gareth and I don't think she minded, at the time. She made the story; she took Raymonde (moi-méme) and Daniel (Kenneth) to Venice, then hated it all or pretended to hate it all'. See H.D., 'Compassionate Friendship', p. 134.

[62] H.D., 'Narthex', p. 275.

[63] Bryher and Macpherson married on 1st September 1927 in Chelsea Registry Office in London with H.D. and John Ellerman Jr. present as witnesses; see Souhami, p. 163. See also McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher,* p. 116; Betsy van Schlun, *The Pool Group and the Quest for Anthropological Universality: The Humane Images of Modernism* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), p. 7.

[64] Marcus, *The Tenth Muse,* p. 326.

husband, from claiming custody of her daughter Perdita should he file for a divorce, whilst also guaranteeing Perdita could keep her British citizenship.[65] Macpherson and Bryher legally adopted Perdita in March 1928. Whatever the motivations for the marriage, what emerges from their many letters and autobiographical writings is a picture of a queer family that carved out experimental ways of living and being together outside of heteronormative bounds. Their relationship is emblematic of the tectonic shifts in what Jesse Wolfe calls the 'landscape of intimacy', where ideas of gender, sexuality, intimacy, monogamy, marriage, sex, and desire were being rethought, interrogated, rejected, and reshaped.[66] Reflecting on their period of cohabitation and artistic collaboration, H.D.'s daughter Perdita writes:

> They were very busy, those three—H.D., Bryher, and a recent member of the family, Kenneth Macpherson. Typewriters clacked from early morning on. […] Their books were published as fast as they were written. They had formed their own company; a fine incentive—no rejection slips, no obstructive editors. […] They branched out into film, and founded the magazine *Close Up.* And they travelled, meeting all the leading figures in variegated fields. […] It was a chaotic scene, fraught with personality clashes.[67]

This biographical sketch of the POOL group's beginnings provides valuable insight into the group and its galvanisation through a complex network of intimacies. Critics often present the three as a 'menagerie' or as a 'domestic and artistic ménage à trois' which, as Phillip writes, reveal creative and queer lives that were 'as experimental as the (visual and literary) texts' they produced: 'ones that lived alternatively, where different desires were embraced'.[68]

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[65] Souhami, p. 162. Souhami quotes a letter written on 4th March 1925 from Bryher to Brigit Patmore, showing that McAlmon was briefly considered as Perdita's adoptive father: 'Robert is very kind and helpful and says that I may, that Robert and I adopt, legally and fully, Perdita. […] I have no wish to take her from Hilda's care, in fact that is the only stipulation that Robert makes, that it does not mean that I drag an infant round with me. My hands are tied unless she is mine, because there is no fun in providing an expensive education and either having a fight with R.A (Richard Aldington] in the middle of it, or else having some beastly struggle in the courts of justice'. Critics (for examples, see Marcus, *The Tenth Muse*; Souhami; Guest; and McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher*) point to the musicologist Cecil Gray as Perdita's biological father, but Aldington's name was on her birth certificate.

[66] Jesse Wolfe, *Bloomsbury, Modernism and the Reinvention of Intimacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 2.

[67] Perdita Schaffner, 'Running', *The Iowa Review,* 16.3 (Autumn 1986), 7-13 (p. 9).

[68] Jean Walton, 'White Neurotics, Black Primitives, and the Queer Matrix of *Borderline*', in *Out Takes: Essays on Queer Theory and Film,* ed. by Ellis Hanson (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 243-270 (p. 243); Phillip, 'Veiled Disclosures and Queer Articulations: Readings of Literary and Cinematic Works by Bryher and POOL', p. 2. Guest and James Donald refer to them as a 'menagerie of three', see Guest, p. 189; James Donald, *Some of These Days: Black Stars, Jazz Aesthetics, and Modernist Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 131. For studies that refer to the three as a 'ménage', see: Friedman, *Penelope's Web*, p. 394fn2; Louis H. Silverstein, 'Herself Delineated: Chronological Highlights of H.D.', in *Signets: Reading H.D.*,

Their community would not have been able to form in this manner without the involvement and support of Bryher. The Ellerman family fortune funded and sustained not only POOL productions, but also the lives and works of many of POOL's associates. In her memoir, Bryher wrote: 'I have rushed to the penniless young, not with bowls of soup but with typewriters'.[69] Many scholars have acknowledged Bryher's patronage and crucial involvement in many different modernist circles, with Souhami honouring her as a 'patron of modernism'.[70] In addition to funding H.D., Macpherson and POOL productions, she gave money in the form of stipends and monthly allowances to Sylvia Beach and James Joyce, subsidised the *Little Review* in New York, funded Contact Press, the Brendin Company and the periodical *Life and Letters To-Day*.[71]

Lawrence Rainey warns of the dangers of such modernist patronage. Framing H.D.'s career as a 'distinctly modernist fable', where 'coterie poetics' and access to wealth and support leads to a type of self-referential work produced for stilting private consumption, 'like bonbons at a dinner party, among a cenacle of friends and hangers-on in wealthy bohemia'.[72] This view has been challenged, with many highlighting the productive exchange that occurred between H.D., Bryher and the network they participated in. McCabe draws attention to the metamorphosising and generative 'larval process' of H.D.'s later writing, translation, and poetry.[73] Louise Kane, too, argues that the '*Close Up* clique' was anything but stultifying: instead, she traces the network, with Bryher and H.D. as central proponents, as indicative of a distinct '1930s brand of modernism which,

ed. by Susan Stanford Friedman and Rachel Blau DuPlessis (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), pp. 32-45 (p. 39); Adalaide Morris, 'A Relay of Power and of Peace: H.D. and the Spirit of the Gift', *Contemporary Literature,* 27.4 (Winter 1986), 493-524 (p. 498); Walton, 'White Neurotics, Black Primitives, and the Queer Matrix of *Borderline*', p. 243; and Schlun, p. 6. For studies that refer to them as a ménage à trois, see McCabe, 'Bryher's Archive: Modernism and the Melancholy of Money', p. 122; Marcus, *Dreams of Modernity*, p. 156; Blau DuPlessis, p. 57; for descriptions as a 'Swiss ménage', see McCabe, 'Close Up & Wars They Saw: From Visual Erotics to a Transferential Politics of Film', p. 16; Phillip, 'Veiled Disclosures and Queer Articulations: Readings of Literary and Cinematic Works by Bryher and POOL', p. 3.

[69] Bryher, *The Heart To Artemis,* p. 211.

[70] Souhami, p. 113-114.

[71] For more information about Bryher's modernist patronage, see Jayne E. Marek, *Women Editing Modernism: "Little" Magazines & Literary History* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995), pp. 101-137; Hanscombe and Smyers, pp. 207-212 and Jayne Marek, 'Magazines, Presses, and Salons in Women's Modernism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Women Writers,* ed. by Maren Tova Linett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 62-77.

[72] Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites & Public Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 148-149.

[73] McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher*, pp. 8-9.

characterised by a sense of immediacy and freshness'.[74] I follow McCabe and Kane's work and seek to further explore tenets of POOL's lively production. Indeed, *Close Up*'s wide network and success resists straightforward categorisations of coterie poetics as set out by Rainey, with their 'evasive complacency' that can 'shun a more genuine, more probing engagement' with their contemporaries.[75] Bryher notes in *Heart*, *Close Up* was 'an immediate success'.[76] By the time it ceased in 1933, it had a circulation of five thousand readers.[77] Blakeston remarks in a letter to Bryher in 1929 that 'nearly every big book shop I passed had Close-Up.'[78] As Christopher Townsend has shown, the POOL group participated in dialogues that were taking place in national newspapers at the time, on topics of sound technology and Black representation in film.[79] Their films and books, too, engaged actively in concerns that simultaneously shaped and were shaped by modernist cultures, as Schlun has illustrated by mapping POOL's interests to canonical modernist figures like Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce.[80] Although most were printed in short runs of 300 or 500 copies, there was a marked appetite for POOL's books: with Blakeston's *Through A Yellow Glass* and Eric Elliot's *Anatomy of a Motion Picture* selling out.[81] POOL's publications, too, were announced and reviewed in large circulation papers and journals of the time: *The Sunday Times*, the *Observer*, *Manchester Guardian*, *Vogue*, the *Dial*, *Film Weekly*, the *Daily Mail*, the *London Mercury*, the *Sphere* and *Kino Weekly*.[82] Thus, although the POOL group was undoubtedly constructed and sustained by close, private relationships—what Kane calls a 'clique', Friedman sees as a 'circle', and Rainey a 'coterie'—

[74] Louise Kane, 'The Little Magazine in Britain: Networks, communities, and Dialogues (1900-1945)' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, De Montfort University, Leicester, 2014), p. 282, p. 265.
[75] Rainey, p.168.
[76] Bryher, *The Heart To Artemis*, p. 289.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Oswell Blakeston to Bryher, March 8th 1929. Box 3, Folder 118.
[79] Christopher Townsend, 'A Deeper, Wider POOL: Reading *Close Up* Through the Archives of its Contributors', *Papers on Language and Literature,* 55.1 (Winter 2019) <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/A Deeper, Wider POOL: Reading Close Up through the Archives of Its...-a0579538770> [accessed 2 February 2019].
[80] Schlun, p. 26-32.
[81] Blakeston writes to Bryher in 1930: 'I am ever so pleased the Yellow Glass is selling out: it seems too good to be true.' Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML Letter from Oswell Blakeston to Bryher, March 13th 1930. Box 3, Folder 119; Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Close Up Notes [n.d]. Box 169, Folder 5652.
[82] See Bryher's scrapbook, where she has cut and compiled a huge selection of announcements, reviews and mentions of POOL, *Close Up,* its books and films. Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, 'Letter from Bryher to Kenneth Macpherson, n.d. Box 178, Folder 5748-5749.

it had a public trajectory and social exchange that drew on its queer composition that, I argue, extends to figures and texts not typically included in POOL's body of work.[83]

POOL Productions

What follows is an overview of POOL's labelled activities, providing a chronology and bibliography for the group that this thesis will then build on and expand.[84] In constructing POOL's timeline, I am interested in the dialogues that arise between different books, films and issues entertained in *Close Up,* and how ideas circulated within and beyond their network. Above I have mapped the brief biographies H.D., Bryher, and Macpherson, along with the circumstances that formed both their personal relationship and POOL, to highlight the queer dynamics and financial freedom that brought the group to life and informed its ethos. Because of the convergence of intimate networks and creative production, it is difficult to pinpoint when exactly "POOL" was formed. Although Bryher's *Heart* offers insight into the beginnings of *Close Up,* walking with Macpherson beside Lake Léman in Territet in February 1927—where Bryher resided and the three often stayed together—there is no adjoining story of origin for how POOL began.[85] We might take April 1927 as a potential starting point, when an advert for POOL was posted in the first issue of *transition*:

> POOL
> is announced.
>
> It has projects. It will mean, concerning books, new hope.
> It has projects. It will mean, concerning cinematography, new beginning.
> New always. Distinguished, and with a clear course.
>
> BOOKS FILMS
> … encouragement.

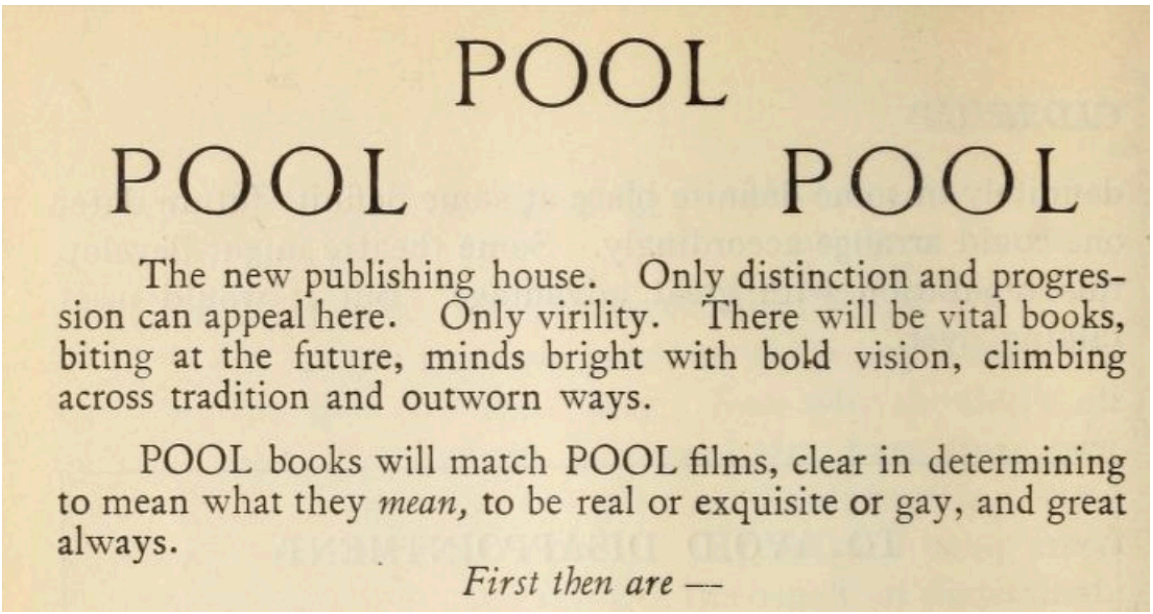
[83] Kane, 'The Little Magazine in Britain: Networks, communities, and Dialogues (1900-1945)', p. 282; Friedman, *Analyzing Freud*; Rainey, p. 170.

[84] Betsy van Schlun's catalogue of POOL publications provides a timeline and analysis for the group's labelled activities as well as their humanistic motivations, and Anne Friedberg's appendices in *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism* also ground POOL's outputs in the context of the late 20s and early 30s. See: Schlun; see Anne Friedberg, 'Appendix 3: Publishing History and POOL Books' and 'Appendix 4: A Chronology of *Close Up* in Context', in *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism,* ed. by James Donald, Anne Friedberg and Laura Marcus (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 318, pp. 319-321.

[85] Bryher, *The Heart To Artemis,* p. 289. Although Bryher does not include a date for her memory of Macpherson in Territet as they walked along the water's edge and formed the idea of a film magazine, Macpherson visited Bryher with H.D. in Territet in February to film *Wing Beat,* which was most likely when this conversation took place. See Louis Silverstein, 'H.D.'s Chronology, Part Three (April 1919-1928)', *Louis Silverstein's H.D. Chronology* <https://www.imagists.org/hd/hdchron3.html> [accessed 14 February 2022].

> CLOSE UP, a monthly magazine to begin battle for film art. Beginning July. The first periodical to approach films from any angle but the commonplace. To encourage experimental workers, and amateurs. Will keep in touch with every country, and watch everything. Contributions on Japanese, Negro viewpoints and problems, etc. Some of the most interesting personages of the day will write.[86]

Thus, POOL was 'announced'. Stressing the group's newness and experimentation, the advert has a triangular formation—'BOOKS; 'FILMS'; 'CLOSE UP'—to chart their 'clear course'.[87] The threefold emphasis parallels their presentation in *Close Up*'s first issue (see Fig. 2): the word POOL is repeated three times. Perhaps this repetition was meant to accent the three separate streams of production—of books, films and their film journal *Close Up*—or perhaps its placement sought to quietly mirror the network's original foundation, of H.D., Bryher and Macpherson. This announcement is the first *outward* expression of the group, publicly projecting their plans of an experimental 'new beginning'.[88]



POOL

POOL POOL

The new publishing house. Only distinction and progression can appeal here. Only virility. There will be vital books, biting at the future, minds bright with bold vision, climbing across tradition and outworn ways.

POOL books will match POOL films, clear in determining to mean what they *mean,* to be real or exquisite or gay, and great always.

First then are —

Figure 2: 'Advertisement', *Close Up,* 1.1 (July 1927), p. 56.

Archival correspondence between Bryher and Macpherson reveal traces of POOL's inner workings preceding their advert in *transition*, which prompts further questions about

[86] Advertisement from *transition,* vol. 1 (April, 1927), quoted in Anne Friedberg, 'Introduction', in *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism,* ed. by James Donald, Anne Friedberg and Laura Marcus (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 1-27 (p. 9).
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.

when the group started and how to define it. Their letters indicate that *Gaunt Island,* Macpherson's second POOL novel published in September 1927, was already written before the network formed.[89] Writing to Macpherson in 1934, Bryher demarcates his creative period of production as 1926-1930 and Macpherson reminds her that 'the two books were written before we were married [in September 1927] and one of them before I had met you'.[90] Although Macpherson does not specify which of his two books he had written before meeting Bryher, it is likely that he is referring to *Gaunt Island*. Although *Poolreflection* was the first POOL production to be published, both Friedman and Guest assert that it draws on Macpherson's autobiographical experiences with POOL, suggesting that this was written after the three met.[91] These letters demonstrate the complexities of defining the group and respective works, where the beginnings of POOL productions preceded the formation of the network. With the absence of archival documentation depicting POOL's exact origins, how do we define its inception? Did the POOL group begin when Macpherson first started work on *Gaunt Island,* before meeting H.D. and Bryher? Did it form when the first POOL film, *Wing Beat*, was shot in February 1927? Or should the group's beginnings be tied to the network's private assembly and their meeting in December 1926, when Gregg introduced Macpherson to H.D.? Or, looking back further, were the stirrings of POOL's creative forces first sparked in 1918, when H.D. and Bryher met? Or should we look to their flagship publication *Close Up*, which Kane describes as the network's 'mouthpiece', as their official launch?[92] If so, should we look to *Close Up*'s conception in February 1927 or its first issue, published later that year in July?

What emerges from the group's fragmented archival materials is a lively assemblage of entwined works: a conflux of pooled streams. Their interconnected nature resists neat categorisation or chronological markers and instead appears as a fluid network of circulation and exchange, where ideas are interrogated across different media forms, multiple perspectives, and various voices. This intermedial approach is epitomised in the group's advert for *Wing Beat,* their first film:

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[89] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Close Up Notes [n.d]. Box 169, Folder 5652.

[90] Bryher outlines Macpherson's creative works and subsequent lack of interest or participation in POOL's activities in an undated letter: 'Between 1926 and 1930 you wrote two books', setting the start of his POOL activity in 1926. See Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Bryher to Kenneth Macpherson, n.d., Box 170, Folder 5679; Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Kenneth Macpherson to Bryher, August 30 1934. Box 36, Folder 1286.

[91] See Friedman, *Penelope's Web,* p. 384-385n37; Guest, p. 185.

[92] Kane, 'The Little Magazine in Britain: Networks, Communities, and Dialogues (1900-1945)', p. 283.

ON THE WAY
WING BEAT!

A POOL film. A study in thought.
The Screen has had all these equivalents:

the epic,
the novel,
the chronicle,
the fantasy,
the play.

But no free verse poem. WING BEAT is the first. Telepathy and attraction, the reaching out, the very edge of dimensions in dimensions, the chemistry of actual attraction, of *will* shivering and quivering on a frail, too-high, too inaccessible brink.[93]

POOL's advert presents *Wing Beat* as cinema's 'free verse poem' and positions it on the edge of definition, 'reaching out' and away from itself to alternate 'dimensions'.[94] In this sense, it constructs a schema through which to approach POOL's experiments: as nodes that reach out to one another, crossing formal dividing lines between mediums, magnetically pulled to one another through connections that evade logical explanation.

Figure 3: H.D. in *Wing Beat*. *Close Up*, 1.1 (July 1927).

[93] 'Advertisement for *Wing Beat*', *Close Up*, 1.1 (July 1927), p. 58.
[94] Ibid.

Figure 4: Kenneth Macpherson in *Wing Beat. Close Up,* 1.1 (July 1927).

Figure 5: H.D. in *Wing Beat.* Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML. Box 171, Folder 5709.

Wing Beat was shot in February 1927 near Bryher's base in Territet and featured H.D., Macpherson and E. L. Black as actors (see Fig. 3, Fig. 4, Fig. 5, Fig. 6, and Fig. 7). Although it does not appear to have been completed or publicly screened and it is now lost, archival fragments of the short film were recovered by Anne Friedberg.[95] In addition to these fragments, two stills included in *Close Up* (see Fig. 3 and Fig. 4) and one preserved in Bryher's archives (see Fig. 5), along with an unpublished article by H.D. combine to offer a glimpse into what the film explored. H.D. celebrates Macpherson's 'genius', declaring his 'cinema as the art of to-day' and celebrating *Wing Beat*'s 'lyrical qualities' and its attention to emotion.[96] The fragments depict an agitated woman (played by H.D.), who struggles to sleep (see Fig. 7) and a 'gramophone scene' in which Colin (played by Macpherson) finds himself 'in a moment of mental turmoil' trying to find 'some half moment's distraction from his inner seething vision'.[97] His unrest is exacerbated by 'his older film brother' (played by E. L. Black, the pseudonym of Bryher's younger brother, John Ellerman Jr.) dancing and playing records on a gramophone, encroaching on Colin's personal space and prompting 'a frenzy of nervous irritation over- nothing' (see Fig. 6).[98] Summarising the subject of the film, H.D. writes that *Wing Beat* is 'nerves and nerves and our nerves and other people's finely strung emotions. Men and their nerves and their desires and where men and their desires lead them are the things that matter'.[99] This provides insight into POOL's artistic and aesthetic interests that will continue to flow throughout their oeuvre. They wished to

[95] In her article on *Wing Beat*, H.D. describes it as a 'modest four reel film', of which she had only seen 'fragments' in a 'private performance in a tiny way-side cinema'. In her 'Borderline Pamphlet', she references *Wing Beat*, writing that 'Kenneth Macpherson turned a personal little film in 1927. It is carefully packed away and he shows it to no one'. See H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Wing-Beat. Box 43, Folder 1102; Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Borderline Pamphlet. Box 168, Folder 5637. In her doctoral dissertation, Friedberg writes of how she found a box of nitrate film among H.D.'s Papers in the Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library at Yale University, where she reassembled them. These are now held at the Film Library of the Museum Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. Schlun supplies that these fragments now run for a total of seventeen minutes. Some clips from this recovered footage are used in Véronique Goël's film *Kenwin* (1996), which is available on the DVD extras of the BFI release of *Borderline* in 2006. For analysis of *Wing Beat*'s stills and H.D.'s unpublished article, see Anne Friedberg, 'The Film Journal Close Up: Writing About Cinema (1927-1933)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of New York, 1983), pp. 123-134; Schlun, pp. 258-264; Friedberg, 'Introduction: *Borderline and POOL Films*', in *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism*, ed. by James Donald, Anne Friedberg and Laura Marcus (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 212-213; McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher*, p. 133. Friedberg, Schlun and McCabe all note the out-of-focus blurred technique that Macpherson employed to convey 'unspoken dread' (McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher*, p. 133).

[96] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Wing-Beat., Box 43, Folder 1102.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid.

represent, as H.D. explains, 'the world as lived by the nervous post-war thinker, artist, intellectual; nerve-wrought, hysterical if you will but vibrant, pulsing with life and with rarefied emotion'.[100]

Figure 6: E. L. Black (John Ellerman Jr.) and Kenneth Macpherson in *Wing Beat.* Still from *Kenwin*, dir. by Véronique Goël (BFI, 1996) [DVD].

Figure 7: H.D. in *Wing Beat.* Still from *Kenwin*, dir. by Véronique Goël (BFI, 1996) [DVD].

[100] Ibid.

The figure of the 'nerve-wrought' artist is central to Macpherson's novel *Poolreflection,* which was POOL Book's first publication on June 24, 1927.[101] Schlun describes it as a typical modernist psychological novel that explores the 'question of modernist art and its autonomy versus its necessity'.[102] The story follows Peter's extended psychological turmoil, interweaved with tangled references to Greek mythology where Peter sees himself as a 'half-metamorphosed Narcissus' poised at 'the water brink' and his son, Lex, as a 'golden faun' sculpted by Praxiteles.[103] Macpherson poses questions of morality and desire throughout *Poolreflection*, teasing the same threads that comprised *Wing Beat* throughout the narrative: Peter feels himself 'spent, disharmonised, adrift; fretted by inhibition's yea and nay' and experiences a 'telepathic sympathy'.[104] These themes are interrogated through Peter's homoerotic, incestuous fixation with Lex, and his relationship to Lex's lover, Moreen. Marcus and Guest both position *Poolreflection* as a variation of model of H.D.'s *Hedylus* (1928).[105] However, as Schlun notes, *Poolreflection* was published a year prior to *Hedylus* (1928) and therefore represents a productive 'exchange of ideas', as opposed to a straightforward imitation.[106] *Poolreflection* is presented in a similar fashion to *Wing Beat,* with its announcement in *Close Up* emphasising it as an emotional exploration: 'The study of Peter, at once sympathetic and caustic, stripped and examined. His curious struggle and failure to hold onto things spirit and body impulses, recoils, outstretchings, recorded with clairvoyant, purely psychic subtly'.[107]

Four POOL books were published in 1927. Like *Poolreflection,* Macpherson's *Gaunt Island* grapples with intimacy, desire, morality, psychology, and art.[108] Its focus is another

[101] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Close Up Notes [n.d]. Box 169, Folder 5652.
[102] Schlun, p. 164.
[103] Kenneth Macpherson, *Poolreflection* (Territet: Dijon, 1927), p. 74, p. 100.
[104] Ibid., p. 2, p. 3.
[105] Guest dismisses *Poolreflection* as a 'repugnant tale', asserting that it would be 'wiser to ignore this novel if it not present a variation on H.D.'s *Hedylus,* which he greatly admired'; while Marcus likens *Poolreflection* to *Hedylus* and *Palimpsest* (1926). Friedman, too, asserts that 'the style of Macpherson's novel is strikingly "H.D.-ian" in its technique of lyric interior monologue and characterization. Repetition of motifs, - especially flowers, colors, butterflies, land and water, light and dark, classical and pastoral deities – are very reminiscent of *Palimpsest,* as well as of *HER* and *Asphodel,* which H.D. might have shown him. See: Marcus, *The Tenth Muse,* p. 326-7; Marcus, 'Cinema and Psychoanalysis', in *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism,* ed. by James Donald, Anne Friedberg and Laura Marcus (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 240-246 (p. 241); Schlun, p. 165; Friedman, *Penelope's Web,* p. 385n38.
[106] Schlun, p. 165.
[107] 'Advertisement for POOL Books', *Close Up,* 1.2 (August 1927), p. 71.
[108] There is a scant amount of criticism on both of Macpherson's POOL books. Guest briefly describes *Gaunt Island*: 'He had written about [his] family in Brontesque fashion in one of his very bad novels [...] The novel

tense triadic relationship: two brothers (Robin and Geoffrey) and Elmo, who is described as a thing of 'psychic emanations'.[109] Contributing to POOL's project of representing the human mind and emotions, an advertisement in *Close Up* promoted *Gaunt Island* as 'an absorbing and tragic tale, capturing the [...] sea and weather and emotions' of the stormy Scottish Hebrides.[110] Schlun sees *Gaunt Island*'s morbid fascination with death as a foil to *Poolreflection*'s exploration of the pleasure principle, both told through mythical and metaphorical imagery.[111] They ask what forms desire can or should take, defying societal institutions and—in the case of Peter and Lex—moral standards.

Bryher's *Civilians,* published in the autumn of 1927, also challenges ideas around social convention. In POOL's catalogue of publications, *Civilians* is described as 'a study of Wartime England'.[112] Indeed, it depicts civilian suffering in London during the First World War, told from different perspectives: from Sylvia, who pragmatically marries an American officer to leave England; to the naïve Louise, who is seduced and abandoned by a soldier; to the anxious Mr. Stubbs, who evades conscription.[113] Although *Civilians* differs in tone, content, and style to *Poolreflection* and *Gaunt Island*; it is still underpinned by one of POOL's common themes, asking how to live in a rapidly changing world. The catalogue explains Bryher's intent:

> What part have Civilians in War? is the question this undaunted author asks. Reading it, one realises here is not a searchlight merely, but an oxy-aceteline flame burning to the very heart of conditions that made a World War possible. [...] Where did the old code lead?[114]

Bryher takes a blazing 'oxy-aceteline flame' to 'old code[s]' of conduct and tradition, posing questions about how to lead an ethical life.

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also contains characters based on two woman who had been his lovers: Frances, and the ubiquitous Brigit. Schlun dedicates a section to *Gaunt Island* as Macpherson's 'cinematographic' novel of 'Celtic Sensitivity', interpreted via a Romantic sensibility and compared to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land.* McCabe briefly notes Macpherson's parody of Frances Gregg. See: Guest, p. 185; Schlun, pp. 203-240; McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher*, p. 133.

[109] Kenneth Macpherson, *Gaunt Island* (Territet: Dijon, 1927), p. 40, p. 67.

[110] 'Advertisement for new POOL books', *Close Up,* 1.6 (November, 1927), p. 73.

[111] Schlun, p. 204.

[112] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, POOL's catalogue, n.d. Box 170, Folder 5679.

[113] Schlun argues that these shifts in focalisation can be likened to 'a film montage method', as part of Bryher's 'cinematic style'. Furthermore, by drawing on non-fiction narratives of quotidian, "civilian" experiences of wartime London, Bryher constructs a 'novel from real, factual material, as if working with the recorded impressions of a documentary film negative'. See Schlun, pp. 247-250 (p. 248, p. 250).

[114] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, POOL's catalogue, n.d. Box 170, Folder 5679.

Why Do They Like It? (1927) is another 'searchlight' of sorts.[115] Exposing the cruelties of the British education establishment, this autobiographical account by Bryher's younger brother (writing under the pseudonym of E. L. Black) is framed in *Close Up* as 'the last comment on Public School system' and its 'endless stupidities', which cultivates a 'fear toward life' through 'the cumulative effect of paltry injustices, crudities, brutalities'.[116] Again, it questions societal institutions. In an article reflecting on his time with the POOL group, Blakeston summarises *Why Do They Like It?* as a book that was written to 'catch falling humanity precisely on the bounce'.[117] The impulse to 'catch' human experience amid modernity's freefall can be seen across POOL works, marked by a suspicion of institutionalised traditions.[118]

In addition to publishing four books and filming *Wing Beat* in 1927, the POOL group also started their film journal, *Close Up.* This was by far their most widely read output: as Bryher notes with slight surprise in *Heart*, 'We expected it to last three issues and had five hundred copies printed. It was an immediate success and when we ended after the collapse of the silent film, six years later, we had five thousand readers'.[119] In *Close Up*'s first editorial, Macpherson set out the journal's agenda: 'It has to be the film for the film's sake'.[120] Macpherson pits *Close Up* against 'Box office stunts', explaining his issue with cinema as it stood in the 1920s:

> Cinematography has stuck itself in front of the artist, and the artist wants to work his medium straight. His conflict is with the business manager. He also wants HIS medium straight. The thing one sees in consequence is compromise, and the beginning of a problem.[121]

Close Up contributed to and propelled the discourse around cinema, fighting for film to be appreciated as an art form with the exciting potential to depict modernity: '<u>the</u> art of to-

[115] Ibid.
[116] 'Advertisement for POOL Books', *Close Up*, 1.1 (July 1927), p. 56. For more analysis of *Why Do They Like It?*, see Schlun, who describes it as an 'Adolescent Anti-Establishment Novel', Schlun, pp. 250-252. McCabe mentions its publication also, noting that Ellerman Jr. received his education at Malvern College (see McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher*, p. 128). Friedberg also mentions *Why Do They Like It?* in her doctoral dissertation, drawing parallels between Bryher's first novel, *Development* (1920), which is also highly critical of the British schooling system, which were based on her own experiences at Queenswood. See Friedberg, 'Writing About Cinema: "Close Up" 1927-1933', p. 109. Schlun, McCabe, and Friedberg all also highlight that *Why Do I Like It?* includes a foreword by Dorothy Richardson.
[117] Blakeston, 'Retrospect 14: Close Up', p. 37.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Bryher, *The Heart To Artemis*, p. 289.
[120] Kenneth Macpherson, 'As Is', *Close Up*, 1.1 (July 1927), pp. 5-15 (p. 14).
[121] Ibid., p. 6, p. 8.

day', as H.D. asserts in her unpublished *Wing Beat* article, which she likens to 'a wild bird caught in a barn' in danger of being 'netted or caged or trapped' by 'the bird-stuffers and bird-slayers' who represent censorship, tradition, and standardisation.[122] Bryher, too, explains the group's impulse to investigate film:

> The film was new, it had no earlier associations and it offered occasionally, in an episode or single shot, some framework for our dreams. We felt we could state our convictions honourably in this twentieth-century form of art....[123]

Running from July 1927 to December 1933, *Close Up*'s 54 issues included a total of 583 articles from 107 different contributors.[124] A range of different voices and opinions are represented, where contributors challenged whatever 'problem' or 'compromise' they saw threatening cinema's ability to 'state our convictions honourably', and celebrating when—using H.D.'s ornithological metaphor—the 'wild bird' can fly free of barn rafters and glimpse 'the vast areas of the consciousness that can not be caught in cages'.[125]

Close Up arrived at a curious time. As Jamie Sexton discusses, there was a growing interest in cinema 'as a modern, international phenomenon' in Britain, with the London Film Society forming in 1925.[126] Cinema—as an image and an institution—had undergone seismic changes since its "first birth" in 1895.[127] In 1926, Virginia Woolf critiqued film as a 'parasite', feeding from other art forms, but prompted 'what the cinema might do if it were left to its own devices', conveying a concomitant dissatisfaction and fascination with the

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[122] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Wing-Beat. Box 43, Folder 1102.
[123] Bryher, *The Heart To Artemis,* p. 290.
[124] Here I reference the named articles listed in the contents of each issue, however each issue also included a 'Comments and Review' section, which had short reviews of books, films and announcements that were sometimes labelled with initials and sometimes included anonymously. The entirety of *Close Up*'s six-year run is freely accessible online via archive.org thanks to its digitisation in November 2013, which was sponsored by the Packard Campus for Audio Visual Conservation at the Library of Congress. All issues were scanned from copies held within the collections from the Library of Congress. See 'Close Up: The Only Magazine Devoted to Films as Art', *Archive.org* (November 2013) <https://archive.org/search.php?query=creator%3A%22Macpherson%2C+Kenneth%2C+%5Bfrom+old+catalog%5D+ed%22> [accessed June 12 2022].
[125] Macpherson, 'As Is' (July 1927), p. 8; Bryher, *The Heart To Artemis,* p. 290; H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Wing-Beat. Box 43, Folder 1102.
[126] Jamie Sexton, 'The Film Society and the Creation of an Alternative Film Culture in Britain in the 1920s', in *Young and Innocent? The Cinema in Britain 1896 – 1930,* ed. Andrew Higston (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2002), pp. 281-305 (p. 291).
[127] For more on the first birth, as a technological process, and cinema's "second" birth in the 1910s as a medium, see: André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, 'A Medium Is Always Born Twice...', *Early Popular Visual Culture,* 3.1 (May 2005), 3-15; Andrew Shail, 'Cinema's Second Birth', *Early Popular Visual Culture,* 11.2 (2013), 97-99. For an account of early cinema and its development, see Tom Gunning, 'Attractions: How They Came into the World', in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded,* ed. by Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), pp. 31-40; and Marcus, *The Tenth Muse*; *A Companion to Early Cinema,* ed. by André Gaudreault, Nicolas Dulac and Santiago Hildago (Oxford: Blackwell 2012).

medium.[128] Just three months after *Close Up*'s launch, *The Jazz Singer* was released.[129] With its synchronised dialogue and musical numbers, the film represented the advent of the "talkies" and Hollywood's dominance, which Bryher would later frame as 'the collapse of the silent film': 'the golden age of what I call "the art that died" because sound ruined its development'.[130] This was a historical moment that Macpherson self-consciously described as their 'critical age'.[131] Spanning the transition from silent to sound cinema, *Close Up*'s lifespan was also occupied the middle of the interwar years, where it anxiously witnessed the spread of fascism across Europe. It published anti-war calls for peace, warning against fascist propaganda films, with Bryher writing:

> If we want peace, we must fight for the liberty to think in terms of peace, for all the peoples of Europe. […] And fight for it especially with cinema. By refusing to see films that are merely propaganda for any unjust system.[132]

Despite Bryher's call to arms, POOL would cease production of *Close Up* in the same year that Hitler was appointed German chancellor. McCabe quotes a poem by Wallace Stevens to convey their threshold position, bridging multiple historical transitions, where she imagines them as poised within '"intervals of a storm"'.[133] The POOL group themselves appear aware of their work as a prototypical archive of the political, economic, technological, and artistic landscapes they inhabited, where by 1929, *Close Up* was already promoting its back catalogue as 'REFERENCE BOOKS FOR THE FUTURE', documenting a turbulent past from an imagined vantage point in the future.[134]

The masthead listed Kenneth Macpherson as *Close Up*'s editor and Bryher as the assistant editor. Writing in July 1927 Dorothy Richardson, who would become a regular and

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[128] Virginia Woolf, 'The Cinema', in *The British Avant-Garde Film 1926-1995: An Anthology of Writings*, ed. by Michael O'Pray (Luton: University of Luton Press, 1996), pp. 33-36 (p. 35).
[129] For an exploration of sound cinema's impact on *Close Up* and cinema more broadly, see Marcus, *The Tenth Muse,* pp. 404-437 (for discussion on *The Jazz Singer,* see pp. 409-416); Zlatina Nikolova and Chris Townsend, 'Dorothy Richardson and *Close Up:* Amateur and Professional Exchanges in Film Culture', in *The Critic As Amateur,* ed. by Saikat Majumdar, and Aarthi Vadde (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 181-200; and James Donald, 'From Silence to Sound', in *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism,* ed. by James Donald, Anne Friedberg and Laura Marcus (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 79-82.
[130] Bryher, *The Heart To Artemis,* p. 289; p. 290.
[131] Macpherson, 'As Is', *Close Up* (July 1927), p. 5.
[132] H. A. M., 'Why War? Einstein and Freud.* International Institute of Intellectual Co-Operation', *Close Up,* 10.3 (June 1933), pp. 159-160 (p. 159); Bryher, 'What Shall You Do In The War?', *Close Up,* 10.3 (June 1933), pp. 188-192 (pp. 190-1).
[133] Wallace Stevens, 'The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words', *The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination* (New York: Knopf, 1942), p. 20, quoted in McCabe, 'Close Up & Wars They Saw: From Visual Erotics to a Transferential Politics of Film', p. 11.
[134] 'Advert for Bound Volumes of *Close Up*', *Close Up,* 4.5 (May 1929), p. 121.

significant contributor to *Close Up*, described the journal as 'rather a family affair for the moment' before adding 'But several Big Bugs have promised articles: Havelock Ellis, Huxley, Lawrence…'[135] Richardson's emphasis on a 'family' dynamic illustrates the close-knit lines of intimacy that structured the POOL group also galvanised *Close Up*.[136] Indeed, the first issue offered an editorial from Macpherson; an essay by the French writer Jean Prévost (who was part of Sylvia Beach and Adrienne Monnier's circles in Paris); Bryher's younger brother under his pseudonym E. L. Black; an article and poem by H.D.; and pieces by Bryher and Richardson.[137] Although Aldous Huxley and D. H. Lawrence never wrote for *Close Up*, the magazine did expand, resulting in an array of voices and opinions. I will explore *Close Up*'s composition and critical history in more detail through Herring and Blakeston's involvement and their significant contributions to the magazine. From January 1931, Blakeston was listed as assistant editor alongside Bryher and the journal shifted from its monthly issues to quarterly publications. This was a significant change that I will examine in more detail later alongside POOL's shifting biographical structures.

At the end of March 1928, the POOL group made their second film, *Foothills*, in Clarens, Switzerland, not far from Territet, where Bryher would later build the Bauhaus-styled Kenwin villa (forged from the first syllables of Bryher and Macpherson's names, Kenneth and Winifred).[138] Unlike *Wing Beat*, *Foothills* follows a linear narrative. Although the film is similarly lost with only fragments remaining, Bryher's synopsis of *Foothills* depicts a love triangle between Jess (played by H.D., as seen in Fig. 8 and Fig. 10), who abandons her fiancé, a 'man-about-town' (acted by Herring), and instead chooses the 'young peasant Jean' (Macpherson, as seen in Fig. 9) and in doing so, chooses a quiet village life over the pull of the city.[139] Schlun, Marcus and Friedberg all identify parallels between *Foothills* and F. W. Murnau's film, *Sunrise* (1927), where the POOL film teases out themes of desire, marriage, polyamory, infidelity, social exclusion, how the cityscape contrasts the

[135] Letter from Dorothy Richardson to P. Beaumont Wadsworth, July 1927, quoted in *Windows on Modernism: Selected Letters of Dorothy Richardson*, ed. by Gloria Fromm (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995), p. 139.
[136] Ibid.
[137] See *Close Up*, 1.1 (July 1927). For more on Prévost's connections Beach and Monnier, see Noel Riley Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation: A History of Literary Paris in the Twenties and Thirties* (New York: Newton, 1983), pp. 188-189.
[138] Friedberg, 'A Chronology of *Close Up* in Context', p. 320. Building work on Kenwin started in 1929 and was completed in 1931, resulting in what McCabe calls an 'open collaborative shelter'. For more information about Kenwin, see McCabe, *H.D. and Bryher*, p. 162; Schlun, pp. 336-357; Souhami, pp. 180-181.
[139] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Synopsis of Foothills. Box 170, Folder 5674.

rural, and how place can impact identity.[140] As Schlun observes, *Foothills* is often catalogued as one of POOL's short films—perhaps because only nine minutes of footage have survived—but it was actually closer in length to *Borderline*'s 63 minutes.[141] The exact length is unclear, with varying comments from H.D., describing it as a 'a full length five reel film' in the 'Borderline Pamphlet', and a 'slight lyrical four reel little drama' in *The Little Review*.[142] *Foothills* was, like many of POOL's projects, a collaborative endeavour. It boasted a larger cast than *Wing Beat,* with Bryher and another *Close Up* writer Marc Allégret assisting with some of the filming, too.[143] While it was never screened to public audiences, it seems that *Foothills* was shown privately to critics and friends, garnering positive responses from the likes of G. W. Pabst, who the group admired greatly.[144] I will expand on the tense interrelationships depicted in *Foothills* in my exploration of Herring's contributions to POOL's films, where the ways in which desire is depicted on screen is crucial.

[140] Schlun, pp. 266-268; Marcus, *The Tenth Muse,* pp. 384-386; Friedberg, 'Introduction: *Borderline* and the POOL Films', p. 213.
[141] Schlun, p. 266.
[142] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Borderline Pamphlet. Box 168, Folder 5637; H.D., 'response to "Questionnaire"', *The Little Review*, (12 May 1929), pp. 38-9.
[143] Marcus, *The Tenth Muse,* p. 385, p. 386.
[144] Writing about POOL's early films, Blakeston states that *Foothills* 'was, probably, the most notable. Although these films did not reach the general public they were eagerly reviewed by sensitive critics, such as the famous G.W. Pabst, and deeply appreciated for their intense qualities'. See Oswell Blakeston, 'Foreign Notes: A New English Film', *Educational Screen* (January 1931). Macpherson wrote emphatically to H.D. to alert her that Pabst had liked her performance in *Foothills,* showing it to the director in August 1928: 'said how STRONG is H.D., it is amazing, how strong, what power, how consistent. And what he really liked about the film was that you showed up the utter futility of the Hollywood tradition and that beauty was something quite different'. Letter from Macpherson to H.D., undated, quoted in Friedberg, 'Introduction: Reading *Close Up 1927-1933*', p. 22. H.D. also gestures to *Foothills* having been reviewed favourably by critics in her 'Borderline Pamphlet': 'Here and there the work was excellent. That film has been shown privately and commented on too generously, Macpherson feels, by certain of the German and French and English critics. But he himself was not satisfied'. Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Borderline Pamphlet 1930, Box 168, Folder 5637.

Figure 8: H.D. as Jess in *Foothills. Close Up*, 5.1 (July 1929).

Figure 9: Kenneth Macpherson as Jean in *Foothills*. *Close Up, 5.1 (*July 1929).

Figure 10: H.D. as Jess in *Foothills*. *Close Up*, 5.1 (July 1929).

POOL published two more texts in 1928. These were both non-fiction books focusing on cinematography aimed at amateur filmmakers: Eric Elliott's *Anatomy of a Motion Picture Art* and *Through A Yellow Glass* by Oswell Blakeston.[145] *Anatomy* was quite a departure from Macpherson's dense metaphors in *Poolreflection* and *Gaunt Island,* or the quotidian life in *Why Do They Like It?* and *Civilians.* Instead, it has much more in common with the film criticism in *Close Up,* billed as a 'survey' of 'the whole aspect of the film world, its problems, its failures and its achievements'.[146] Elliott explores the film camera's techniques and 'tricks' that, when their effects are rendered on the screen, 'promise realisation of the most weird, the most startling, the most terrible, the most peaceful, the most ugly or the most beautiful pictures he can imagine'.[147] Elliott marries technical language and theory with the affect, atmosphere and art of film.[148] Blakeston also utilises industrial language in his first POOL book, which invited readers to '[l]earn for yourself

[145] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Close Up Notes, n.d. Box 169, Folder 5652.
[146] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, POOL's catalogue, n.d. Box 170, Folder 5679.
[147] Eric Elliott, *Anatomy of Motion Picture Art* (Territet: POOL, 1928), p. 52.
[148] For Schlun's description of *Anatomy of Motion Picture Art,* which highlights his investment in film as art, see Schlun, pp. 115-116. In *The Tenth Muse,* Marcus discusses *Anatomy of Motion Picture Art* in relation to its 'imagistic' aesthetic emphasis on film, and also includes C. J. Lejeune's positive review of the book in the *Manchester Guardian*, see Marcus, *The Tenth Muse,* p. 373-375. Elliott's analysis of silent film's intertitles in *Anatomy of Motion Picture Art* is discussed briefly by Kamilla Elliott as being one of the first critical film pieces to address the ways in which intertitles are used. See Kamilla Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 87.

what the film world is really like'.[149] As I will explore later, Blakeston crafts a queer walking-tour-guide of a commercial London film studio in what Marcus describes as his 'typically idiosyncratic style'.[150]

In 1929, Macpherson directed his third short film, *Monkey's Moon* in Territet.[151] Thought to be lost, the film was restored in 2008 by Yale University and now exists in digitised six-minute form.[152] It follows two of Macpherson's pet monkeys (see Fig. 11) as they escape from their cages, roaming in a garden, before they are captured once more. Schlun comments on the difficulties of categorising this film, where its style and form appears as a documentary, yet it possesses a strange 'lyrical quality'.[153] The monkey's adventures are interspersed with shots of organic imagery from the garden and images of beetles, which are sharply contrasted by the looming shadow of a human hand (See Fig. 12). *Monkey's Moon* operates, thus, in a borderline space between captivity and freedom, where the clash between non-human and human challenge the anthropocentric hierarchies and ways of being in the world.[154]

[149] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, POOL's catalogue, n.d. Box 170, Folder 5679.
[150] Marcus, *The Tenth Muse,* p. 373.
[151] It is unclear as to when exactly in 1929 Macpherson filmed this and under what circumstances. McCabe ascribes the human shadow in the film as Bryher's (see McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher,* p. 145), which seems likely as the film was shot in Territet, where Bryher resided. *Monkey's Moon* was announced in *Close Up* in June 1929, with four stills of the monkeys as 'a film now nearing completion by Kenneth Macpherson', with captions detailing the species of the pet monkeys (they are the 'Devil Monkey of the Amazon'; 'The Douracouli, […] is nocturnal in his habits. The two monkeys in this film are pets of the director'; "Sister", who adored being taken in lingering close-ups. One of Nature's film-stars. The faces are white and black, the back grey, and the breast orange'; and '"Sister" (Right) and Bill, who hated the camera as much as she moved it'). These stills were printed across the page from images of H.D. and Macpherson from *Foothills.* One more still from *Monkey's Moon* was also printed in *Close Up*'s December 1929 issue.
[152] 'Monkeys' Moon and Pool Films', *Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library, Yale University* <https://beinecke.library.yale.edu/collections/highlights/monkeys-moon-pool-films> [accessed 2 March 2023]. The short film is available to watch on YouTube. See *Monkey's Moon,* dir. by Kenneth Macpherson (POOL, 1930), YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=09S3knF75vo> [accessed 8 September 2019].
[153] Schlun, pp. 269-277 (p. 269). Schlun parallels *Monkey's Moon* with Pound's imagism and Eisenstein's montage, and argues that it presents oblique references to 'life-affirmative principle of Dionysus' (p. 275).
[154] Schlun sees *Monkey's Moon* as dispelling 'Darwin and his idea of the origins of species', overturning the biological determinism and supporting her thesis of POOL's desire for anthropological universality. See Schlun, p. 274. McCabe also focuses on the monkey's 'erratic emotions', where they 'frolic and dart beneath the moon' to 'meet for a flickering kiss', 'outwit the "humans"'. See McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher,* p. 145.

Figure 11: Monkey's Moon. *Close Up,* 5. 1 (July 1929).

Figure 12: Monkey's Moon. *Close Up,* 5. 1 (July 1929).

Another POOL film, *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside,* was announced in *Close Up* in June 1929 as 'a new POOL Satire by Oswell Blakeston, with music by [Edmund] Meisel'.[155] The film is now lost, with only a handful of images (see Figs. 13-24), reviews and archival fragments remaining which gesture to the film's scope and content, explored later in

[155] *Close Up*, 4.6 (June, 1929). The film was first announced as *I Do Love to be Beside the Seaside,* which may have been a misprint, or POOL may have decided to change the name to *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside* at a later point, where all other mention uses *like* as opposed to *love.* The title may have been a reference to the 1907 music hall song, written by John H. Glover-Kind and popularised by Mark Sheridan.

greater detail.[156] Most accounts of the group's activities fail to acknowledge the film as a POOL production, where it is often missing from lists and analyses of their work.[157] Perhaps this omission persists because it was the only POOL film not credited to Macpherson, with this being Blakeston's directorial debut, and complicated by its status as a lost work. Its absence from histories of the POOL group touches on the issues at the heart of this thesis: of modernism's critical legacy, what is included, what is missed, and how this changes the shape of a group, body of work or artistic movement. H.D., Bryher, Macpherson and a German actor called Sybille Schmitz all appeared in *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside.* Macpherson's face, half obscured, peers out from behind a fixture, looking directly at the camera in one of the surviving prints (see Fig. 16), and Bryher plays the protagonist: 'a typist, [who] is completely absorbed by her work. Other aspects of her life are repressed' (see Fig. 18).[158] The film critic Mercurius's review for *The Architectural Review* includes several images (Figs. 17-24) and insights into Blakeston's intentions:

> a brilliant and amusing commentary on the technical devices of many well-known producers of films. Held lightly together by an airy thread of story, it exposes, by a

[156] A third print (see Fig 15) from *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside* was included in *Close Up,* 5.6 (December 1929). Deke Dusinberre writes that the only print from *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside* was destroyed in the Second World War. See Deke Dusinberre, 'The Avant-Garde Attitude in the Thirties', in *The British Avant-Garde Film 1926-1995: An Anthology of Writings,* ed. by Michael O'Pray (Luton: University of Luton Press, 1996), pp. 65-85 (p. 68). A print is included in Donald, Friedberg and Marcus's anthology *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism* (p. 11), (see Fig. 16) which is most likely from the collections of Blakeston's archives at the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas. 11 images from the film are featured in a review by the anonymous film critic Mercurius in *The Archetypal Review.* See: Mercurius, 'The Pipes of the Pan: I do like to be beside the Seaside', *The Architectural Review,* 67.403 (June 1930), 341-342.

[157] Catalogues of POOL's films typically extend just to *Wing Beat, Foothills, Monkey's Moon* and *Borderline.* For example, the film does not appear in Marcus's catalogue of POOL films in *The Tenth Muse,* p. 384. Although a still of *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside* is included in the anthology *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism,* it is not credited as a POOL production (p. 11; p. 19). It is also missing from the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library's page on POOL films (see ('Monkeys' Moon & Pool Films'); there is no mention in Souhami's account of POOL films in *No Modernism Without Lesbians,* or in Justus Neiland, 'Borderline (1930)', *The Routledge Encyclopaedia of Modernism* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2016) <https://www.rem.routledge.com/articles/borderline-1930. doi:10.4324/9781135000356-REM1182-1> [accessed 27 May 2021]. For accounts that connect the film to POOL films, see: Dusinberre, p. 68; Zlatina Nikolova, 'Onscreen Femininity Deconstructed: Garbo's Greta, Khokhlova's Edith and H.D.'s Astrid', in *Cinematic Representations of Women in Modern Celebrity Culture, 1900–1950,* ed. by Leticia Pérez Alonso, María Cristina C. Mabrey (New York: Routledge, 2022), pp. 60-76 (p. 64); Townsend, 'A Deeper, Wider POOL: Reading *Close Up* Through the Archives of its Contributors'; and Schlun, pp. 278-280.

[158] Mercurius, p. 341. Blakeston writes to Norman Pearson Holmes with a description of *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside* with a still that shows H.D.: 'I made this short in Switzerland for Bryher's Pool (the imprint of "Close up", the books and such films as "Borderlines", etc.). It was released by Studio Films of Paris where Branerger (the Studio Film boss) handled all the avant-garde shorts, Man Ray, etc. […] Bryher, Kenneth and H.D. all appeared—although, if I remember rightly, the Kenneth sequence was cut.' See Austin, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Oswell Blakeston Collection 1927-1985, Letter from Oswell Blakeston to Norman Holmes Pearson October 16 1967. Box 3, Folder 7.

> constant reduction to absurdity, [...] the merits, the defects, the potentialities and the dangers, of the methods they employ.[159]

It is, then, a satire of the avant-garde. Parodying many of the directors celebrated in the pages of *Close Up,* Blakeston emulates Germaine Dulac's *The Sea Shell and the Clergyman* and 'the symbolism of the objects and their visual relation to each other'; Paul Leni and his play on how meaning is produced from light and shadow; Man Ray's *Emak Bakia* and its use of obscurity; Carl Dreyer's *Jeanne d'Arc*'s reversal of figures and 'emotional oppression'; and, finally, Sergei Eisenstein's *The General Line* and the montage technique: 'Mr. Blakeston has humorously and intentionally exposed the futility of the use of visual symbols', montage and 'misuse of symbolism'.[160] *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside* allows for an expanded understanding of how POOL approached film art, showing that despite Macpherson's repeated desire for 'film art' to be 'freed from commercial limitations', the group was also cautious of the avant-garde, too.[161] Indeed, Deke Dusinberre summarises Blakeston's film as 'something of a spoof on the pretentiousness of "intellectual" film criticism', which Schlun sees as emblematic of POOL's prioritisation of 'amusement and entertainment in their concept of art': *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside* illustrates the POOL group's concomitant captivation and critique of experimental film art.[162]

Figure 13: I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside. Close Up, 4.6 (June 1929).

[159] Mercurius, pp. 341-342.
[160] Ibid., pp. 341-342.
[161] Kenneth Macpherson, 'As Is', *Close Up,* 2.3 (March, 1928), pp. 5-10 (p. 8).
[162] Dusinberre, p. 68; Schlun, p. 280.

Figure 14: I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside. Close Up, 4.6 (June 1929).

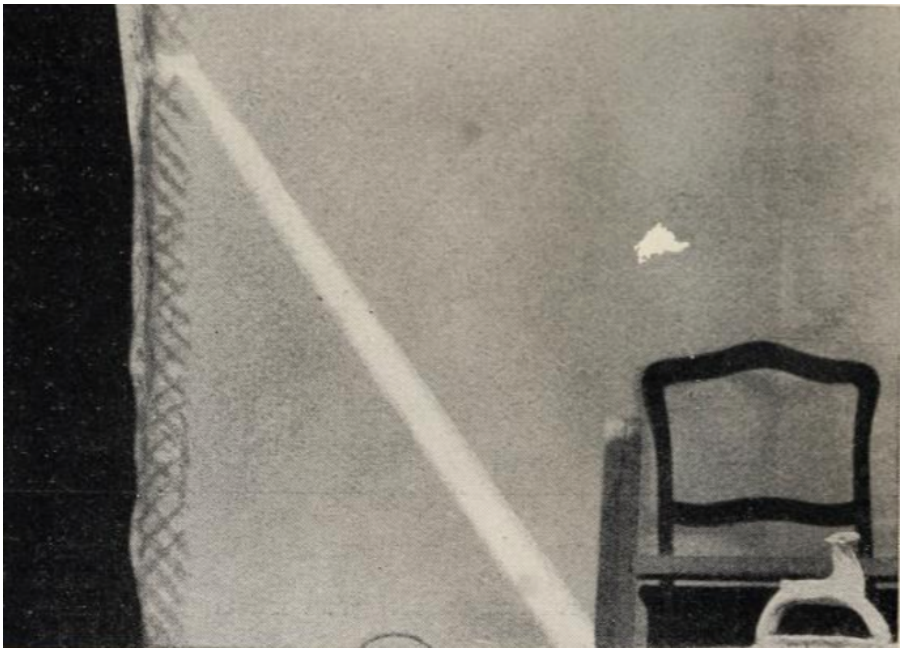

Figure 15: I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside. Close Up, 5.6 (December 1929).

Figure 16: Kenneth Macpherson in *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside.* Donald, Friedberg and Marcus (eds), *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism*, p. 11.

Figure 17: The 'epic posterior shot', from *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside.* Mercurius, 'The Pipes of the Pan: I do like to be beside the Seaside', *The Architectural Review*, 67.403 (June 1930), p. 341.

Figure 18: Bryher as 'the typist' in *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside.* Mercurius, 'The Pipes of the Pan: I do like to be beside the Seaside', *The Architectural Review*, 67.403 (June 1930), p. 341.

Figure 19: I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside. Mercurius, 'The Pipes of the Pan: I do like to be beside the Seaside', *The Architectural Review*, 67.403 (June 1930), p. 342.

Figure 20: I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside. Mercurius, 'The Pipes of the Pan: I do like to be beside the Seaside', *The Architectural Review*, 67.403 (June 1930), p. 342.

Figure 21: I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside. Mercurius, 'The Pipes of the Pan: I do like to be beside the Seaside', *The Architectural Review*, 67.403 (June 1930), p. 342.

Figure 22: I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside. Mercurius, 'The Pipes of the Pan: I do like to be beside the Seaside', *The Architectural Review*, 67.403 (June 1930), p. 342.

Figure 23: I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside. Mercurius, 'The Pipes of the Pan: I do like to be beside the Seaside', *The Architectural Review*, 67.403 (June 1930), p. 342.

Figure 24: I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside. Mercurius, 'The Pipes of the Pan: I do like to be beside the Seaside', *The Architectural Review,* 67.403 (June 1930), p. 342.

Blakeston's second POOL book, *Extra Passenger* (1929), continues to interrogate ideas of film art. Billed as an 'acid and withering indictment' on commercial British filmmaking, the book follows a Künstlerroman narrative where Blakeston's protagonist, Donald, harbours a desire to 'express himself as an artist in new cinema creation'.[163] He moves from his repressive school and 'stifling family environment', where he 'finds himself in an even more stifling environment—that of the British film studios'.[164] *Extra Passenger* offers a complex critique of how 'the infinite possibilities' of the screen are contorted and have 'slipped into backwaters'.[165] Schlun places the novel stylistically in-between *Why Do They Like It?* and *Civilians,* arguing that its combination of the subjective and 'cinematographic' objective style results in the 'lyrical quality' reminiscent of Macpherson's *Poolreflection*.[166] Bryher's non-fiction POOL text, *Film Problems of Soviet Russia,* was also produced in 1929 and takes up similar themes: the issue of how to discuss cinema and art, and how discourse around film shapes their relationship. She discusses Russian filmmakers like Lev Kuleshov, Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Abram Room, Fridrikh Ermler, and Olga

[163] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, POOL: Catalogues, n.d. Box 170, Folder 5679.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Blakeston, *Extra Passenger*, p. 131.
[166] Schlun, p. 256.

Preobrazhenskaya, admonishing British censorship of Soviet films and includes over 70 film stills (many of which were also published in *Close Up*). As Marcus, Friedberg and Schlun all suggest, Bryher's text conveys the intense interest and investment that *Close Up* writers had with Soviet film. As Herring writes in his review of *Film Problems* for the *Manchester Guardian*:

> Anyone who has followed the kinema with intelligence and discrimination knows that the Russian kinema is the most important in the world, and the reason for this importance is that Russian films deal directly with the problems of daily life.[167]

The question of how cinema can represent the complexities of quotidian life underpins much of the POOL group's work. Whether cinema's experimental efforts are parodied (as in *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside*), its commercial practices are derided (as in *Extra Passenger*), or carefully analysed and critiqued (as in *Film Problems*); these various approaches each interrogate a different aspect of how cinema, art, criticism and modernist cultures collide.

Borderline took up much of the group's efforts in 1930. The feature film is perhaps the group's most well-known output, with its complex intersection of race and desire. It starred H.D. (under the name Helga Doorn), Paul Robeson and his wife, Eslanda Robeson. The cast also included Gavin Arthur, Bryher, Herring, Charlotte Arthur and Blanche Lewin. In the pamphlet accompanying *Borderline,* H.D. writes that work began 'some months before [Macpherson] began to "turn"' the film at the end of March 1930, where the group shot on location in Riant Chateau, Territet.[168] Macpherson started work on his sketches for *Borderline* around April 1929 and declared it finished in June of the following year.[169] It was first screened in London in October 1930. This work encompassed Macpherson's '1,000 little sketches', as H.D. explains: there 'was not one angle of a face, scarcely a movement of a hand or fold of drapery that he had not pre-visualised'.[170] Once it was shot, H.D.'s 'Autobiographical Notes' reveal that 'K[enneth] develop[ed] a bad throat' and both she and

[167] Robert Herring, 'The Week on the Screen', *Manchester Guardian* (13 April 1929), p. 11.
[168] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Borderline Pamphlet. Box 168, Folder 5637. The Borderline Pamphlet was originally published in 1930 by the Mercury Press in London. It is preserved in Bryher's Papers at the Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library at Yale University, and has been reprinted in *Sagetrieb,* vol. 6 (Autumn, 1987), pp. 29-50; *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology,* ed. by Bonnie Kime Scott (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 110-125; and in H.D., 'Borderline: A POOL Film with Paul Robeson', in *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism,* ed. by James Donald, Anne Friedberg and Laura Marcus (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 221-235.
[169] Kenneth Macpherson, 'As Is', *Close Up,* 7.5 (November 1930), pp. 293-298 (p. 293).
[170] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Borderline Pamphlet. Box 168, Folder 5637. Some of these 'sketches' are listed as examples in H.D.'s pamphlet.

Bryher edited *Borderline,* 'work[ing] over the strips doing the montage as K indicates'.[171] This casts *Borderline* as a collaborative project, in much the same mode as *Close Up*, which operated under Macpherson's name but encompassed a wider network of activity from different sources.

Macpherson describes the silent film as 'jagged': it is 'dominated' by 'suggestion' of 'conflict, of mental wars, of hate and enmity'.[172] I will later explore the multiple "borderline" states that emerge from these mental wars wage on in relation to Herring's role in the film. The film is an integral part of POOL's tapestry of work, weaving many threads—of dream states, queer desires, fantasy, repression, psychoanalytic interrogations of neuroses, of social order, morality—in their attempt to convey the experience of living. As Macpherson writes, '*Borderline,* then, whether you like it or not, is life'. [173]

Alongside POOL's work on *Borderline,* the group published two more books in 1930. These were a pamphlet titled *Does Capital Punishment Exist?* by Hanns Sachs (who was Bryher's psychoanalyst) and an educational German language book called *The Light-Hearted Student*, co-written by Bryher and Trude Weiss, who was a regular writer for *Close Up* and an activist who wrote extensively on Judaism and feminism.[174] These are the last books that the group would publish under the POOL label. Although they diverge from the overt themes of cinema, desires and dreams, they embody elements of what Kane and Schlun both identify as POOL's humanitarian ethos. Schlun's study of POOL's anthropological universality tracks their labelled outputs and their 'humane', 'organic' and

[171] N H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Autobiographical notes, n.d. Box 47, Folder 1181. Donald, Friedberg and Marcus highlight the contrast between H.D.'s autobiographical comments and her 'Borderline Pamphlet', where she insists that *Borderline* was the independent work of Macpherson as an 'artist par excellence'. See Donald, Friedberg, Marcus, p. 334n26.
[172] Macpherson, 'As Is', *Close Up* (November 1930), p. 294.
[173] Ibid., p. 296.
[174] Hanns Sachs, *Does Capital Punishment Exist?* (Territet: POOL, 1930); Bryher and Trude Weiss, *The Light-Hearted Student* (Territet: POOL, 1930). Bryher met Sachs at a party hosted by G. W. Pabst in Berlin, 1927. She underwent formal analysis with Sachs in Berlin, and then in Switzerland in the summers from 1928-1932, and then whenever they met from that point onwards. H.D. also underwent some sessions with Sachs, and arranged her later analysis with Sigmund Freud, which she went on to write about in *Tribute to Freud* (1985). Sachs also contributed three articles to *Close Up,* all reproduced in the anthology *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism.* These were: Hanns Sachs, 'Film Psychology', *Close Up,* 3.5 (November, 1928), pp. 8-15; Hanns Sachs, 'Modern Witch Trials', *Close Up,* 4.5 (May 1929), pp. 18-22; Hanns Sachs, 'Kitsch', *Close Up,* 9.3 (September 1932), pp. 200-205. For more about Bryher and Sachs's relationship, see Friedman, *Analysing Freud,* pp. 574-575. Weiss was listed as *Close Up*'s correspondent for Vienna from March-December 1928, and then again from May 1930 until their final issue, contributing a total of nine articles. In *The Light-Hearted Student,* the division of work is noted in the introduction: 'Miss Weiss is responsible for the diagrams, much research work, and in general for the German. The general scheme of the book and use of rhyme in the vocabularies are the work of the English collaborator' (p. 15).

'non-violent' attitudes, and Kane's analysis of *Close Up*'s handling of world cinema shows their marked efforts to contribute to humanistic dialogue and global post-war recovery through transnational exchange.[175] *Does Capital Punishment Exist?* is an English translation of Sachs's German article first published in *Die psycho-analytische Bewegung* at the start of 1930. It takes pain, punishment, moral schemas as its main subjects, with Sachs attacking the death penalty and highlighting the pitfalls in 'criminal literature as well as in the sphere of modern thought and action'.[176] Societal critiques drive *The Light-Hearted Student*, too. Drawing on the themes woven throughout *Why Do They Like It?* and *Extra Passenger*, Bryher and Weiss list various barriers to learning language and put forward an 'amusing' guide that teaches German through rhyme.[177] Like much of POOL's work, the grammar textbook is motivated by the desire to communicate and to convey meaning and thought across divides, whether this be the a semantic barrier between English and German speakers, or the space between celluloid stock and the cinemagoer's eye.

January 1931 marks an upheaval for *Close Up.* With anxieties about how 'the new technique of sound-sight' would impact film as an industry, and as an artistic vehicle to convey universal meaning, the journal shifted from monthly publication to quarterly.[178] *Close Up*'s reaction to the talkies is complex. *The Jazz Singer* opened just three months after *Close Up*'s first issue and recalibrated the economic and aesthetic landscape of film, which James Donald summarises: '*Close Up*'s *raison d'être* was being undermined at the very moment the magazine came into being. Of course, however, the story is much more complicated and more interesting than that'.[179] Indeed, through my reading of Herring's *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*, I explore POOL's complex reaction to sound cinema. Not only did the format of *Close Up* change—with fewer publications, glossier pages and a new layout—but the dynamics within the POOL group were shifting, too, as explored in my reading of POOL's private archives show. Macpherson's involvement and investment in *Close Up* and, more widely, in the POOL group dwindled from this point on, although he was still credited

[175] Schlun, p. 12; Louise Kane, 'Little Magazines, Postwar Internationalism, and the Construction of World Cinema', *The Space Between,* vol. 16 (2020) <https://scalar.usc.edu/works/the-space-between-literature-and-culture-1914-1945/vol16_2020_kane> [accessed 13 February 2022].
[176] Sachs, *Does Capital Punishment Exist?,* p. 7.
[177] Bryher and Weiss, p. 12.
[178] Kenneth Macpherson, 'As Is', *Close Up,* 10.6 (December 1929), pp. 447-454 (p. 449).
[179] James Donald, 'Introduction: From Silence to Sound', in *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism,* ed. by James Donald, Anne Friedberg and Laura Marcus (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 79-82 (p. 79).

as editor until the journal's end. His editorials moved to the back of the magazine and he admits to Bryher in a letter a mixture of personal and artistic factors 'made *Close Up* seem useless and distasteful' for him from 1930 onwards.[180] Blakeston filled the editorial void. He is listed as an assistant editor alongside Bryher from 1931 onwards until the journal's last issue in December 1933.

Although POOL's works appear disparate, differing in style and content, they all challenge inherited traditions. These challenges take many forms. *Poolreflection* dismantles conventional, heteronormative and monogamous ideas of intimacy; *Why Do You Like It?*, *Extra Passenger* and *The Light-Hearted Student* attack the institutional values held within the British education system; they critiqued their current-day cinematography practice, through satires like *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside, Through A Yellow Glass* and *Close Up*, reimagining how film could portray emotion and desire, through their own filmmaking. In questioning inherited cultural norms, POOL's works engage in what James Donald describes as an effort to depict 'the vicissitudes of cosmopolitan being-in-the-world'.[181] This is expressed in a flurry of filmic and literary POOL productions between 1927 and 1930, and a gradual waning thereafter, until 1933, when POOL's label appeared to dissipate.

Just as the POOL group's formation is difficult to pinpoint, its ending is similarly complicated. The group's edges are blurred. Although critics generally take *Close Up*'s run as synonymous with POOL's lifespan, ceasing to produce any further labelled works after December 1933, members of the group continued to work with one another, producing work after this point invested in the same issues that POOL engaged with. Townsend and Kane have both explored the connections and continuities between *Close Up* and the literary periodical *Life and Letters To-Day*, which Bryher purchased in April 1935.[182] Herring and Dorothea Petrie Townshend (a school friend of Bryher's), were appointed editors and the journal included many familiar *Close Up* contributors.[183] Townsend shows that many of *Close Up*'s central concerns around film evolved within the pages of *Life and Letters To-Day*,

[180] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Kenneth Macpherson to Bryher, August 30 1934. Box 36, Folder 1286.
[181] Donald, *Some of These Days*, p. 135.
[182] Christopher Townsend, '*Close Up,* After *Close Up: Life and Letters To-Day* as a Modernist Film Journal', *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies,* 9.2 (2018), 245-264; Louise Kane, 'The Little Magazine in Britain: Networks, communities, and Dialogues (1900-1945), p. 286.
[183] For more on Bryher's purchase of *Life and Letters To-Day* and Herring's editorship, see Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Box 19, Folder 731.

continuing POOL's projects.[184] Indeed, Sarah Chadfield refers to *Life and Letters To-Day* as 'POOL's new publication', and Kane describes it as 'the new organ of the former *Close Up* network', situating the journal in a lively period of late modernist activity.[185] Enmeshed in an interlinked network of exchange, it is difficult to see where or when POOL's influence ends and something else begins.

Not only does POOL's evolution and expansion take place within the periodical culture of the time, spilling over and beyond 1933; it also occurs in literature. H.D. published several autobiographical short stories in 1934 that were not labelled as POOL works but engage directly with her experience of the group's intimate network. Almost all of them use the same streams of production as POOL, where they were funded by Bryher and printed for private circulation by Maurice Darantiere of Dijon, who printed POOL's early books and the first issues of *Close Up.* H.D. refers to her fiction penned between 1927 and 1934 as her "Dijon Cycle" which 'weave over and through the social-texture of the years when Kenneth and Bryher and I were together'.[186] These 'stories of Bryher and Kenneth', she writes, 'are subtle stories, difficult to re-read', spun together to form fragments of POOL's interior lives.[187] Her characters Daniel, Raymonde and Gareth, surface throughout her Dijon books, featuring in 'Narthex' (1928), 'The Usual Star' (first drafted in 1928 and published in 1934), and 'Two Americans' (drafted in 1930 and published in 1934).[188]. 'Mira-Mare' and 'Kora and Ka' (both written in 1930 and published in 1934), and *Nights* (started in 1931, and finished in 1935), take up different names: Alex and Christian; John Helforth and Kora; Natalia, Neil and Renne.[189] H.D. writes that 'something of Kenneth is enshrined in the little books. But more of Bryher…'.[190] Alongside 'sketch[es]' of POOL's founders, H.D.'s short stories also present glimpses of Paul Robeson and Herring as Saul Howard and Bennie Matthews in 'Two Americans', narrating the tense dynamics between Robeson and the

[184] Townsend, '*Close Up,* After *Close Up: Life and Letters To-Day* as a Modernist Film Journal'.
[185] Sarah Chadfield, 'Rethinking the Real: Modernist Realisms in *Close Up* and *Life and Letters To-day, 1927-1939* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2016), p. 53; Kane, 'The Little Magazine in Britain: Networks, communities, and Dialogues (1900-1945)', p. 290.
[186] H.D., 'Compassionate Friendship', p. 132.
[187] Ibid., p. 133, p. 132.
[188] H.D., 'Narthex'; H.D., 'The Usual Star', in *The Usual Star* (Dijon: 1934), pp. 9-89; H.D., 'Two Americans', in *The Usual Star* (Dijon: 1934), pp. 93-116.
[189] H.D., 'Mira-Mare', in *Kora and Ka,* ed. by Robert Spoo (New York: New Directions, 1996[1934]), pp. 55-102; H.D, 'Kora and Ka', in *Kora and Ka,* ed. by Robert Spoo (New York: New Directions, 1996[1934]), pp. 9-54; H.D., *Nights* (New York: New Directions, 1986[1935]).
[190] H.D., 'Compassionate Friendship', p. 130.

group, touching on her erotic attraction, fetishistic depictions of race and notions of identity and home.[191] As well as autobiographical 'reliquar[ies] to contain the memories' of H.D.'s time with POOL, the stories also exemplify many of the group's thematic concerns: queer desire, the mind, embodiment and perception.[192] Writing about *Nights* to Sylvia Dobson in 1935, H.D. describes it as a 'sort of veiled (not so veiled) study in sex, auto-eroticism and the wrong people making love', and 'a bit on the 'ps-a side', which was her shorthand for psychoanalysis.[193] These stories engaged with the ideas at the heart of the group, yet they are not viewed as POOL projects. They extend beyond the remits of POOL's critical lifespan and labelled creations.

There are many works that occupy this periphery—or perhaps borderline—space: works that were produced by writers who were linked to the group but have not yet been connected to POOL's activities. This prompts the question: how should these works be treated? Where do H.D.'s Dijon works sit in relation to POOL, with their 'veiled (not so veiled)' explorations of the group's personal lines of intimacy?[194] What of her poem, 'Red Roses for Bronze', which was published in 1928 in *Poetry Quartos*, which problematically sets Robeson as a bronze god?[195] Should chapters of the sequence novel *Pilgrimage* by Dorothy Richardson, who contributed significantly to *Close Up* with her column 'Continuous Performance', be considered POOL texts? The manifold links between Richardson's film writing and her fiction have been well traversed, with Susan Gevirtz arguing that they are 'necessary trajectories of the same curiosity and aesthetic investigation'.[196] What about

[191] For autobiographical readings of 'Two Americans', see: James Donald, 'As It Happened… *Borderline,* the Uncanny and the Cosmopolitan', in *Uncanny Modernity: Cultural Theories, Modern Anxieties,* ed. by Jo Collins and John Jervis (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 91-111 (p. 106); Genevieve Abravanel, 'How to Have Race Without a Body: The Mass-Reproduced Voice and Modern Identity in H.D.'s "Two Americans"', *Mosaic,* 42.2 (2009), 37-53; Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Modernism of the "Scattered Remnant": Race and Politics in H.D.'s Developments', in *Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship,* ed. by Shari Benstock (Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 208-232 (pp. 214-223); Marcus, *The Tenth Muse,* p. 509; Friedman, *Penelope's Web*, p. 259-261.
[192] H.D., 'Compassionate Friendship', p. 130.
[193] 'Letter from H.D. to Sylvia Dobson, July 27 1935', quoted in Carol Tinker and Silvia Dobson, 'A Friendship Traced: H.D. Letters to Silvia Dobson', *Conjunctions,* 82.2 (Spring/Summer 1982), 115-157 (p. 128).
[194] Ibid.
[195] H.D., 'Red Roses for Bronze', in *Collected Poems, 1912-1944,* ed. by Louis Lohr Martz (New York: New Directions, 1983), pp. 211-215. For readings of 'Red Roses for Bronze' that analyse H.D.'s depiction of Robeson and draw parallels to the fetishization of his body that occurs in *Borderline*, see: Susan McCabe, *Cinematic Modernism: Modernist Poetry and Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 168; Friedman, 'Modernism of the "Scattered remnant": Race and Politics in H.D.'s Development', p. 225.
[196] Susan Gevirtz, *Narrative's Journey: The Fiction and Film Writing of Dorothy Richardson* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), p. 6. For more parallel readings of Richardson's film criticism and fiction, see: Abbie Garrington,

Herring's neglected book, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*, which rewrites The Book of Genesis as a satire about the advent of sound cinema, or his autobiographical *Cactus Coast*, which hopefully imagines a 'beacon' of queer desire on the coast of Monte Carlo?[197] Or Blakeston's short stories in *Few Are Chosen,* which explores the human body's place in the world through light and haptic vision, or *Magic Aftermath*, where a mundane trip to the cinema alters Paul's entire world view, animating his repressed queer longing? How might these inform or, in turn, be enlightened by placing them in dialogue with the POOL group?

By acknowledging these works as imbricated in a complex network of production, further insight into the group's composition, creative output, and engagement with modernism and modernity can be gained. Instead of treating the POOL group as a fixed set of writers or a stable list of catalogued creations, I argue instead for the consideration of POOL as a lively network of writers, filmmakers, artists, and industry workers, constituted by lines of queer intimacy. Raymond Williams discusses the complexities and tensions within historical analyses of 'cultural groups':

> The group, the movement, the circle, the tendency seem too marginal or too small or too ephemeral, to require historical and social analysis. Yet their importance, as a general social and cultural fact [...] is great: in what they achieved, and in what their modes of achievement can tell us about the larger societies to which they stand in such uncertain relations.[198]

Williams proposes that the cultural production of such groups or movements is rooted in the social relations of their unique historical moment, emphasising the interpersonal and collaborative elements of groups like William Godwin and his circle, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the Bloomsbury Fraction. Indeed, the POOL group's social relations are integral to their formation and their activities. I use the terms 'group' and 'network' loosely and interchangeably throughout this thesis to engage with POOL, to discuss a collection of collaborators who themselves were wary—and even resistant to—such definitions and labels.

Haptic Modernism: Touch and the Tactile in Modernist Writing (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 142-154; Nikolova and Townsend, pp. 181-200. For analysis of the Richardson's cinematic style in her fiction, see: Qian Zhang, '"[S]hining from the Future over Her Earliest Memories": Light, Memory, and Film in Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage', *Women's Studies,* 49.5 (2020), 463-477; Maria Francisca Llantada Díaz, 'An Analysis of Poetic and Cinematic Features in Dorothy M. Richardson's Pilgrimage', *English Studies,* 90.1 (2009), 57-77; Kristin Bluemel, *Experimenting on the Borders of Modernism: Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1997).

[197] Herring, *Cactus Coast,* p. 223.

[198] Raymond Williams, 'The Bloomsbury Fraction', in *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selection Essays* (New York: Verso, 1980), pp. 148-169 (p. 148-9).

Expanding the conception of the POOL group allows for a wider analysis of their activities and their queer modernist aesthetic. Attending to the queer relations of the group allows for different streams of production and influence to be explored, forming a fluid model of creativity. This sense of intimacy is then refracted throughout their work and made manifest through moments of modernist experimentation in their literary texts and films. This thesis recovers the works of two men, Herring and Blakeston, who are minor figures in critical accounts of the POOL group and in histories of literary modernism and film, where no extended reading of their literary works has yet been made. In exploring the literature that they produced between 1927 and 1934 (which spans their engagement with the group's most active period of production) I want to consider Herring and Blakeston not as lost writers whose work should be incorporated into a new modernist canon or to argue to what degree they adhere to traditional ideas of modernist aesthetics. Instead, my aim is to identify their significant involvement with POOL, to better understand the group's intense burst of cinematic and literary experimentation, alongside the queer modernist articulations that emerge across their fiction which, in turn, speak to and inform POOL's queer politics.[199]

The POOL Group's Critical Recovery: Locating Robert Herring and Oswell Blakeston

In charting the constellation of connections that locate Herring and Blakeston's fiction within the wider modernist nebula of the 1920s and 1930s that simultaneously produced and was produced by POOL, this thesis intersects with and expands on existing accounts of the group. The POOL group has a curious and complex critical lineage. After *Close Up*'s final issue in 1933, the group and their work were nearly forgotten for decades. There are a few mentions of *Close Up* scattered across early film histographies, with Siegfried Kracauer's study of German cinema in 1947, Jay Leyda's study of Soviet film in 1960, and Rachael Low's foundational study of British cinema in 1971.[200] Low describes POOL as a publisher rather than a group, but identifies a 'nucleus of cineastes devoted to

[199] My approach to the POOL group and use of the term 'articulations' is indebted to Alex Goody, who draws on the work of Stuart Hall and Jennifer Daryl Slack to synthesise a mode of cultural study that is a 'process of making connections', where 'context does not simply sit outside practices, affecting them, but that the practices and participants themselves affect form and context'. See Alex Goody, *Modernist Articulations: A Cultural Study of Djuna Barnes, Mina Loy and Gertrude Stein* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 14-15.
[200] Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947); Jay Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film* (New York: George Allen & Unwin, 1960); Rachael Low, *History of British Film 1918-1929* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971), p. 22.

the development of the art of film' that clustered around *Close Up.* She includes Macpherson, Bryher, Blakeston, Herring, Ernest Betts, Jean Prévost, Ivor Montagu, Gertrude Stein, Dorothy Richardson and Eric Elliott in this 'small circle of film initiates', noting its great 'historical importance [...] despite its small circulation'.[201] Aside from these brief references, the POOL group received almost no scholarly attention until the 1980s, when the POOL group's significance began to emerge within the field of film studies and history, the intersection between cinema and literary modernism, and in relation to the work of H.D., Bryher and Dorothy Richardson. The group's recovery has brought many vital facets of the group's work to light, yet it has also displaced Herring and Blakeston's roles within the group.

The concept of POOL as a group of artists and their work on *Close Up* and *Borderline* emerged with significant in scholarship during the 1980s, with what Michael O'Pray describes as a 'flurry of interest' led by three figures: Deke Dusinberre, Anne Friedberg and Roland Cosandey.[202] Indeed, Dusinberre's article, 'The Avant-Garde Attitude in the Thirties' situates *Close Up* as the 'initial focal point for avant-garde film activity in Britain'.[203] Friedberg recounts how she came across a 'mysterious box of nitrate film' in H.D.'s archives at the Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, which transpired to be 'fragments of the lost POOL film projects from the late Twenties', and led to her article on *Borderline* in 1980 and her pioneering dissertation on *Close Up* in 1983.[204] Cosandey's article also analyses the group's cultural production and tracks the historical reception of *Borderline.*[205] These studies argue for the evaluation of *Close Up* as a powerful disseminating critical force.

It is from this early work that the idea of POOL as a group begins to form. Dusinberre does not explicitly align the productions as part of a group's activity, but he does highlight the various outputs as autonomous but interconnected parts, drawing connections between *Close Up* and 'Pool films', drawing attention to the fact that 'Pool

[201] Low, *History of British Film 1918-1929*, p. 22.
[202] Michael O'Pray, 'Borderline', *Art Monthly*, no. 116 (May 1988), 36-37 (p. 36).
[203] Dusinberre, p. 67. This article was first published in *Traditions of Independence: British Cinema in the Thirties*, ed. by Don Macpherson (British Film Institute: London, 1980).
[204] Friedberg, 'The Film Journal Close Up: Writing About Cinema, (1927-1933)' p. v; Anne Friedberg, 'Approaching *Borderline'*, *Millennium Film Journal*, no.7/8/9 (Autumn 1980), 130-39.
[205] Roland Cosandey, 'On *Borderline'*, in *The British Avant-Garde Film 1926 – 1995: An Anthology of Writings*, ed. by Michael O'Pray (Luton: University of Luton Press, 1996), pp. 45-64 (p. 48). First published in *Afterimage*, no. 12 (Autumn, 1985).

publishers produced *Close Up*'.[206] Friedberg first employs the phrase 'the POOL group' to describe the collection of writers who worked together to make POOL films, *Close Up* and POOL books. She identifies this as a group of three in her study of 'what I am calling "the POOL group"—Winifred Bryher, Kenneth Macpherson, H.D. [...] It was the unique combination of these three personalities that formed POOL'.[207] Friedberg centres the founding trio in her restoration of the POOL group, noting Bryher and Macpherson's editorial titles within *Close Up* to demonstrate their marked involvement and depicting H.D., in contrast, as a 'silent partner'.[208] Although there is an emphasis on the activities of H.D., Bryher and Macpherson—and within this, a further emphasis on the work of H.D. and Bryher, which she admits is 'implicitly imbalanced' due to 'the limited amount of biographical information and sources' for Macpherson—Friedberg also notes the varied elements of POOL's productions, where she includes brief sections on Blakeston, Herring and Dorothy Richardson, who are all referred to as frequent contributors to *Close Up.*[209] Cosandey approaches the varied productions as the 'activity of Kenneth Macpherson and the more or less fixed group under the Pool banner – Winifred Bryher, Robert Herring, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), Dorothy Richardson, Oswell Blakeston', which he celebrates as 'exemplary in all respects' as 'no other group managed to create this unique and concentrated combination of all (or almost all) the various forms which constituted the international network of European avant-garde cinema'.[210] His outline of POOL is slightly broader, acknowledging the crucial involvement of Herring, Richardson and Blakeston. He also hints at a more fluid and collaborative model that is '*more or less* fixed', which leaves a little room for change, where the 'division of work [on *Close Up*] is highly schematic and obviously allowed for other tasks to be assumed at times by various members of the basic group or by the international correspondents'.[211]

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[206] Dusinberre, p. 68.
[207] Friedberg, 'The Film Journal Close Up: Writing About Cinema, (1927-1933)', p. 32.
[208] Ibid. This view is reiterated in Friedberg's introduction to the edited anthology *Close Up, 1927-1933,* where she writes that 'POOL began as a publisher of books, a producer of films and the publisher of a monthly magazine *Close Up*. Although the actual members of POOL were not officially listed on any of their publications, *Close Up* referred to Kenneth Macpherson as its "Editor" and Bryher as "Assistant Editor". Bryher and Macpherson were unknown to the readers they courted. *Close Up* was launched to give them a voice. The poet H.D was a less visible—yet essential—accomplice'. See Friedberg, 'Introduction: Reading *Close Up*, 1927-1933', p. 9.
[209] Friedberg, 'The Film Journal Close Up: Writing About Cinema, (1927-1933)', p. 32, pp. 286-302.
[210] Cosandey, p. 48.
[211] Ibid., p. 48, p. 49. Emphasis is my own.

Since these early studies, scholarship has been predominantly focused on the group's film work. The legacies of *Close Up* and *Borderline* have been explored, where critics have located them in cinema and media histories, the transition to sound technology in film and its representation of race, especially in relation to Paul Robeson's role in *Borderline*. [212]

[212] For studies on *Close Up,* see: David Mellor, 'London - Berlin - London: A Cultural History: The Reception and Influence of the New German Photography in Britain 1927-1933', in *Germany: The New Photography 1927-33: Documents and Essays Selected and Edited by David Mellor*, ed. by David Mellor (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978), pp. 113-132; Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1998), pp. 229-247; Susan McCabe, '"Delight in Dislocation": The Cinematic Modernism of Stein, Chaplin, and Man Ray', *Modernism/modernity,* 8.3 (September 2001), 429-452; Paola Zaccaria and Francesca De Ruggieri, '*Close Up* as Con(t)ext', in *Networking Women: Subjects, Places, Links Europe-America: Towards a Re-writing of Cultural History, 1890-1939: Proceedings of the International Conference, Macerata, March 25-27, 2002*, ed. Marina Camboni (Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura: Roma, 2004), pp. 249-280 (p. 249); Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*, 2nd edn (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 111-129; Christine Gledhill, 'Play as Experiment in 1920s British Cinema', *Film History,* 20.1 (2008) 14 – 34; Laura Marcus, 'Cinema and Visual Culture: *Close Up* (1927-1933)', in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines: Volume I Britain and Ireland 1880-1955,* ed. by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 505-529; Genevieve Abravanel, 'Britain's Hollywood: Cinema and *Close Up', Modernist Cultures,* 5.1 (May 2010), 145-161; Phillip, 'Veiled Disclosures and Queer Articulations: Readings of Literary and Cinematic Works by Bryher and POOL', pp. 165-220; Genevieve Abravanel, *Americanizing Britain: The Rise of Modernism in the Age of the Entertainment Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 85-109; McCabe, 'Close Up & Wars They Saw: From Visual Erotics to a Transferential Politics of Film', pp. 11-35; Jenelle Troxell, 'Shock and "Perfect Contemplation": Dorothy Richardson's Mystical Cinematic Consciousness', *Modernism/modernity,* 21.1 (January 2014), 51-70; Kane, 'The Little Magazine in Britain: Networks, communities, and Dialogues (1900-1945)', pp. 263-323; Chadfield, 'Rethinking the Real: Modernist Realisms in *Close Up* and *Life and Letters To-day, 1927-1939*'; Jenelle Troxell, 'Mind Cure and ecstasy on the pages of *Close Up*', *Screen,* 58.3 (Autumn 2017), 349-371; Schlun, pp. 357-408; Ira Nadel, 'The Russian Woolf', *Modernist Cultures,* 13.4 (2018), 546-567; Galina Kiryushina, 'Execrations on another plane': Film theory in *Close Up* and Beckett's Late Prose', in *Beckett and Modernism*, ed. by Olga Beloborodova, Dirk Van Hulle and Pum Verhulst (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 209-222; Townsend, '*Close Up,* After *Close Up: Life and Letters To-Day* as a Modernist Film Journal', pp. 245-264; Nikolova and Townsend, pp. 181-200; Townsend, 'A Deeper, Wider POOL: Reading *Close Up* Through the Archives of its Contributors'; Jenelle Troxell, '"Light Filtering through Those Shutters": *Joyless Streets,* Mnemic Symbols, and the Beginnings of Feminist Film Criticism', *Camera Obscura,* 34.3 (2019), 63-95; Kane, 'Little Magazines, Postwar Internationalism, and the Construction of World Cinema'. For studies on *Borderline,* see: Friedman, 'Modernism of the "Scattered Remnant": Race and Politics in H.D's Developments', pp. 208-232; Jean Walton, '"Nightmare of the Uncoordinated White-Folk": Race, Psychoanalysis, and *Borderline*', *Discourse,* 19.2 (Winter 1997), 88-109; Walton, 'White Neurotics, Black Primitives, and the Queer Matrix of *Borderline*', pp. 243-270; Anette Debo, 'Interracial modernism in avant-garde film: Paul Robeson and H.D. in the 1930 *Borderline*', *Quarterly Review of Film & Video,* 18.4 (2001), 371-383; Alice Maurice, '"Cinema at Its Source": Synchronizing Race and South in the Early Talkies', *Camera Obscura,* 17.1 (2002), 31-71; Susan McCabe, 'Borderline Modernism: Paul Robeson and the Femme Fatale', *Callaloo,* 25.2 (Spring, 2002), 639-653; Tizra True Latimer, '"Queer Situations": Behind the Scenes of *Borderline', English Language Notes,* 45.2 (Fall/Winter 2007), 33-47; Judith Brown, '*Borderline*, Sensation, and the Machinery of Expression', *Modernism/Modernity,* 14.4 (November 2007), 687-705; Donald, 'As It Happened… *Borderline,* the Uncanny and the Cosmopolitan', pp. 91-111; James Donald, '*Borderline*, and Paul Robeson: Portraits of the Artist (review)', *Modernism/modernity,* 15.3 (September 2008), 594-598; Susan McCabe, 'The British Hitchcock: Epistemologies of Nation, Gender and Detection', *Modernist Cultures,* 5.1 (May 2010), 127-144; Phillip, 'Veiled Disclosures and Queer Articulations: Readings of Literary and Cinematic Works by Bryher and POOL', pp. 120-164; Brad D. Baumgartner, 'Uncanny Ontology: *Borderline,* Martin Heidegger, and the Avant-Garde', *The Explicator,* 70.2 (2012), 123-127; Caroline Maclean, '"That Magic Force that is Montage": Eisenstein's Filmic Fourth Dimension, *Borderline* and H.D.', *Literature & History,* 21.1 (Spring 2012), 44-60; Troxell, 'Shock and "Perfect Contemplation": Dorothy Richardson's Mystical Cinematic Consciousness', 51-70; Donald, *Some of These Days*.

There has also been an interest in *Close Up*'s role in periodical cultures of modernism and its role as 'little magazine'.[213] The publication of the edited anthology, *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism,* curated by Donald, Friedberg and Marcus in 1998 reproduced a selection of articles from *Close Up* and film stills from a number of POOL films alongside useful introductions, analysis and biographical context for the POOL group. *Close Up* had hitherto only existed in archives, libraries, second-hand bookshops and private collections, so the publication of this anthology meant *Close Up* became more easily accessible. Indeed, the editors cite this as one of their motivations for the project, where the 'importance of *Close Up* for histories of both modernism and cinema is being recognized more and more widely, and so an anthology which makes even a sample of its work more easily available is timely'. [214] This anthology is invaluable, where it draws on much of archival and historical grounding set out in Friedberg's thesis and presents explorations of *Close Up* in relation to early-twentieth cinema culture, psychoanalysis, and sound technologies, much of which would be expanded in Marcus's *The Tenth Muse.*[215] The editors note 'one quite deliberate imbalance' in their curation of *Close Up 1927-1933*: 'We have placed a special emphasis on the writings of H.D. and Dorothy Richardson'.[216] This allows for explorations of H.D.'s investigation of 'film art as new classicism', where the editors state that her film writing represents 'a number of different strands' of the journal's core concerns; and Richardson's views on sound and the phenomenological, anthropological and gendered aspects of cinemagoing seen in her *Close Up* contributions.[217] It also demonstrates and perpetuates an 'imbalance' that is present across much scholarship on the POOL group and their works.[218]

[213] See Kane, 'The Little Magazine in Britain: Networks, Communities, and Dialogues (1900-1945)', pp. 263-323; Maggie Humm, 'Women Modernists and Visual Culture', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Writers,* ed. by Maren Tova Linett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 148-153; Marcus, 'Cinema and Visual Culture: *Close Up* (1927-1933)', pp. 505-529; Townsend, '*Close Up,* After *Close Up: Life and Letters To-Day* as a Modernist Film Journal'.
[214] James Donald, Anne Friedberg and Laura Marcus, 'Preface', *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism,* ed. by James Donald, Anne Friedberg and Laura Marcus (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998) pp. vii-x (p. vii).
[215] Marcus, *The Tenth Muse,* pp. 319-403.
[216] Donald, Friedberg and Marcus, 'Preface', p. vii.
[217] Laura Marcus, 'Introduction: The Contribution of H.D', in *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism,* ed. by James Donald, Anne Friedberg and Laura Marcus (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 96-104 (p. 96; p. 98); Laura Marcus, 'Continuous Performance: Dorothy Richardson', in *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism,* ed. by James Donald, Anne Friedberg and Laura Marcus (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 150-159.
[218] Donald, Friedberg and Marcus, 'Preface', p. vii.

Many studies have focused on the involvements of Bryher, H.D., and Richardson within *Close Up* and POOL's films, facilitating an interest in the group within modernist histories. This is part of a larger feminist critical intervention seeking to recover the neglected works and lives of women writers within a modernist studies which, as Bonnie Kime Scott wrote, 'was unconsciously gendered masculine'.[219] Following Friedman's call-to-arms in 1975, there has been an ongoing revival of H.D.'s work, her mythopoesis and modernist experimentation.[220] Bryher's works and significant role in modernist cultural production have also received increasing scholarly attention, with Maggie Humm, Joanne Winning, Donald, Friedberg and Marcus, Phillip, and most recently Zlatina Nikolova, Souhami and McCabe working to bring her editorial role within *Close Up* to light.[221] H.D and Bryher's relationship to cinematic modernism has been the subject of much discussion—where the interests and operations of the POOL group, *Close Up* and POOL films are often

[219] Bonnie Kime Scott, 'Introduction', *The Gender of Modernism*, ed. by Bonnie Kime Scott (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 1-29 (p. 2). See also: Benstock and Hanscombe and Smyers.
[220] Friedman, 'Who Buried H.D.? A Poet. Her Critics, and Her Place in "The Literary Tradition"'. These interpretations range from biographic, feminist, psychoanalytic and queer approaches, to name just a few of many ways that critics have engaged with H.D.'s work. For biographic studies of H.D. that explore key events in her life and read the impact in her work, see Blau DuPlessis, Guest, and Friedman, *Penelope's Web.* For feminist readings of H.D.'s work, see Susan Stanford Friedman, *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981); Gertrude Reif Hughes, 'Making it Really New: Hilda Doolittle, Gwendolyn Books, and the Feminist Potential of Modern Poetry', *American Quarterly,* 42.3 (Sept. 1990), 375-401; and Georgina Taylor, *H.D. and the Public Sphere of Modernist Women Writers 1913-1946: Talking Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). For studies of H.D. that centre psychoanalytic readings of her work and her close relationship to Sigmund Freud and his theories, see Roula-Maria Dib, *Jungian Metaphor in Modernist Literature: Exploring Individuation, Alchemy and Symbolism* (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 48-86; Susan Edmunds, *Out of Line: History, Psychoanalysis, & Montage in H.D.'s Long Poems* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); and Elizabeth A. Hirsh, 'Imaginary Images: H.D., Modernism and the Psychoanalysis of Seeing', in *Signets: Reading H.D.*, ed. by Susan Stanford Friedman and Rachel Blau DuPlessis (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), pp. 430-454. For queer readings, see Collecott, Buck, and Johnston, pp. 95-126.
[221] Humm, 'Women modernists and Visual Culture', pp. 146-159; Joanne Winning, 'Ezra through the open door': The Parties of Natalie Barney, Adrienne Monnier and Sylvia Beach as Lesbian Modernist Cultural Production', in *The Modernist Party,* ed. by Kate McLoughlin (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 127-146; Donald, Friedberg and Marcus, *Close UP 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism*; Phillip, 'Veiled Disclosures and Queer Articulations: Readings of Literary and Cinematic Works by Bryher and POOL'; Nikolova, 'Images in Prose and Film: Modernist treatments of gender, education and early 20th century culture in Bryher's *Close Up* essays, her volume *Film Problems of Soviet Russia* (1929), and her autobiographical fiction'; Nikolova and Townsend; Souhami, pp. 111-212; McCabe, 'Close Up & Wars They Saw: From Visual Erotics to a Transferential Politics of Film'; McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher*. For further studies highlighting Bryher's role in little magazines, see Benstock; and Marek, 'Magazines, Presses, and Salons in Women's Modernism', pp. 10-11; p. 13-14. For a queer historicist perspective on Bryher's life, see Susan McCabe, 'Whither Sexuality and Gender? "What That Sign Signifies" and the Rise of Queer Historicism', *Pacific Coast Philology,* vol. 41 (2006), 26-31 (p. 30-31). For a broader look at Bryher's relationship to cinema, see Maggie Humm, *Modernist Women and Visual Cultures* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), pp. 174-176. For an analysis of Bryher's novel *Gate to the Sea*, see Ruth Hoberman, 'Multiplying the Past: Gender and Narrative in Bryher's *Gate to the Sea*', *Contemporary Literature*, 31.3 (1990), 354-372.

cited—that allows for a rich analysis of the way that film weaves through the thematic skein of their works.[222]

Donald, Friedberg and Marcus elaborate on their editorial choice to focus so heavily on the women of *Close Up*:

> This is not only in recognition of [H.D. and Richardson's] literary, and sometimes even poetic, qualities. We want to give their speculations on film and cinema wider currency primarily in order to pose the question whether *literary* modernism – and especially the modernism of women like Virginia Woolf as well as the *Close Up* contributors – should be seen in large part as a response to, and an appropriation of, the aesthetic possibilities opened up by *cinema*.[223]

From Friedberg's early doctoral thesis, which aimed to embody a necessary 'feminist history of film theory' which explored 'writing ON cinema by a variety of women writers', the important and urgent investigation of the intersection of gender, cinema and modernism has excavated the work by many women who were systematically written out of modernist histories.[224] This has inspired works including the dynamic study of

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[222] For studies that examine H.D.'s sense of the visual image and its impact on her writing, see Foltz, *The Novel After Film,* pp. 104-134; Jonathan Foltz, 'The Laws of Comparison: H.D. and Cinematic Formalism', *Modernism/modernity* 18.1 (2011) 1-25; Rachel Connor, *H.D. and the Image* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Gary Burnett, *H.D. Between Image and Epic: The Mysteries of her Poetics* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Press, 1990); Rachel Connor, 'H.D.'s *The Gift:* and 'endless store room of film', in *Literature and Visual Technologies: Writing After Cinema,* ed. by Julian Murphet and Lydia Rainford (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 82-95; Troxell, 'Shock and "Perfect Contemplation": Dorothy Richardson's Mystical Cinematic Consciousness'; Leonard Diepveen, 'H.D. and the Film Arts', *Journal of Aesthetic Education,* 18.4 (1984), 57-65; Edmunds; Anne Friedberg, 'On H.D., Woman, History, Recognition', *Wide Angle: A Film Quarterly of Theory, Criticism and Practice,* no. 5 (1982), 26-31; Elizabeth A. Hirsch, '"New Eyes": H.D., Modernism and the Psychoanalysis of Seeing', *Literature and Psychology,* 32.3 (1986), 1-10; Charlotte Mandel, 'Garbo/Helen: The Self-Projection of Beauty by H.D.', *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal,* 7.1/2 (1980), 127-135; Charlotte Mandel, 'The Redirected Image: Cinematic Dynamics in the Style of H.D.', *Literature/Film Quarterly,* 11.36 (1983), 36-45; Charlotte Mandel, 'Magical Lenses: Poet's Vision Beyond the Naked Eye', in *H.D. Woman and Poet*, ed. by Michael King (Orono: National Poetry Foundation, 1986), pp. 300–17; McCabe, *Cinematic Modernism*; and Marcus, 'The Contribution of H.D.', pp. 96-104. For explorations of Bryher's relationship with cinema, see Jane Marek, 'Bryher and *Close Up, 1927-1933'*, H.D. Newsletter, 2.3 (1990), 27-37; McCabe, '"Let's Be Alone Together": Bryher's and Marianne Moore's Aesthetic-Erotic Collaboration'; Carrie J. Preston, *Modernism's Mythic Prose: Gender, Genre, Solo Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Nikolova, 'Images in Prose and Film: Modernist treatments of gender, education and early 20th century culture in Bryher's *Close Up* essays, her volume *Film Problems of Soviet Russia* (1929), and her autobiographical fiction'; and McCabe, 'Close Up & Wars They Saw: From Visual Erotics to a Transferential Politics of Film'. For analyses of *Borderline* which include emphasis on H.D.'s performance of Astrid, see Maclean; McCabe, 'Borderline Modernism: Paul Robeson and the Femme Fatale'; Debo; Walton, '"Nightmare of the Uncoordinated White-Folk": Race, Psychoanalysis, and *Borderline'*; Donald, '*Borderline*, and: Paul Robeson: Portraits of the Artist'. For an analysis of the queer codification of Bryher as the 'butch bar manager', see Brown, '*Borderline*, Sensation, and the Machinery of Expression', p. 691; Friedberg, 'Approaching *Borderline'*; and Nikolova, 'Onscreen Femininity Deconstructed: Garbo's Greta, Khokhlova's Edith and H.D.'s Astrid'.

[223] Donald, Friedberg and Marcus, 'Preface', p. vii.

[224] Friedberg, 'The Film Journal Close Up: Writing About Cinema, (1927-1933)', p. 7.

Richardson's 'licking eye' and haptic cinema apparatus by Abbie Garrington; Alex Goody's analysis of silent cinema's visual culture in the modernist women of *Close Up,* which includes analyses of writing by H.D., Gertrude Stein and Marianne Moore within a praxis of gender, technology, leisure and modernism; and Lisa Stead's investigation of interwar British movie culture in women's writing.[225]

More recently, the critical focus has inadvertently contributed to what Townsend has described a 'skewed survey' of the POOL group which, he argues, has been shaped by 'established perceptions of canonical significance'.[226] The POOL's critical retrieval has often worked to locate it within the avant-garde activity of the time, emphasising the involvement of well-known modernist names, or names that were being re-established in the essential feminist revisionist studies of the 1980s and 1990s. When *Close Up* is mentioned, the contributions of Gertrude Stein, Marianne Moore, Man Ray, H.D. and Bryher are often highlighted, which produces, as Townsend argues, a 'sharp literary focus' and connotations of the 'avant-garde's exclusivity, techno-phobia, and antipathy to commercial enterprise and mass culture'.[227] Townsend traces this back to Dusinberre's 'oddly focused' article, which proposes that *Close Up*'s 'cultural sympathies with the avant-garde are suggested by its publication of contributions such as the imagist poet H.D. (who often wrote reviews and criticism and occasional poems), Gertrude Stein (who contributed a short story, *Mrs Emerson*) and Man Ray (who published some photographs and a short piece of his film work)'.[228] This selection has persisted throughout scholarship on *Close Up*. For example, McCabe's *Cinematic Modernism* foregrounds the involvement of H.D., Richardson, Stein and Moore 'among its other literary contributions', and analyses Stein's

[225] Garrington, p. 142; Alex Goody, *Modernist Poetry, Gender and Leisure Technologies: Leisure Amusements* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 209-221; and Stead. For more work on Richardson's relationship with film and cinemagoing, see Troxell, 'Shock and "Perfect Contemplation": Dorothy Richardson's Mystical Cinematic Consciousness'; Trotter, p. 162; Sara Bryant, 'Dorothy Arzner's Talkies: Gender, Technologies of Voice, and the Modernist Sensorium', *Modern Fiction Studies,* 59.2 (2013), 346-372; Adam Guy, 'The Noise of Meditation: Dorothy Richardson's Sonic Modernity', *Modernism/modernity,* 27.1 (2020), 81-101; Amelie Hastie, 'Historical Predictions, Contemporary Predilections: Reading Feminist Theory Close Up', *Framework,* 46.1 (2005), 74-82; Laraine Porter, '"The film gone male": Women and the Transition to Sound in the British Film Industry 1929-1932', *Women's History Review,* 29.5 (2020), 766-783; Paul Tissen, 'A Comparative Approach to Form and the Function of Novel and Film: Dorothy Richardson's Theory of Art', *Literature Film Quarterly,* 3.1 (1975), 83-90; and Laura Marcus, 'Continuous Performance: Dorothy Richardson', *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism,* ed. by James Donald, Anne Friedberg and Laura Marcus (Princeton, NJ: Princeton, 1998), pp. 150-159.

[226] Townsend, 'A Deeper, Wider POOL: Reading *Close Up* Through the Archives of its Contributors'.

[227] Ibid.

[228] Ibid.; Dusinberre, p. 67.

short story alongside Ray's film stills; Leonard Diepeveen's early article on H.D.'s relationship with film cites Stein and Moore as emblematic of *Close Up*'s literary contributors; Carrie J. Preston positions *Close Up* in relation to H.D., Richardson, Stein, Moore and Ray, as well as the psychoanalyst Hanns Sachs, Michael North exemplifies the tendency to conflate *Close Up*'s cultural status with its literary modernist contributors: 'Any claim that *Close Up* might have had to speak for the "aesthetes" on the subject of film was based primarily on the presence of H.D., but also on the very considerable contributions of Dorothy Richardson, as well as occasional pieces by other writers such as Gertrude Stein and Marianne Moore'.[229] Janet Harbord describes POOL's 'cultural paradigm' as 'a particularly modernist kind' of 'abstraction and formal play of Woolf, H.D., [and] Gertrude Stein'.[230] To list a few further examples, Goody's *Modernist Poetry, Gender and Leisure Technologies* includes detailed analysis of Stein's two contributions to *Close Up*; Barbara Guest's biographical study of H.D. includes reference to *Close Up* by naming Stein, Moore, Barbara Low and Richardson; and Richard Dyer maps *Close Up*'s broad affiliations with the Harlem Renaissance, and the other, with the 'literary and quasi-feminist avant-garde (H.D., Marianne Moore, Gertrude Stein, Dorothy Richardson', [and] psychoanalysis (Barbara Low, Mary Chadwick, Hans Sachs and Freud himself)'.[231]

This repeated emphasis works to reinforce a critical picture of *Close Up* and, by proxy, POOL, that is not representative of the group's wide ranging and varied network of activity. Indeed, over the journal's six-year run and the 584 article published in that time, Stein only contributed two pieces to the journal in 1927: 'Mrs Emerson', which was published in August 1927, and 'Three Sitting Here', which is spread across the third and fourth issues in September and October 1927.[232] Similarly, Low published just one piece in 1927.[233] Moore contributed two pieces in 1933.[234] Ray's contribution is similarly sparse, with

[229] McCabe, *Cinematic Modernism*, p. 1; p. 429; Diepeveen, p. 58; Preston, p. 213; Michael North, *Camera Works: Photography and the Twentieth-Century Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 88.
[230] Janet Harbord, *Film Cultures* (London: Sage, 2002), p. 26.
[231] Goody, *Modernist Poetry, Gender and Leisure Technologies: Machine Amusements*, pp. 218-221; Guest, p. 190. Barbara Low contributed just one article to *Close Up* in in August 1927; Dyer, p. 128-9.
[232] Gertrude Stein, 'Mrs Emerson', *Close Up,* 1.2 (August 1927), pp. 23-28; Gertrude Stein, 'Three Sitting Here', *Close Up,* 1.3 (September 1927), pp. 17-28; Gertrude Stein, 'Three Sitting Here', *Close Up,* 1.4 (October 1927), pp. 17-25.
[233] Barbara Low, 'Mind-Growth or Mind-Mechanization: The Cinema in Education', *Close Up,* 1.3 (September 1927), pp. 43-52. This article which is fully reproduced in Donald, Friedberg and Marcus, pp. 247-250.
[234] Marianne Moore, 'Fiction or Nature?', *Close Up,* 10.3 (September 1933), pp. 260-265; Marianne Moore, 'Lot in Sodom', *Close Up,* 10.4 (December 1933), pp. 318-319.

just one short descriptive paragraph about his 'cinepoem with a certain optical sequence', *Emak Bakia*, with four accompanying stills appearing in *Close Up*'s second issue.[235] Marcus and Friedberg acknowledge the complexities of *Close Up*'s cultural status, noting that this affiliation with figures like Stein, Ray and Woolf—who Macpherson attempted unsuccessfully to solicit an article from in 1927—was intentional, as it provided an 'external legitimization from the literary world' to discuss cinema, and that this was gradually shed, where, as Marcus writes, the '"writerly" and undeniably "coterie" aspects of the journal's foundation do not detract from the immense importance it acquired on broad, international film contexts'.[236] Despite this, the cultural construction of *Close Up* persists.

The narrow focus on such a varied journal results in what Schlun critiques as the homogenisation of *Close Up*'s film writing. This is exemplified by Donald, Friedberg and Marcus's edited anthology, where so much attention has been applied to a relatively small selection of work, which 'misplaces' and fundamentally 'alters' the nature of the journal itself.[237] Schlun's study seeks to address this, with an extended examination of Macpherson's 'As Is' editorials and his 'poetic arrangement' of *Close Up,* however she still includes dedicated sections to the contributions of H.D., Richardson and Stein.[238] Townsend's revisionist article, 'A Deeper, Wider POOL: Reading Close Up Through the Archives of its Contributors' challenges the 'editorial bias' represented by *Close Up 1917-1933* in order to excavate the significant roles that Herring and Blakeston played within *Close Up,* along with their connections to the film industry, mass culture, and their impact on the magazine's content and critical discourse.[239] Townsend contrasts the representation of the three most prolific contributors to *Close Up*—Macpherson (who produced 60 articles in total), Blakeston (56), and Herring (38)—with the relatively sparse number of articles that H.D. (14) and Richardson (22) contributed. There is a further imbalance here, too: the majority of H.D. and Richardson's articles were published in early issues of *Close Up*, with 11 of H.D.'s pieces and 14 of Richardson's appearing in the first 14 months of the journal's six year run. Donald, Friedberg and Marcus's edited anthology reproduces nine of H.D.'s pieces

[235] Man Ray, 'Emak Bakia', *Close Up,* 1.2 (August 1927), p. 40.
[236] Friedberg, 'Introduction: Reading *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism',* p. 15; Marcus, 'Cinema and Visual Culture: *Close Up* (1927-1933)', p. 512-513.
[237] Schlun, p. 360.
[238] Ibid., p. 410. For Schlun's analysis of Macpherson's contributions, see pp. 370-384); for her study of H.D.'s work with an emphasis on her 'Projector' poems, see pp. 384-394; for Stein's literary contributions, see pp. 394-402; and Richardson's column, see pp. 402-406.
[239] Townsend, 'A Deeper, Wider POOL: Reading *Close Up* Through the Archives of its Contributors'.

along with all 22 of Richardson's contributions, whereas just three of Macpherson's, two of Blakeston's and one of Herring's articles are included.[240] While the 'deliberate imbalance' allows for an enlightening study of women's writing and cinematic modernism, it establishes a partisan projection of *Close Up,* which tilts towards the first fourteen months of a six-year project and actively displaces the journal's most prolific voices.[241]

Townsend's article alongside other recent criticism have made *Close Up*'s wider streams of activity more visible. Kane locates *Close Up* within the context of international film culture, and within a larger, lively modernist periodical network alongside Blakeston's *Seed* and *Life and Letters To-Day,* where Bryher and Herring's roles are crucial, thus expanding conceptions of *Close Up*'s modernist cultural legacy.[242] Townsend establishes Herring and Blakeston's roles within *Close Up,* focusing on their productive dialogue they encourage between *Close Up* and the emergent British media culture, and Townsend and Zlatina Nikolova's recent piece on *Close Up*'s investment in cinema 'as popular culture' that draws on Richardson and Herring's respective involvements.[243] Schlun ambitiously maps POOL's catalogue with attention to the group's interest in mass culture, analysing the 'universal language of art' within *Close Up,* POOL's books, films, and architecture.[244] It is the only full-length study of the POOL group to date, and offers the first analyses of POOL books like *Poolreflection, Gaunt Island,* and a small section on *Extra Passenger,* set alongside readings of Nietzsche and Greek myth.[245] Schlun situates POOL within a model of modernism that speaks to T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, gesturing to the 'many streams' of POOL that embody a 'synthesis of the arts'.[246] While this thesis is less interested in how POOL's fiction adheres to a modernist canon, and more about how notions of canonicity have shaped its critical genealogy, Schlun's work pioneers the study of POOL's books.

Tracing the POOL group's critical history offers some explanation of how the elision of extended studies on Herring and Blakeston has occurred: firstly, the vital recovery the

[240] Ibid.
[241] Donald, Friedberg and Marcus, 'Preface', p. vii.
[242] Kane, 'Little Magazines, Postwar Internationalism, and the Construction of World Cinema'; Kane, 'The Little Magazine in Britain: Networks, communities, and Dialogues (1900-1945)'.
[243] Townsend, 'A Deeper, Wider POOL: Reading *Close Up* Through the Archives of its Contributors'; Nikolova and Townsend, p. 183, p. 186.
[244] Schlun, p. 69.
[245] Ibid., pp. 161-202, pp. 203-243, pp. 253-256.
[246] Ibid., p. 1.

roles of women in networks like POOL and within works like *Close Up* has naturally prioritised different figures; and secondly, Herring and Blakeston's minor statuses, relative obscurity and lack of easy access to their archives and fictional texts, which remain out of print, has not inspired much critical interest until recent years. Kristin Bluemel reflects on the impact of existing narratives of modernism, institutional identities, and the limits of 'troubled modernist inclusion' within a field that is, as Paul Saint-Amor writes, ever 'weakening' and 'expanding'.[247] Another reason for the absence of full-length studies of Herring and Blakeston is the critical construction of the POOL group itself. The POOL group is largely used as a shorthand for H.D., Bryher and Macpherson, treating the group as a triadic ménage, which had surrounding acolytes and associates. Donald, for example, demonstrates the focus on the triangular relationship with his definition of the 'self-styled POOL group' as:

> an idiosyncratic triumvirate of avant-garde intellectuals with a passion for cinema: the talented but ill-disciplined young Scot, Kenneth Macpherson, the English writer and shipping heiress Bryher (Annie Winifred Ellerman), and, of course, Hilda Doolittle, the expatriate American poet H.D. Living together in the Swiss town of Territet, these three played out an intricate minuet of sexual relationships and self-reflection on the depths of their emotions.[248]

This emphasis on POOL as synonymous with the three founding members produces a narrow conception of the group's operations, which obliquely obscures the parts that other figures, like Herring and Blakeston, played.[249]

Other studies present the POOL group as a more capacious collective, enabling for a wider analysis of POOL's influences. Kane tracks the group's evolution from 'a tight clique of three to a wider, yet still small, interlinked network of writers, film-directors, and even physicians', highlighting the tensions between *Close Up*'s 'expanding network' and POOL books and films which, by comparison, had smaller circulations, where POOL is

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[247] Kristin Bluemel, 'Vegetable Careers or, Beating Mr. McGregor at His Own Game', *The Modernist Review* (September 2020) <https://modernistreviewcouk.wordpress.com/2020/09/15/the-trouble-with-modernism-a-dialogue-continued/> [accessed 1 October 2020]; Paul Saint-Amour, 'Weak Theory, Weak Modernism', *Modernism/modernity Print+*, 3.3 (2018) <https://modernismmodernity.org/articles/weak-theory-weak-modernism#_edn41> [accessed 3 June 2021]

[248] Donald, '*Borderline*, and: Paul Robeson: Portraits of the Artist', p. 594.

[249] Baumgartner, pp. 123-127; Abravanel, *Americanizing Britain,* p. 96; Gledhill, 'Play as Experiment in 1920s British Cinema', p. 17; Walton, 'White Neurotics, Black Primitives, and the Queer Matrix of *Borderline*', p. 243; McCabe, *H.D & Bryher,* p. 132; Latimer, '"Queer Situations": Behind the Scenes of *Borderline',* p. 33; Phillip, 'Veiled Disclosures and Queer Articulations: Readings of Literary and Cinematic Works by Bryher and POOL', p. 2; Christina Walter, *Optical Impersonality: Science, Images, and Literary Modernism* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014), p. 102; Schlun, p. 4.

'characterised by a strange dialectic of expansion and curtailment'.[250] Townsend and Nikolova both identify 'the POOL group's wider network' as an intersectional 'locus for different forms of amateurism', where industry professionals and established literary modernists engaged in a productive exchange.[251]

Other references to POOL explicitly include Herring and Blakeston, as well as other *Close Up* contributors. This approach follows Cosandey's looser outline, which deliberately unites H.D., Bryher, Macpherson, Richardson, Herring, and Blakeston within the 'more or less fixed group under the Pool banner'.[252] Marcus's in-depth analysis of *Close Up,* in *The Tenth Muse* notes the magazine's covalent nature:

> The question opens out onto the "biographical" dimensions of *Close Up's* moment, and, more broadly, onto the complexities of private, *coterie* and public intellectual life in the modernist period. The letters (a substantial number of which have survived into the archives) that passed between *Close Up's* editor Kenneth Macpherson, his co-editor Bryher, and H.D., as well as, extending the circle, Blakeston and the film critic Robert Herring, reveal something of the ways in which 'the group' was constructed and sustained.[253]

Marcus's open question engages with the broader difficulties in defining artistic groups and their critical and aesthetic afterlives. The network's private dynamics and '"biographical" dimensions' overflow into *Close Up* and into POOL. Her provocation also hints at how notions of the network might alter, what insights might be gleaned by 'extending the circle' to encompass Herring and Blakeston.[254] Chadfield's doctoral thesis defines the POOL group as 'H.D., Bryher, Macpherson and Herring' in her exploration of modernist realisms in *Close Up* and *Life and Letters To-Day.*[255] She engages with the slippery nature of the term:

> the extent to which they imagined themselves as a "group" is difficult to say. They certainly did not refer to a POOL group in their letters to one another, and instead tended to call their friends "the bunch" when they mentioned them in collective terms. In criticism, the POOL group is most often taken to mean the writers, filmmakers and analysts associated with *Close Up* because the journal was their most well known publication'.[256]

[250] Kane, 'The Little Magazine in Britain: Networks, communities, and Dialogues (1900-1945)', p. 283, p. 286.
[251] Nikolova and Townsend, p. 182.
[252] Cosandey, p. 48.
[253] Marcus, *The Tenth Muse,* p. 321.
[254] Ibid.
[255] Sarah Chadfield, 'Rethinking the Real: Modernist Realisms in *Close Up* and *Life and Letters To-day, 1927-1939*', p. 61.
[256] Ibid.

These deliberations are crucial. They speak directly to the tensions within my study: how should we define a group that never outlined its own parameters, or even referred to itself as such? How should we manage the artistic afterlife of this modernist moment, especially when engaging with the queer sexual politics that sustained it? My use of the term "the POOL group" describes a confluence of multiple streams of production orientated toward collaboration and community. I embrace a fluid model of the group and focus on two neglected components of this expanded network, offering a close reading of Herring and Blakeston's prose alongside archival materials, to explore how their works exist within POOL's queer artistic conflux.

Fabio A. Durão and Dominic Williams offer useful grounding for analysing modernist groups, focusing on unseen and intimate networks of friendship, where 'much of modernism took shape in letters and personal encounters, and how collaborative ventures like the salon and the "little magazine" contributed, not incidentally but centrally, to the cultural innovations of the early twentieth century'.[257] Milton A. Cohen offers a loose working definition for pre-war modernist groups, which also informs my understanding of POOL's fluid model: they have a 'collective consciousness, a sense of itself as a group. The identity presumes a sense of boundaries, however loosely observed'.[258] Although POOL's network is more permeable, there is something about the idea of a shared ethos or 'collective consciousness' that speaks to the shared themes that ripple across POOL's body of work, as well as their shared language of nicknames and codes in their archival correspondence.[259] In approaching POOL as a collective, I also take inspiration from Madelyn Detloff and Brenda Helt's edited collection *Queer Bloomsbury*, which reads the Bloomsbury group through conviviality.[260] Paul Gilroy uses the idea of conviviality in *Postcolonial Melancholia,* defining it as the 'process of cohabitation and interaction that have made multiculture an ordinary feature of social life in Britain's urban areas'.[261] This

[257] Fabio A. Durão and Dominic Williams, 'Introduction', in *Modernist Group Dynamics: The Politics and Poetics of Friendship,* ed. by Fabio A. Durão and Dominic Williams (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2008), pp. vii-x (p. vii).
[258] Milton A. Cohen, *Movement, Manifesto, Melee: The Modernist Group 1910-1914* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2004), p. 30.
[259] See Friedman, *Analyzing Freud* and Christine K. Thompson, 'Fido, Cat and the Rat: Correspondence between Bryher, H.D., and Dorothy Richardson, *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 22.1/2 (Spring/Summer 1994), 65-76.
[260] Marelyn Detloff and Brenda Helt, 'Introduction', in *Queer Bloomsbury,* ed. by Marelyn Detloff and Brenda Helt (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 1-14 (pp. 1-2).
[261] Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 15.

post-imperial notion, Detloff and Helt explain, operates on the basis of shared spaces and works by 'prioritising the importance of *being together* (or more aptly, *being thrown together*) over the ontological condition of being that we more colloquially call "identity"'.[262] For their 'boundary-exceeding' study of Bloomsbury, they prioritise the notion of being together or *becoming*—or co-evolving or *becoming together*—over a fixed, singular identity.[263] Thus, the contingency that accompanies the process of becoming and becoming together is most helpful in conceptualising the POOL group's constellate model, comprised of connections within their personal network and artistic production.

Being together gestures to a sense of closeness or proximity, of the connections made when one text or person touches another, of being beside one another. This thesis looks repeatedly to the side in expanding the POOL group. It looks to the side of *Close Up* and POOL's original nucleus, its founding trio of H.D., Bryher and Macpherson, to examine what connections arise through Herring and Blakeston's contiguity. Detloff and Helt draw attention to the notion that becoming together 'captures both the contingency and the generativity of inhabiting space *beside* one another', invoking the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Indeed, Sedgewick's theories offer a form of resistance to critical practices that expose 'the topos of depth or hiddenness, typically followed by a drama of exposure'. Instead of looking *beneath*, *behind* or *beyond,* Sedgwick suggests the *beside*. By turning to *besides*, '*beneath* and *beyond* turn from spatial descriptors into implicit narratives of, respectively, origin and telos':

> *Beside* is an interesting preposition also because there's nothing very dualistic about it; a number of elements may lie alongside one another, though not an infinity of them. *Beside* permits a spacious agnosticism about several of the linear logics that enforce dualistic thinking: noncontradiction or the law of the excluded middle, cause versus effect, subject versus object. […] *Beside* comprises a wide range of desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating, rivalling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, aggressing, warping, and other relations.[264]

Herring and Blakeston's prose exist *beside* the POOL group's body of work. This thesis looks at the connections that arise from being beside, whereby locating and exploring the contributions of Herring and Blakeston, further elements of POOL's activity, their queer

[262] Detloff and Helt, p. 1.
[263] Ibid., p. 2.
[264] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 8.

politics and their views on art are revealed. This thesis operates '*beside*' previous scholarship on the group: the pioneering works of art historians Dusinberre and Cosandey; the essential feminist and queer studies that recovered the roles of H.D., Bryher and Richardson; and recent works by Townsend, Schlun, Nikolova and Kane that are expanding the critical image of POOL's network, to continue this rippling expansion of the group that never defined its own limits.

Queer Currents: Reading the Archives

In 1934, H.D. sent Herring two of her newly printed 'long-short stories' to read.[265] These were 'Kora and Ka' and 'Mira-Mare'; parts of H.D.'s autobiographical Dijon cycle which parallels POOL's formation and fragmentation. These stories were inspired by a fraught trip to Monte Carlo with Macpherson in 1930; where Herring often joined them and inspired his own novel, *Cactus Coast*.[266] Writing the following day, Herring describes his experience of reading the stories:

> I read [them] in bed, quietly. In the morning I wasn't sure if I had read or thought or dream-lived it. I have read it again and am quite sure – it is <u>not</u> reading; it is a going into that time. "Kora and Ka" caught me up in its currents. I was a fish, swimming back and forth, each time in a new current. You know how the silent and swift glide of a fish in a tank are like electricity in being? It was like that, (I always think that fish, with their darting pushing and inter-patterning and displacement of each other, are like one's mind)..... only one wasn't looking at them, but inside with them.... I have never read anything like this before. It is extraordinary how K[enneth] lives in both so much more than he does in himself. [...] "Mira Mare" was like going to Monte for the tenth time and seeing it for the first. [...] How beautiful it was then, that first putting of a psychic toe in the water, before it was deep or disastrous or anything but warm.[267]

[265] H.D., 'H.D. by Delia Alton', p. 219.

[266] In her essay 'Compassionate Friendship', she describes both as having 'enshrined Kenneth', and 'Mira-Mare' as 'a sketch of a short trip that Kenneth and I had one summer to Monte Carlo. I am glad to find the atmosphere so living'. In her 'Autobiographical Notes', she pinpoints this trip and gestures to Bryher's organisational drive and Herring's physical presence that are typical of the POOL group's travels: 'July 14, Bryher sends K[enneth] and self off to Monte Carlo, to big empty hotel. We find bathing rocks. Return to much rain; I work in the downstairs back-room, the "cellar" in Riant Chateau, on a story, I call Mira Mare and later, Kora and K. [...] Bryher invites Robert to join K and self again, in Monte Carlo, at Hotel reserve, August.' H.D., 'Compassionate Friendship', p. 130; H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML Autobiographical notes, n.d. Box 47, Folder 1181.

[267] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to H.D., 1934. Box 10, Folder 356.

Herring's affective reaction to H.D.'s work illustrates the intimate 'currents' that flow within the POOL's group.[268] This is 'not' a typical reading experience for Herring: it transports him elsewhere, away from the present moment, 'it is a going into that time', into a 'dream-lived' space. His transformative metaphor—'I was a fish'—establishes a model for the mind, where thoughts move like shoals of fish, swimming and 'inter-patterning' between text and reader, and between self and other.[269] Instead of outside looking in, Herring feels he is 'inside' H.D.'s textual world, carried on currents of consciousness.

Herring's response to H.D.'s writing gestures to the transferal of meaning within the POOL group and the connections that spark 'like electricity', documented through archival letters such as this one. It is an intimate connection that Herring forms with H.D.'s writing, based on a flash of recognition as he identifies Macpherson and H.D. in 'Mira-Mare' as Christian and Alex; and Macpherson in 'Kora and Ka' as John Helforth. Herring explains that it was H.D.'s portrayal of Helforth's hand—the 'hand of Helforth lies affectedly across the grey knew of his lounge suit'—that prompted his intimate connection to Macpherson: 'I was so grateful for that hand! It had always been a problem - whether his hand was beautiful despite the affectedness or whether the affectedness might not be the beauty'.[270] Herring writes that '[s]ince the hand was my clue in the other', that for 'Mira-Mare', it was a 'small detail' of a 'strange house, so pink' that made the autobiographical connection legible; as he writes of Alex in another letter, 'it is you'.[271]

Biographical schemas and references are scattered throughout the POOL group's writing and archives. For example, H.D.'s Dijon cycle is crafted around the 'social-texture' of her relationship with Bryher and Macpherson; Macpherson's two novels both interrogate the complex dynamics between the love of three people; Bryher's biography *The Heart To Artemis* documents her relationships formed in connection to POOL; Herring describes

[268] Ibid.
[269] Herring would have also known that 'fish' was H.D.'s codeword used in her letters to signal spiritual phenomena, which he gestures to with his mention of a 'psychic toe in water'. His language also recalls H.D.'s *Notes on Thoughts and Vision* (1982) and her poetic and spiritual model of the 'over-mind', which she describes as 'a cap of consciousness' where 'thoughts pass and are visible like fish swimming under clear water'. Both H.D. and Herring imagine the mind in watery terms where thoughts move like fish through a permeable space between body and world. See H.D., *Notes and Thought on Vision and The Wise Sappho* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1982), p. 17-23.
[270] H.D., 'Kora and Ka', p. 10; H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to H.D., 1934. Box 10, Folder 356.
[271] Ne H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to H.D., n.d. Box 10, Folder 356; H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to H.D., 1934. Box 10, Folder 357.

Cactus Coast as his own 'slightly demented diary'; and there are stark resonances between Blakeston's experiences working at The Gaumont Company and the film studios described in *Through A Yellow Glass* and *Extra Passenger*.[272] When placed in dialogue—or *beside*—with the POOL's archives, intimate connections become legible. Writing about the complexities of autobiography and relationality, Janine Utell reflects on the ethics of such intimate life writing. She defines such life writing as 'part of the process of making something always in process'.[273] Although not all of POOL's works mirror their intimate dynamics, they all hold autobiographical fragments which provide insights into their historical moment and engage with Utell's processual definition of life writing, formed within an intimate network of activity. The term "intimacy" is useful here. It represents, as Lauren Berlant states, 'the enigma of [a] range of attachments': it 'poses a question of scale that links the instability of individual lives to the trajectories of the collective', which encapsulates the connections—the currents—that animate the POOL group's private dynamics and their artistic production.[274]

Herring uses the word "currents" to describe his affinity with H.D.'s work and in his own fiction to proffer ontological interrogations of being, where in *Cactus Coast* Ricka declares that: 'I am ripples in process of clearing', where he 'makes himself in containing the current'.[275] These states are contingent and in flux, paralleling his language in his letters to H.D., where the fish—his thoughts—caught in the currents are depicted in constant motion, where they are 'darting pushing and inter-patterning'.[276] Writing about revisiting H.D.'s short story 'Two Americans', which includes a fictional version of himself as Bennie, 'an imaginary Kenneth' and Robeson, Herring writes:

> One of the things that happens is that the stories change each time I read them. As if they had turned in the light and were showing a different colour. "Two Americans" does very odd things. Lately, I've realised K[enneth] most in it. Each time, one or other of the people have come up at me – as if I were seeing it from another angle,

[272] H.D., 'Compassionate Friendship', p. 132; H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to H.D., August 14 1934'. Box 10, Folder 357; Blakeston, *Extra Passenger,* p. 123.
[273] Janine Utell, *Literary Couples and 20th Century Life Writing: Narrative and Intimacy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), p. 12. See also Laura Marcus, *Auto/biographical Discourses: Criticism, Theory, Practice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).
[274] Lauren Berlant, 'Intimacy: A Special Issue', *Intimacy,* ed. Lauren Berlant (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 3.
[275] Herring, *Cactus Coast,* p. 203, p. 214.
[276] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to H.D., 1934. Box 10, Folder 356.

were on a moving camera. As I think I said, one walks into different currents each time.[277]

These connections, for Herring, are numerous. Various currents and perspectives can co-exist, as with the different angles shot from a 'moving camera'.[278] This is a useful way to approach the POOL group, whereby currents flow between POOL and Herring and Blakeston's works, which reveal new 'angle[s]' of POOL's intimate and artistic activity and the queer creative practices and lives that constituted it.

POOL's archives are queer archives. They were forged during a censorious and homophobic period, and therefore offer glimpses into their historical moment where they were radically reimagining ways of being together. The editors of *Radical History Review*'s special issue dedicated to queer archives state that 'Queer things cannot have straight histories'.[279] Currents, with their divergent contours, swells, pulls and undercurrents, seem an appropriate image with which to approach the group's queer archives, especially a group that presented themselves around the symbol of 'expanding ripples'.[280] In his study of how sexuality shaped modern fiction, *Libidinal Currents,* Joseph Allen Boone notes that the term "currents" suggests both 'psychological and modernist imperatives', whereby it 'connotes continuous flow', that is 'not contained by prescribed trajectories' and modernism's formal fluidity and representation of the mind.[281] The editors of 'Queering Archives: Historical Unravelings' note that queer archives are 'evasive and dynamic', where they are often 'structured by their own distinct habitual wranglings with absence and presence'.[282] This thesis is attuned to the absences within POOL's archives: the absences, omissions or codes where queer desires could not be voiced due to censorship, along with the physical absence of Herring and Macpherson's archives and the critical absence of Herring and Blakeston's works in relation to POOL. This study therefore necessarily engages with the tensions that arise within such queer historicism, which I briefly outline here and define my use of the

[277] H.D., 'Compassionate Friendship', p. 128; H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to H.D., n.d. Box 10, Folder 357.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Daniel Marshall, Kevin P. Murphy and Zeb Tortorici, 'Editor's Introduction: Queering Archives: Historical Unravelings', *Radical History Review,* no. 120 (Fall 2014), 1-11 (p. 1).
[280] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, POOL: Catalogues, n.d. Box 170, Folder 5679.
[281] Joseph Allen Boone, *Libidinal Currents: Sexuality and the Shaping of Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 18.
[282] Marshall, Murphy and Tortorici, p. 1.

term "queer", before moving to close readings of Herring and Blakeston's prose alongside analysis of surviving letters, photos, film, film stills and scrapbooks.

Crucial work has been done in Early Modern and Medieval studies to highlight and reconcile the disparities within the language and significations of historical texts, where Dinshaw proposes a queer 'touch of time', emphasising the affective connection that occurs between past and present moments, described by Carla Freccero as 'living with ghosts'.[283] The late nineteenth and early-twentieth century saw the emergence of tangible ways to discuss sexual identities, with the formation of new taxonomies and labels, posing a different set of questions for queer historicism within modernism. With defining moments such as Oscar Wilde's sodomy trial in 1895, the libel case of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* in 1928, alongside the emergence of sexology and psychoanalysis; sexual identities could be discussed—and policed—in new ways. Writing on the tensions within queer historicism, McCabe notes that the language of the early-twentieth century is often characterised with clinical classifications and legal discourse which is 'often at odds' with contemporary queer theory.[284] Following the need for a 'greater elasticity of meaning and expressivity', McCabe suggests a queer historicism, as 'a contemporary understanding of nuanced "identifications," might help us to uncover the specific contours of embodied lives'.[285]

The clinical categories used during the early-twentieth century are significant, where they reinforce normativity and other queerness.[286] Sedgwick sees this as the moment 'a chronic, now endemic crisis of homo/heterosexual definition' came into view: it is an institutionalised taxonomy fostered by the medical, psychological, legal and literary language around homosexuality that has shaped and structured the epistemology of

[283] See Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval,* p. 36; Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 78. See also: Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Carla Freccero 'Queer Times', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 106.3 (2007), 485-494. David Halperin, on the other hand, is cautious of such affective identifications, and proposes a tighter historical specificity instead, arguing for an approach that 'foregrounds historical differences, that attempts to acknowledge the alterity of the past as well as the irreducible cultural and historical specificities of the present. See David Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 17.

[284] Susan McCabe, 'To Be and to Have: The Rise of Queer Historicism', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies,* 11.1 (2005), 119-134 (p. 119).

[285] McCabe, 'To Be and to Have: The Rise of Queer Historicism', p. 30.

[286] Anna Katherine Schaffner shows how labels of "other" and "perverse" arose to describe queer desires: 'they rest on assumptions about what is correct and incorrect, natural and unnatural', and are always contingent on the norm against which it is defined. Anna Katherine Schaffner, *Modernism and Perversion: Sexual Deviance in Sexology and Literature, 1850-1930* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 3-4.

sexuality. Arguing against this binary, Sedgwick makes space for a 'nominally marginal, conceptually intractable set of definitional issues' instead.[287] Throughout my study, the term "queer" is used to account for the expansive range of identities that were othered because of the institutional practices that Sedgwick describes, whereby 'queer maintains a relation of resistance to whatever constitutes the normal'.[288] My use of the term is intentionally slippery, leaky and loose, to account for the varied range of intimacies that constituted the POOL group. I refer to queerness as defined by Sedgwick, as:

> the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't be* made) to signify monolithically. [...] A word so fraught as "queer" is—fraught with so many social and personal histories of exclusion, violence, defiance, excitement—never can only denote; nor even can it only connote; a part of its experimental force as a speech act is the way in which it dramatizes locutionary position itself.[289]

The term "queer" is particularly useful when navigating an archive characterised by intimacy. Letters between Macpherson, Bryher and H.D. are often addressed or signed off in two's, with Macpherson's contribution typically scribbled around the edges of a letter from H.D. to Bryher, and vice versa. They shared a coded language of nicknames and illustrations, where H.D. was invariably 'Kat', 'Kat-Mog', 'Cat', 'Horse' or 'Lynx', Bryher was 'Little Dog' or 'Fido', and Macpherson was 'Kex', 'Rover' or 'Big Dog'.[290] H.D. and Bryher also kept numerous published and unpublished fictional works from both each other and Herring.[291] There are carefully preserved photographs taken from their shared Monte Carlo trips, which feature H.D., Macpherson and Herring.[292] The letters from Herring to H.D. are characterised by a confessional quality, and he is referred to by the founding three as

[287] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2008), p. 1-2.
[288] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 9.
[289] Ibid., pp. 8-9.
[290] For an analysis of H.D., Bryher and Richardson's correspondence that includes reflection on the fidelity that 'Fido' implies, the feline solitude that accompanies the cat imagery, and plays on the 'amorous rovings' of Rover, see Thompson. See also: Friedman, *Analyzing Freud,* which reproduces some of these letters and drawings.
[291] H.D. kept typescripts of Herring's 'Elegy on a Ghost Passing Beyond Knowledge of her won Ghostliness', 'The Fourth May', 'Love Song of Penance Impenitent', 'The Sole Sentinel or Harlequin in Perspective', and 'The True History of the Life and Death of the Valorous Colonel'; from Bryher, she kept typescripts of 'Along the River', 'The Powers of Ancient Egypt', and 'Young Rawley'. See H.D. Papers, Box 45. Bryher kept typescripts of Herring's 'A Carolean Coranto', 'A Consideration of the Comedies and Romances of Shakespeare', five untitled poems, 'The Inconstant Lover', 'It's on the Way', 'The Merchant of Venice', 'Much Ado About Nothing', 'Petsamo', and 'Too Old at Twenty'. See Bryher Papers, Box 94.
[292] For photos and clippings of pieces on *Borderline,* see Bryher Papers, Box 168; for photographs from the POOL group's trip to Iceland in 1929, see: Bryher Papers, Box 112, Folder 3948.

'Buddy', 'Bud', or sometimes 'poor old Bud', and he often signs his letters to Bryher with 'Barks, to all' or 'All barks', where he is initiated into their coded and collaborative network of roving cats and dogs. Blakeston is known as 'O.B.' within POOL's network, and referred playfully to Bryher as his 'Supervisor' and Macpherson as his 'Director'. H.D.'s autobiographical notes and her letters from Herring also provide insight into the private relationships that impacted and shaped the public trajectory of the group—referred to as 'the Monte [Carlo] episode' by H.D.—which is explored in Chapter Two.[293]

In her study of intimate archives, Melanie Micir references the story of Chloe and Oliva from Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*—'Sometimes women do like women'—to define her project, which traces the real-life 'queer women, in particular, [who] wrote themselves and their Olivias into a literary and cultural history that refused to accommodate them'.[294] She reminds us that '[o]nly some of the relationships between these Chloes and Olivias are known with any real degree of certitude—with the agreement and consensus of both the subjects themselves and the leagues of literary historians who have trailed after them.'[295] The same is true for the figures that constitute the POOL group. While many studies have explored the sexual identifications of H.D. and Bryher, and some have cited Macpherson's bisexuality and Herring's bisexual or homosexual orientations, I lean into the use of "queer" and away from using discrete categories precisely because of the unknowability of the archives that Micir refers to, so as to trace what Boone calls 'libidinal currents' throughout Herring and Blakeston's prose, and their connections to the POOL group's activities and ethos.[296]

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[293] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Autobiographical Notes, Box 47, Folder 1181.
[294] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Harcourt, 2005[1929]), p. 78; Melanie Micir, *The Passion Projects: Modernist Women, Intimate Archives, Unfinished Lives* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019), p. 3.
[295] Micir., p. 12.
[296] For studies that focus on H.D.'s sexual identifications, see: Collecott and Johnston, pp. 95-126; and Buck. For studies that reference Bryher and her sexuality, see: Phillip, 'Veiled Disclosures and Queer Articulations: Readings of Literary and Cinematic Works by Bryher and POOL'; Ellen Ricketts, 'Queering the Home Front: Subversive Temporalities and Sexualities in Rose Allatini's Despised and Rejected and Bryher's Two Selves', *Women's Writing: the Elizabethan to Victorian Period*, 24.1 (2017), 23–36; Souhami; pp. 111-212; McCabe, 'To Be and to Have: The Rise of Queer Historicism', pp. 28-30. For a biographical exploration of H.D. and Bryher's relationship, see McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher.* For references to Macpherson's bisexuality, see Schlun, p. 166; Friedman, *Analyzing Freud,* p. xxxii, p. 111n37; p. 254. For speculations on Herring's sexual identification, see Friedman, *Analyzing Freud,* p. 111n37, p. 322n26.

Chapter Two

Robert Herring: 'Buddy'

In Robert Herring's autobiographical novel *Cactus Coast* (1934), Ricka attempts to explain his conception of himself: 'I am ripples in process of clearing. But as yet am not clear enough to see'.[297] This is an apt metaphor for Herring's current position in criticism, where fragments of his life and work are emerging in scholarship, but a full biographical picture of is still indistinct and blurred. This chapter attends to Herring's engagement with the POOL group, showing his significant roles within the network, and offering the first close readings and extended analysis of two of his novels, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew* and *Cactus Coast*, which overlap with POOL's active period of publication. I start by establishing Herring's biography to locate his entry and involvement with the POOL group: his role in *Close Up*'s composition, his acting in *Foothills* and *Borderline*—on which he reflected after shooting: 'I had the most important two weeks, I imagine of my life'—and his place in the group's queer matrix, as the confidant and friend 'Buddy' and as Macpherson's '"Ex"'.[298] Herring's critical standing is then reviewed, so as to chart the rippling interest in his connections to *Close Up*, *Life and Letters To-Day*, and his role in *Borderline* as the pianist who looks longingly at a photograph of Paul Robeson. The liminality that *Borderline* presupposes is found in *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*, which opens up a discursive parody that hinges on the transition from silent to sound cinema, raising questions about how rigid traditions from the past bear onto the present moment. Issues of time are at the heart of *Cactus Coast*, which traverses multiple temporal quagmires to imagine a queer temporality that can encompass queer joy.

Buddy's Beginnings and Entry into POOL

Robert Herring Williams was born on May 13 1903 in Wandsworth, London, to Clara Helena Williams and Arthur Herring Williams. His father was a merchant who made his fortune in Kokstad, South Africa and left £18,382 when he died in 1906 (over £1.5 million in

[297] Herring, *Cactus Coast*, p. 203.
[298] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher, H.D., and Kenneth Macpherson 1930, Box 19, Folder 707; H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to H.D. 1933, Box 10, Folder 355.

today's money).[299] He had an older brother, Ernest Arthur Williams, who went on to manage their late father's trading company.[300] Herring attended Clifton College in Bristol before studying at Kings College, Cambridge, where he graduated in 1924 with a second-class degree in the English Tripos.[301] He dropped 'Williams' from his name as he began what would become an idiosyncratic literary career, where he wrote as "Robert Herring", using his middle name shared with his late father and paternal grandmother, Jane Elizabeth Herring. He joined *The London Mercury* in 1925 as assistant editor and worked under J. C. Squire. He held this position until 1927, where Donald, Friedberg and Marcus credit him with being 'largely responsible for that journal's serious consideration of cinema'.[302] Indeed, he reviewed films shown in Italy, France, Germany, Ukraine, and London, and also reviewed books, published poems and essays. After his editorship, he continued to contribute articles on "The Movies", as well as articles and poems.[303] *The London Mercury* established him as a discerning film critic. He saw cinema's ability to 'convey a great deal more swiftly and subtly—therefore, better—than other arts, but it must translate this into action, as ballet's translation into movement', laying the groundwork for his entry into POOL, which would come via *Close Up.*[304] Despite favouring cinematic artistic expression, Herring's pieces for *The London Mercury* also show his interest in literature, with articles on war poets and poems addressed to Shakespeare's Ophelia.[305]

The President's Hat was published in 1926. It is a fictional travelogue following two men walking through Andorra, Spain. With long descriptions of patchwork fields alongside intertextual quips about Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence, *The President's Hat* is a 'harlequin quilt' of allusion and nature writing.[306] The illustrated dustcover shows grand red

[299] Census of England and Wales, 1911. Richmond Road, London, Williams Household; Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010; England and Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1995 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.
[300] Stephens, p. 157.
[301] 'A Register of Admissions to King's College Cambridge', 1797 - 1925, GBR/0272/KCAC/2/13A/Withers, KCAC/2/13A/Withers. Archive Centre, King's College, Cambridge.
[302] Donald, Friedberg and Marcus, *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism,* p. 316.
[303] See for example, Robert Herring, 'The Movies', *The London Mercury,* 15.19 (July 1927), pp. 316-218. See also Marcus, 'Cinema and Visual Culture: *Close Up* (1927-33)', p. 513.
[304] Robert Herring, 'The Movies', *The London Mercury,* 15.85 (November 1927), pp. 87-89 (p. 87).
[305] Robert Herring, 'Ophelia', *The London Mercury,* 15.89 (March 1927), p. 462.
[306] Robert Herring, *The President's Hat* (London: Longmans & Co, 1926), p. 9.

curtains and gold ropes being pulled aside to show the book's eponymous hat in a glass case, which was Cecil Beaton's first paid commission.[307]

Herring and Beaton were friends from Cambridge and they both found themselves—in varying degrees—caught up with the Bright Young People of 1920s London. Herring's letters to H.D. mention his friendship with not only Beaton, who chronicled many of the Bright Young Things, but also Nancy Mitford, Inez Holden, Nancy Cunard, Leslie Hutchinson, Olga Lynn, and Elizabeth Ponsonby. Although he failed to attend, Herring was invited to Ponsonby's infamous "Bath and Bottle Party" of July 13 1928, writing to H.D. on July 14 of a 'very amusing party last night' that he missed 'where I should have met again a very charm[i]ng young German baron who is taking the season quite seriously'.[308] Attempting to capture some of London's characters, Herring started work on a new book in 1926.

Adam and Evelyn at Kew, which was contracted by the literary agency Curtis Brown in November 1926 and later published in February 1930 by the London publisher Elkin Mathews and Marrot.[309] It was partly intended as a parody of London society. After its publication, he wrote dejectedly to Bryher about the success of Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies,* which famously parodied many of the Bright Young People: 'I put Lady Alex and Hutch [Leslie Hutchinson] and Sybil Thorndike and Olga Lynn in KEW before he had begun to write [*Vile Bodies*]'.[310] Due to its long gestation period, Herring conceded in a letter to John Tresidder Sheppard that the book and his veiled commentary of the Bright Young Things 'a

[307] Terrance Pepper, 'Chronology', in *Beaton Portraits,* ed. by Terrance Pepper (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 15-45 (p. 18).
[308] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to H.D. July 14 1928, Box 10, Folder 353. For a description of the Ponsonby's "Bath and Bottle Party", where guests were invited to attend St George's Swimming Baths in London 'wear[ing] a Bathing Suit and bring[ing] a Bath towel and a Bottle', see D. J. Taylor, *Bright Young People: The Rise and Fall of a Generation, 1918-1940* (London: Vintage, 2008), pp. 1-3 (p. 2).
[309] Herring writes to Bryher in 1930 explaining *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*'s publication history: 'The contract was first signed in November 1926, when I wrote the book', in Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher, February 7 1930. Box 19, Folder 707; Herring details when Elkin Mathews and Marrot accepted the manuscript in late 1929, he writes to Bryher: 'Curtis Brown have got my kew book off for me. The first publishers they sent it to. Not a 1st rate one – Elkin Matthews' in Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher, 1929. Box 19, Folder 705; Herring also wrote to Bryher to share news of *Adam and Evelyn's* publication on February 6 1930, 'Well, well, well, now did you ever believe that would happen, KEW between covers. (and such covers, if it isn't rude of me to say so?)', in Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher, February 7 1930. Box 19, Folder 707.
[310] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher February 13 1930, Box 19, Folder 707.

little out of date. But I think gets "them" fairly well'.[311] The Bright Young threads are subtly stitched through the background of *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*, with minor characters like Tio—who Herring based on the cabaret singer Hutchinson—weaving briefly in and out of the narrative, mimicking the fleeting snatches of conversation in Woolf's 'Kew Gardens'.[312]

Adam and Evelyn at Kew was published outside of POOL's streams of production and without Bryher's patronage. However, it engages playfully with POOL's interest in film art, Hollywood, interpersonal relationships, and the role of sound in cinema. It was also read and celebrated by POOL's founding members: Herring writes in surprise to H.D., Bryher and Macpherson that 'the <u>whole</u> of you like it', describing himself as 'soaring' with H.D.'s praise.[313] Dorothy Richardson compliments it as 'the happiest thing', like 'compressed laughter and light'.[314] *Close Up* reviewed it positively, using film terminology to highlight Herring's literary play: 'The montage is excellent and few modern English writers have so true a sense of prose', although they critiqued the price of the book.[315] Furthermore, Herring's letters reveal that he redrafted the book at some point in-between November 1926 and 1930. Writing collectively to Bryher, H.D. and Macpherson, he explains that he 're-wrote the book', 'added to it and filled it up' during in this time.[316] Its extended gestation period positions *Adam and Evelyn at Kew* as a temporal marker that spans Herring's first few years of intense collaboration with the group, acting as a textual bridge between Herring's writing outside of the network and his life as part of POOL.

As Herring was drafting *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* he started work as an editor for Macmillan. Between 1927 and 1935, he edited and introduced a series of plays by Richard

[311] Letter from Robert Herring Williams to JTS, February 9 1930, Papers of John Tresidder Sheppard, GBR/0272/JTS/2/226. Archive Centre, King's College, Cambridge.
[312] Herring explains in a letter addressed collectively to POOL's founding trio that he 'put in Hutch, who is the Chinese juggler', in Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher, H.D., and Kenneth Macpherson February 1930, Box 19, Folder 707. Herring mentions that he had read Woolf's short story 'Kew Gardens': 'I read V.Woolf's story, which completely shattered me. SO good in her way, <u>and</u> her way is so wrong', in Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher, February 7 1930, Box 19, Folder 707.
[313] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher, H.D., and Kenneth Macpherson, February 1930. Box 19, Folder 707.
[314] Ibid.
[315] 'Book Reviews', *Close Up,* 6.3 (March 1930), pp. 244-247, (p. 245).
[316] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher, H.D. and Kenneth Macpherson February 1930. Box 19, Folder 707.

Brinsley Sheridan and Oliver Goldsmith.[317] This kindled an interest in historical comedies and some resonances from Sheridan and Goldsmith bleed into *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*, with a 'muddled' retelling of the Georgian reign.[318] He was also writing regularly on films for a selection of periodicals such as *Drawing and Design* and *The Studio.* He became the *Manchester Guardian's* film critic in July 1928 and held this position until 1938.[319] Herring was building a network of contacts within the film industry and later became a member of the Film Society council.[320] He also sourced film stills from publicists to accompany his articles, writing retrospectively 'I began using stills in 1926', forming the basis of a broad portfolio of film reviews, commentary and contacts.[321] His position as a professional film critic made him an ideal candidate for *Close Up.*

By September 1927, *Close Up* had three issues out and was being well received, with Bryher noting in *The Heart To Artemis*, '[t]o our utter amazement, the first issue of *Close Up* sold out within a month and it was enthusiastically reviewed.'[322] Indeed, *The London Mercury* complimented Macpherson's 'stimulating' editorial, whilst *Poetry* hailed *Close Up* as an 'engaging and a genuinely modern manifestation', and the *Westminster Gazette* wrote that despite *Close Up's* 'slangy writing', the 'idea is good'.[323] It was around this time that *Close Up* invited Herring to write for the journal, to which he responded on September 20 1927: 'I shall be delighted.'[324]

This is the first documented contact that Herring had with the group. The letter that was first sent to Herring was destroyed in the 1975 house fire along with the rest of

[317] These were: Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The School for Scandal* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1927); Oliver Goldsmith, *She Stoops to Conquer* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1928); Oliver Goldsmith, *The Good Natur'd Man* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1928); Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The Rivals* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1929); and Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The Critic* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1935).
[318] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* p. 114.
[319] Herring shared the news of the *Manchester Guardian's* offer with H.D. on July 14 1928, wondering whether to accept, he wrote: 'I have just been given control of the cinema stuff for the Manchester Guardian, and write a regular weekly column, and I cannot do both and am still indecisive', in H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to H.D. July 14 1928, Box 10, Folder 353.
[320] Marcus, 'Cinema and Visual Culture: *Close Up* (1927-33)', p. 514; Robert Sitton, *Lady in the Dark: Iris Barry and the Art of Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), p. 112.
[321] Marilyn Campbell, 'Robert Herring on Collecting Film Stills', *The Princeton University Library Chronicle,* 65.3 (Spring 2004), 521-530 (p. 523).
[322] Bryher, *The Heart To Artemis,* p. 290.
[323] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, London Mercury Newspaper Cutting August 1927, Box 178, Folder 5750; Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Poetry Newspaper Cutting September 1927, Box 178, Folder 5750; Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Westminster Gazette Newspaper Cutting September 1 1927 Newspaper Cutting, Box 178, Folder 5750.
[324] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher September 20 1927, Box 18, Folder 703.

Herring's personal archive. It is therefore uncertain how this pitch was presented, or whether Herring may have had an introduction to the group before this. It is possible that Herring crossed paths with Bryher and Macpherson in Berlin: they were all in Berlin for film business at the same time in the summer of 1927. Bryher's archival notes detail 'one of the most exciting moments that I have ever experienced', where she was initiated into Berlin's film culture 'armed possibly with two issues' of *Close Up.*[325] Herring's letters to Beaton show that he had been in Berlin to review films, writing about one of the 'best I've seen [in Germany] is a film called Feme', which was shown at Berlin's Beba-Palast Atrium in August 1927.[326] Bryher stressed that Macpherson 'had gone to any film available since boyhood', so it is possible that they may have met there.[327] Whether Herring's invitation to write for *Close Up* stemmed from an earlier meeting, or whether it was based on Herring's reputation as a film critic is uncertain. Herring's letter to Bryher on September 20th 1927 accepting her invitation is the first documented contact between Herring and the POOL group, writing: 'I am very flattered by your enquiry and shall enjoy writing, if I may, to the full extent of 2000 words.'[328] He informs Bryher of his other writing commitments, noting that he is 'rather busy for a week or two' on account of returning from Berlin:

> I should prefer to get my Mercury and Drawing and Design copy in [before starting a piece for *Close Up*] and be free to write more generally than is possible in those papers: I get rather tired of criticising one particular picture – there is always so much else to say.[329]

Excited by the prospect of *Close Up*'s opinion-led pieces, Herring includes some potential ideas for articles on issues such as the censorship of exported films, 'war pictures', a review of *L'Usine aux Images* by Ricciotto Canudo, or on '[Emil] Janning's performance in his first american picture'.[330] The latter idea led to his first article 'Jannings in the Way of the Flesh',

[325] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, 'Autobiographical Notes: Berlin, n.d.', Box 72, Folder 2855. As *Close Up*'s first issue was printed in July 1927, for Bryher to have two issues means that her trip would have been around August.
[326] Letter from Robert Herring to Cecil Beaton August 23 1927. Papers of Sir Cecil Beaton. St John's College Library Special Collections, University of Cambridge. GB 275 BEATON/A/A1/259; Wolfgang Jacobsen, *Richard Oswald: Regisseur und Produzent* (Munich: Text + Kritik, 1990), p. 164.
[327] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, 'Autobiographical Notes: Berlin, n.d.', Box 72, Folder 2855.
[328] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher September 20 1927, Box 18, Folder 703.
[329] Ibid.
[330] Ibid.

published in *Close Up*'s November 1927 issue where he was also announced as the journal's London correspondent.[331]

Herring contributed a total of 38 feature articles to *Close Up* over its 54 issues. His chosen topics included cinematic design and imagery, censorship, calls for greater Black representation in studios and on the screen, and speculative pieces about the possibilities for the future of film. Writing to Macpherson, he admits that the 'Close-Up atmosphere suits me: it's like a roomful of people in sympathy! In my other papers (ssh) I feel a little in the dark.'[332] The journal's experimental ethos resonated with Herring. Although he wrote in praise of many current films—from commercial films like *Wolf's Clothing* (1927) and *The Tower of Lies* (1925) to experimental Soviet pictures by Vsevolod Pudovkin and Sergei Eisenstein—it was the possibilities for the future of cinema that fascinated Herring.[333] Whether it was an early interest in sound technology, musing that '[a]n abstract is a revue, and you can go so much further with a talkie abstract', or his imagining of an embodied mode of cinemagoing 'your body absorbs' beams of light: Herring's articles envision a different sort of cinema and possibilities for being in the world.[334]

Herring continued to engage in other forums alongside *Close Up*. In 1928, he attempted to catch cinema's 'transience' on the page with his collection of stills, *Films of the Year, 1927-1928,* writing that cinema 'expresses a part of us that can be expressed in no other way. There *is* such a part of us and the cinema *can,* though it does not fully yet, express it'.[335] Many of the films that Herring selected are praised in the pages of *Close Up*—such as *The Student of Prague* (1926) and *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (1926)—demonstrating the dialogue and exchange between *Close Up* and Herring's other outputs.[336]

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[331] Robert Herring, 'Jannings in the Way of the Flesh', *Close Up,* 1.5 (November 1927), pp. 31-38.
[332] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Kenneth Macpherson October 21 1927, Box 18, Folder 703.
[333] Robert Herring, 'So Blue', *Close Up,* 2.4 (April 1928), pp. 36-41; Robert Herring, 'Film Imagery: Seastorm', *Close Up,* 4.1 (January 1929), pp. 14-27; Robert Herring, 'Storm Over London', *Close Up,* 4,3 (March 1929), pp. 34-44.
[334] Robert Herring, 'The Implications of Revue', *Close Up,* 5.3 (September 1929), pp. 199-209 (p. 209); Herring, 'A New Cinema, Magic and the Avant-Garde', p. 52.
[335] Robert Herring, *Films of the Year 1927-1928* (London: The Studio, 1928), p. 1, p. 5-6.
[336] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher December 21 1928, Box 18, Folder 703; Herring, *Films of the Year, 1927-1928,* p. 9; p. 19; Robert Herring, 'Thou Shalt Not See', *Close Up,* 1.6 (December 1927), pp. 48-55; Oswell Blakeston, 'An Epic – Please!', *Close Up,* 1.3 (September 1927), pp. 61-66; Kenneth Macpherson, 'As Is', *Close Up,* 1.4 (October 1927), pp. 5-17.

Herring presented talks for the BBC on cinema, featuring twice in a six-part radio series on film criticism in August 1929 and again in in 1937.[337] He was briefly considered for an established film critic role within the BBC, where he was cited in internal memos as 'plainly one of the best critics writing on the cinema' with 'excellent material'.[338] Herring's 'lugubrious voice' seems to have let him down, where '[i]n some way the microphone makes him both pompous and gloomy', however the BBC agreed to 'try him again from time to time'.[339] He also delivered lectures on cinema at Cambridge University and wrote regularly on film for *The Listener* and the *Manchester Guardian,* as their regular film critic.[340] Although Herring may have felt greater affinity with the 'atmosphere' at *Close Up,* his position as a freelancer and his expertise as a film writer is significant for POOL.[341] Townsend highlights the 'reciprocity between Herring's writing for other media platforms, especially national newspapers, and editorial decisions at *Close Up*', where a circulation of ideas emerges that actively shaped the POOL group's production.[342]

Herring's exchange between *Close Up* and wider media culture informed *Close Up*'s special issue on Black cinema and would introduce Paul and Eslanda Robeson into the group's network, leading to *Borderline* and H.D.'s works, 'Two Americans' and 'Red Roses for Bronze'. In December 1928, an article by Herring appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* disparaging the cinema and British theatre's use of white actors to play Black characters.[343] A week later, Herring wrote to Bryher with news that he had received 'a very interesting

[337] These talks were advertised in the *Manchester Guardian* in 1929 and *The Daily Telegraph* in 1937. In their announcement, the *Manchester Guardian* introduced Herring as 'a new film critic', highlighting his positions at the *London Mercury* and the *Manchester Guardian,* as well as his anthology *Films of the Year 1927,* with no mention of his writing for *Close Up.* See 'Wireless Notes and Programmes: A New Film Critic (From our Wireless Correspondent)', *Manchester Guardian* (Wednesday 7 August 1929), p. 10; 'To-Day's Wireless Programmes', *Manchester Guardian* (Friday 23 August 1929), p. 10; 'To-Day's Sports Commentaries', *The Daily Telegraph* (Saturday 17 July 1937), p. 6.

[338] N. G. Luker to A.D.T. Mr Boswell, BBC Internal Circulating Memo October 14 1937, BBC Written Archives, Talks. Film Talks, 1929-1937, R51/173/1. N. G. Luker to Mr. Silvey, BBC Internal Circulating Memo, November 29 1937, BBC Written Archives, Talks. Film Talks, 1929-37, R51/173/1. For more brief notes on the BBC's internal communications considering Herring for their potential film correspondent, see Hilda Matheson to Lionel Fielden, BBC Internal Circulating Memo, 5 July 1929, BBC Written Archives, Talks. Film Talks 1929-37, R51/173/1.; Norman Luker, BBC Internal Circulating Memo, 'Cinema Talks', 29 November 1937, BBC Written Archives, Talks. Film Talks 1929-37, R51/173/1.

[339] N. G. Luker to A.D.T. Mr Boswell.

[340] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher July 30 1934, Box 19, Folder 711.

[341] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Kenneth Macpherson October 21 1927, Box 18, Folder 703.

[342] Townsend, 'A Deeper, Wider POOL: Reading *Close Up* through the Archives of Its Contributors'.

[343] Robert Herring, 'The Week on the Screen: Negro Films', *Manchester Guardian* (December 15 1928), p. 11.

letter' from Paul Robeson.[344] Robeson praised his *Manchester Guardian* article and inquired whether Herring knew of an outlet that would welcome an article from Robeson, where Herring responded: 'So I sent him, replying, Close-Up.'[345] This led to a long-lasting friendship between Herring and Robeson, and brought Robeson into POOL's orbit.[346]

The *Manchester Guardian* article along with Robeson's response inspired *Close Up*'s August 1929 issue on Black cinema: Herring's letters to Bryher reveal his efforts to 'guarantee' an article or interview with Robeson, both of which failed to come to fruition.[347] Herring urged Bryher to use the issue to give a platform other contemporary Black writers and actors including Harlem Renaissance authors Rudolph Fisher, Walter Francis White, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, W. E. B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson. He also suggested Honey Brown and Daniel L. Haynes, who starred in *Hallelujah* (1929) and writers from Du Bois's *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* along with suggestions for stills from *Hallelujah* and *Hearts in Dixie* (1929).[348] Although the scope of Herring's original vision failed to materialise (with Hughes politely declining to contribute), it did include contributions from the NAACP's Walter White, *Opportunity's* editor Elmer Carter, the columnist Geraldyn Dismond, stills from *Hearts in Dixie* along with portraits of *Hallelujah's* stars Victoria Spivey, Nina Mae McKenny and Haynes.[349] The issue also featured an article from Herring that extended arguments from his earlier *Manchester Guardian* article.[350] Herring also developed a third piece: 'What Next After Spirituals?' was published in the BBC's *The Listener* in September 1929, which celebrated books by Claude McKay, Fisher, Hughes and Cullen.[351] As Townsend observes, the three interlaced articles published between December 1928 and September 1929 demonstrate that Herring cared a great deal about the films and writers he promoted, but was a connecting node between larger, widely-read periodicals and *Close Up.* [352]

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[344] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher December 21 1928, Box 18, Folder 703.
[345] Ibid.
[346] Herring, 'The Week on the Screen: Negro Films', p. 11; Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Kenneth Macpherson October 21 1927, Box 18, Folder 703.
[347] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher February 12 1929, Box 18, Folder 704.
[348] Ibid.
[349] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Langston Hughes to Bryher March 12 1929, Box 169, Folder 5660.
[350] Robert Herring, 'Black Shadows', *Close Up,* 5.2 (August 1929), pp. 97-104.
[351] Robert Herring, 'What Next After the Spirituals?', *The Listener,* 2.36 (September 1929), pp. 376-77.
[352] Townsend, 'A Deeper, Wider POOL: Reading *Close Up* through the Archives of Its Contributors'.

Foothills

Herring was involved in POOL's second film, *Foothills.* In H.D.'s 'Autobiographical notes' she writes that whilst filming in March 1928 in Switzerland and staying at the '[Montreux] Palace Hotel; parties there with Robert [Herring], Br[yher] and K[enneth]', portraying the social as well as artistic activity of the group (see Fig. 25).[353] The film engages with various forms of intimacy, conveying the group's fascination with interpersonal dynamics, where the protagonist Jess is caught between two different streams of infatuation. It retells the story set out in Murnau's *Sunrise,* with Friedberg suggesting that it attended to the 'missing elements' and Schlun specifying that Macpherson wished to elaborate on Murnau's 'lady from the city' and her character.[354] Indeed, Herring critiques *Sunrise* in *Close Up* for bearing 'no psychology, no insight, nothing we have been waiting for': despite its 'elaborate' techniques, it 'takes us back and makes us unlearn'.[355] Although both *Sunrise* and *Foothills* hinge on a love triangle, their narratives differ. In *Sunrise,* 'The Woman From the City' seduces 'The Man', who contemplates drowning his wife to pursue his affair. He realises his error when he believes his wife to have died tragically at sea, violently turning on his mistress before it is revealed that his wife survived the storm. The married couple kiss and the screen fades to the film's eponymous sunrise. The stormy melodrama, violence and threat of *Sunrise* does not surface in *Foothills.* Instead, as Bryher's synopsis sets out, *Foothills* is 'a simple story simply told, of a life in a small Swiss village', highlighting the group's interest in interiority and intimacy.[356]

Foothills ends with Jess (played by H.D.) rejecting her fiancé (Herring) and embracing Jean (Macpherson), where the final line of Bryher's synopsis reads: the 'camera pans upward to a label on [Jess's] suitcase. Hotel Danieli, Venice'.[357] Instead of a sunrise and a kiss, the final image of a hotel gestures to a sense of transit and unrest. Whereas *Sunrise* emphasises the couple's joyful reconciliation, *Foothills* lingers in uncertainty. The Hotel Danieli complicates Jess's desire and her choice to stay with Jean by recalling the Venetian trip that she had either just taken or was about to take with her fiancé, underwriting the happy ending with a sense of loss by gesturing to a journey that the film's ending disallows.

[353] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Autobiographical Notes, Box 47, Folder 1181.
[354] Friedberg, 'Introduction', p. 213; Schlun, p 268.
[355] Friedberg, 'Introduction', p. 213; Schlun, pp. 267-269; Robert Herring, 'Synthetic Dawn', *Close Up,* 2.3 (March 1928), pp. 38-45 (p. 44).
[356] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Synopsis of Foothills, Box 170, Folder 5674.
[357] Ibid.

Hotel Danieli operates as an absence within *Foothills.* It opens a gulf between the small 'simple story' and the wider world, the charged possibilities of what might have been had Jess chosen to leave with her fiancé instead of staying with Jean.[358] The Hotel Danieli holds a broader affective resonance within POOL. It is the hotel that H.D., Bryher and Macpherson would stay in just a few months later that year while on their 'un-official honey-moon à trois' in May 1928, which is also fictionalised in H.D.'s short story 'Narthex', which borrows the name Daniel for her 'Kenneth fantasy'.[359] The film itself acts itself as a foothill—a smaller hill sitting at the base of a larger mountain—exploring the intricacies of Jess's emotional decision whilst gesturing to a network of intimacy beyond it.

Figure 25: Robert Herring, Bryher and H.D. while shooting *Foothills*. *Kenwin*, dir. by Véronique Goël (BFI, 1996) [DVD].

[358] Ibid.
[359] H.D., 'Compassionate Friendship', p. 132; p. 128. 'Narthex' was published in the journal *The Second American Caravan: A Yearbook of American Literature*, ed. by Alfred Kreymborg, Lewis Mumford and Paul Rosenfeld in 1928 (pp. 225-284).

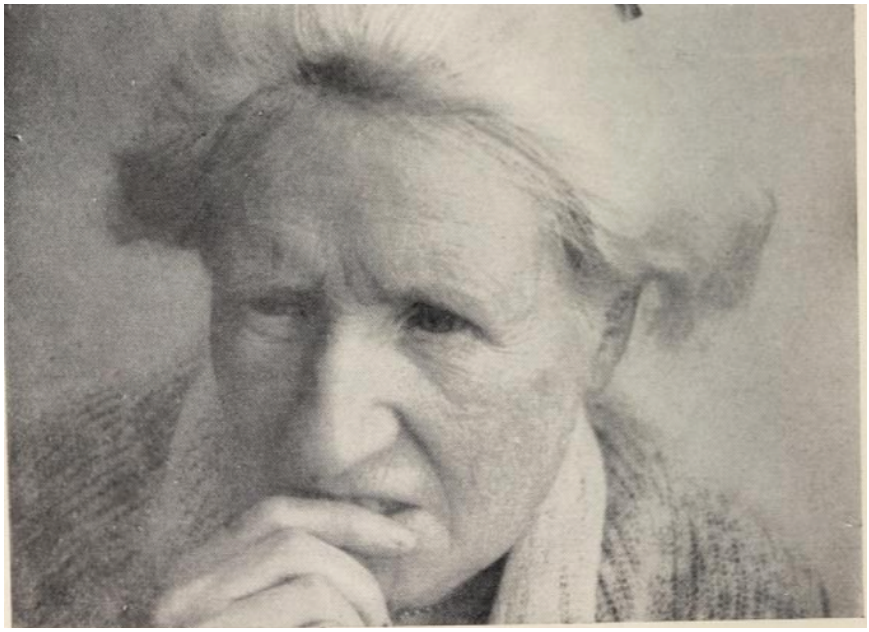

Figure 26: Blanche Lewin in *Foothills, Close Up,* 5.1 (July 1929).

There is little criticism on *Foothills.*[360] With so much of the film being lost, interpretation rests on analysis of Bryher's synopsis and archival fragments, which provide a glimpse into how *Foothills* was made with Herring's support. Although Bryher's synopsis states that *Foothills* was a 'One-Man' film, H.D.'s interviews and letters from this time reveal that *Foothills* was a collaborative endeavour. She describes the filming process as 'enchanting, never anything such fun', where she herself 'learned to use the small projector'.[361] However, following the shoot, she warns Bryher that Macpherson 'is terribly phobed and unhappy about the film' thanks to a 'technical blunder' with some of the lighting in the long shots.[362] The film was 'carefully packed away and show[n] to no one', with H.D. complaining that 'it is so difficult talking to him about it and I have talked AND talked'.[363] In September 1928, H.D. wrote to Bryher enlisting her help in getting

[360] For a reading of the realist tradition in *Foothills* and its use of location and focus on representing authentic psychological experiences, see Chadfield, pp. 93-103 and Schlun, pp. 266-269. For a summary of the filming and Macpherson's approach to technique and advocacy for amateur filmmaking, see Anne Friedberg, 'Borderline and the POOL Films', in *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 211-220 (pp. 212-213); and Marcus, *The Tenth Muse,* pp. 384-386. For an analysis of the plot and how it is a proxy for Macpherson's desires of how he wished his relationship with H.D. might be, see McCabe, *H.D. and Bryher,* pp. 153-154.

[361] H.D., response to questionnaire (1929), printed in *Little Review Anthology*, ed. by Margaret Andersen (New York: Hermitage, 1953), p. 364.

[362] Bryher Papers. General Collection. BRBLM, 'Letter from H.D. to Bryher, March 5 1928'. Box 13, Folder 546.

[363] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Borderline Pamphlet (p. 28). Box 168, Folder 5637; Bryher Papers. General Collection. BRBLM, 'Letter from H.D. to Bryher, September 1928'. Box 13, Folder 546.

Macpherson to show *Foothills* to Herring: 'poor old Buddy [...] DO, let him see the film no matter how K[enneth] may feel'.[364] Herring helped bring the project to fruition, as H.D. recounts: 'A year later [after filming *Foothills*] with the assistance of Bryher, and some of the present *Borderline* group, notably Miss Blanche Lewin and Mr. Robert Herring, he turned a full length five reel film. Here and there the work was excellent.'[365] What sort of 'assistance' Bryher, Blanche Lewin (Fig. 26) and Herring delivered is unclear, whether it was editorial decision, cutting the unfinished film, encouragement, or support, but H.D.'s comments show the collaborative and pooled efforts of the group in creating *Foothills.*

Borderline

Herring's unseen role behind the scenes, in bringing the Robeson's into POOL's fold, and his acting in front of the camera are both crucial to *Borderline.* As Tizra True Latimer argues, *Borderline* weaves together 'scientific and poetic discourses of race, gender, and sexuality', and wilfully deploys them unevenly to emphasise issues of race—which they did through problematic, uncritical and primitivist ideologies. This in turn, allows the film's inherent queerness to operate, inviting invites *Borderline*'s queer situations: a borderline space 'shared by variant sexuality and racial difference as a free zone of creative and relational possibility (if only for white people)'.[366] Herring's role within this borderline space is crucial in crafting the film's queer desires.

Herring plays a pianist in Bryher's lively café-bar, whose unrequited infatuation with Pete (acted by Robeson) informs what Jean Walton describes as the film's 'queer matrix', with his longing stares at Pete's picture, propped on his music stand (see Fig. 29 and Fig. 30).[367] Herring's name recurs in criticism around *Borderline*'s queer dimensions, where Judith Brown notes the pianist's ring and bracelet are markers for his 'representational otherness' (see Fig. 27).[368] Schlun highlights the phallic symbolism of the pianist's cigarette holder (see Fig. 28), including it in her list of the film's 'libidinous symbolism', and Walton suggests that the pianist acts as a surrogate for Macpherson's own cross-racial homoerotic

[364] Bryher Papers. General Collection. BRBLM, 'Letter from H.D. to Bryher, September 1928'. Box 13, Folder 546
[365] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Borderline Pamphlet (p. 28). Box 168, Folder 5637.
[366] Latimer, p. 44.
[367] Walton, 'White Neurotics, Black Primitives, and the Queer Matrix of *Borderline*', p. 258.
[368] Brown, '*Borderline*, Sensation, and the Machinery of Expression', p. 702.

desires.[369] Indeed, Herring's part in *Borderline* represents a crucial element within the film's queer schema. However, most references to Herring's role in *Borderline* are minor, glancing at the pianist's queer signifiers before focusing on tensions between Thorne (Gavin Arthur) and Pete, and on Macpherson's fetishization of Robeson.[370] These brief descriptions have persisted from *Borderline*'s contemporary reviews in 1930—where he is described as 'an enlightened film critic in the guise of a nance pianist'—to recent criticism, where McCabe includes Herring's pining for Pete in her analysis of the film's blurring of 'color lines, forbidden love, and gender lines'.[371] Herring is invariably referred to as *Borderline*'s 'bejeweled pianist'; as Macpherson's 'homosexual friend Robert Herring (the piano-player in the film)'; the 'sexually ambiguous piano player'; the 'gay-coded piano player'; as 'Robert Herring (a queer piano player)'; the 'jazz player who gazes adoringly at the photo of Robeson on his piano's music stand'; the 'limp-wristed pianist (played by the film critic and regular *Close Up* contributor Robert Herring)'; the 'Pete-infatuated piano player'; and as the 'café's gay pianist'. [372] These studies are all valuable examinations of *Borderline*'s knotted issues around race, sex and identity, but rarely extend analysis of Herring's role beyond nominal references, which are typically tied to noting his own queerness.

[369] Schlun, p. 317.
[370] Walton, 'White Neurotics, Black Primitives, and the Queer Matrix of *Borderline*', p. 34; Walton, '"Nightmare of the Uncoordinated White-Folk": Race, Psychoanalysis, and *Borderline*'; Latimer.
[371] 'On Herring, Onlooker', in *To-Day's Cinema* (October 14 1930), quoted in Donald, *Some of These Days,* p. 141-2; McCabe, *H.D. and Bryher,* p. 165.
[372] Brown, '*Borderline*, Sensation, and the Machinery of Expression', p. 691; Carolyn A. Kelley, 'Aubrey Beadsley and H.D.'s "Astrid": The Ghost and Mrs. Pugh of Decadent Aestheticism and Modernity', *Modernism/Modernity,* 15.3 (September 2008), 447-475 (p. 450); Maclean, p. 49; McCabe, 'The British Hitchcock: Epistemologies of Nation, Gender and Detection', p. 131; Walton, 'White Neurotics, Black Primitives, and the Queer Matrix of *Borderline*', p. 244; Donald, 'As it Happened… *Borderline,* the Uncanny and the Cosmopolitan', p. 100; Latimer, p. 34; Donald, *Some of These Days*, p. 141-2; Souhami, p. 178.

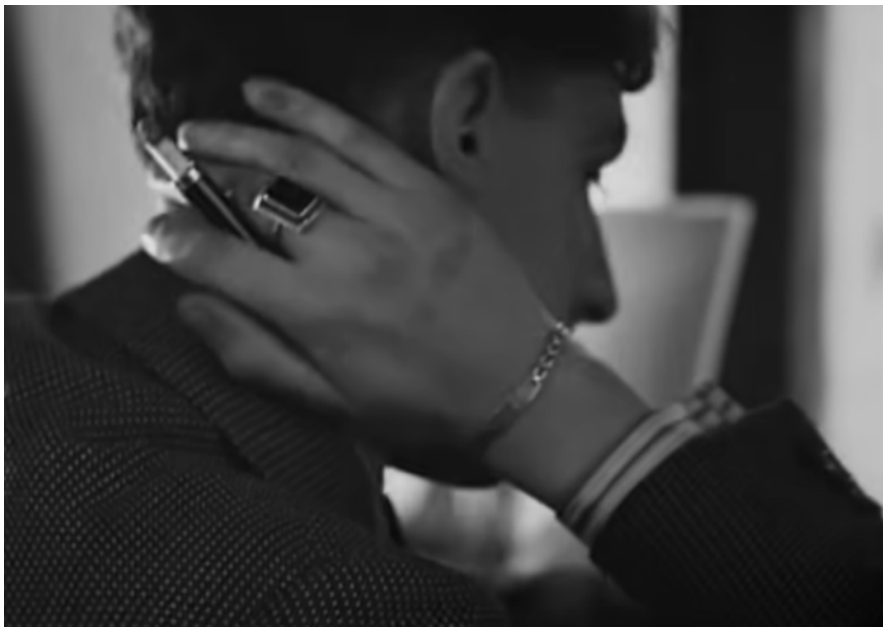

Figure 27: Robert Herring in *Borderline,* dir. by Kenneth Macpherson (POOL, 1930).

Figure 28: Robert Herring, smoking a cigarette as he plays piano in *Borderline,* dir. by Kenneth Macpherson (POOL, 1930).

Whereas Thorne's displaced desire and psychological deterioration results in violence—stabbing his wife Astrid (played by H.D.)—which works to critique the racist and xenophobic structures which exonerate him, the pianist's queer desire operates differently.[373] It is quietly structured around an unresolved yearning, where he glances at

[373] For more on Thorne's redemption, see Brown, '*Borderline*, Sensation, and the Machinery of Expression', p. 702.

Pete's photograph on the piano and, at the end when Pete is exiled from the small town, the pianist mournfully picks up the picture and places it in his breast pocket (see Figs. 30-32). The pianist holds an unreal and unmoving version of Pete, contrasting the cinematic moving image of Pete leaving town. The pianist's desire is repeatedly withheld. The intimacy invoked by slipping the photograph into his pocket, close to his heart and its sentimental connotations, is cordoned off to the right-hand side of his jacket and distanced from his heart. The play between intimacy and evasion is realised again when the pianist throws away the rose that had been placed behind Pete's ear and in Pete's mouth earlier in the film (see Fig. 32). He removes the rose from its glass and tosses it on the floor, momentarily offering a displaced yet intimate haptic connection between the pianist's hand and Pete's ear and mouth, whilst disallowing the rose's symbolic association with romance and Pete's lingering touch by discarding it. *Borderline*'s pianist, therefore, represents a stalled desire, which contributes to Macpherson's artistic goal, where he set out to investigate 'the labyrinth of the human mind, with its queer impulses and tricks, its unreliability, [...] its fantasy, suppressions and desires.'[374] Herring's part in *Borderline* represents a significant fragment of POOL's experimentations with shifting forms of queer intimacies, how they are felt and longed for, as well as signalling his investment in POOL's projects.

[374] Macpherson, 'As Is', *Close Up* (November 1930), p. 294.

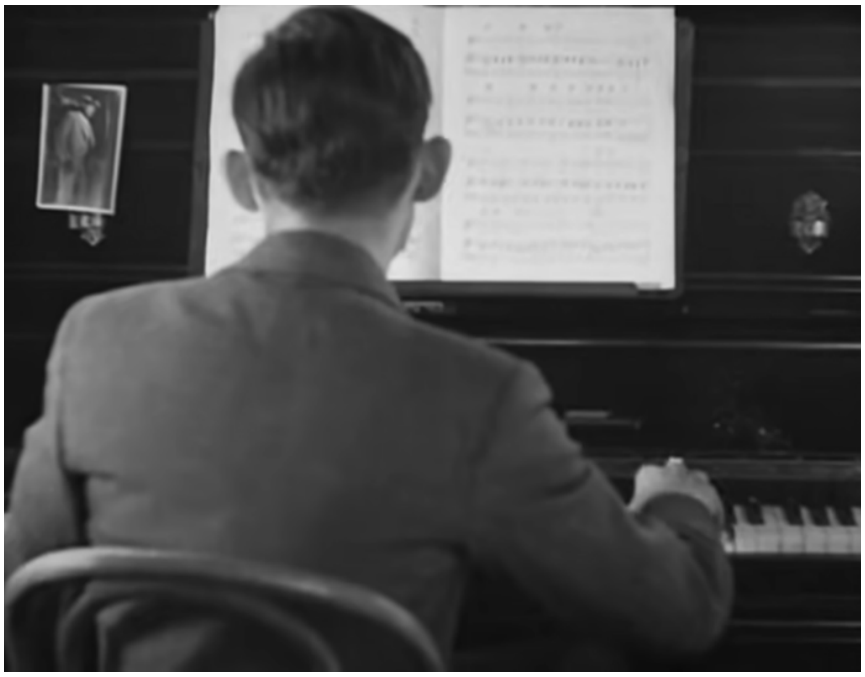

Figure 29: Robert Herring, playing the piano with a picture of Pete on the music stand. *Borderline*, dir. by Kenneth Macpherson (POOL, 1930).

Figure 30: Robert Herring's hand reaching for the picture of Pete. *Borderline*, dir. by Kenneth Macpherson (POOL, 1930).

Figure 31: Robert Herring placing the picture of Pete in his pocket in *Borderline,* dir. by Kenneth Macpherson (POOL, 1930).

Figure 32: Throwing away Pete's rose. *Borderline,* dir. by Kenneth Macpherson (POOL, 1930).

Herring and POOL's Network of Intimacies

As Herring worked on *Close Up* and participated in POOL films, he was initiated into what Friedman has mapped as Bryher's "circle".[375] Photographs in Bryher and H.D.'s archives document travels where they were accompanied by Herring: to Norway in 1929 (see Fig. 33), multiple trips to Monte Carlo in the early 1930s (Fig. 35), and with Bryher to the Baltics in 1939 (Fig. 34).The surviving letters passed between Herring, Bryher, H.D. and Macpherson show sketches, puns, pet names, personal references, confessions and innuendos. Exploring the language used in the letters of H.D., Bryher and Richardson, Christine K. Thompson suggests their nicknames offer 'a way of seeing them at play, forging an egalitarian relationship that gave them a space in which to construct and express parts of their selves.'[376] The pet names are, Thompson continues, 'characteristic of the middle class, to which they all had belonged'.[377] Indeed, Bryher states that 'the English commonly discover nicknames for their friends. It is a sign of acceptance', signalling the importance of naming both for friendship, connection and identity.[378] These nicknames also provide a code for which their 'love and desire' can operate 'obliquely and safely'.[379] Within this menagerie of cats, dogs, rats and rhinos, Herring exists as "Bud" or "Buddy". Herring's nickname conjures associations with friendship, workmates, and brotherhood. Its use in the mid-nineteenth century as a term of endearment gave rise to its use as a verb: to buddy up or be buddied with someone infers a growing closeness, proximity and connection, a testament to his place within POOL.

[375] Friedman, *Analyzing Freud,* pp. l-lii.
[376] Thompson, p. 67.
[377] Ibid.
[378] Bryher, *The Heart To Artemis*, p. 301.
[379] Thompson, p. 69.

Figure 33: Robert Herring, Kenneth Macpherson, and Bryher in Spitzbergen, Norway, 1929. Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Box 103, Folder 3758.

Figure 34: Robert Herring on a ship sailing in the Baltics with Bryher, 1939. Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Box 102, Folder 3727.

Not only did Herring have a POOL pet name, but he actively embraced their shared language. As well as codes for their associates, POOL often playfully used words like "barks" for talk or gossip, "zoo" as a stand in for sex, abbreviations like "ps-a" or "pa" to talk about psychoanalysis, and "fish" to refer to H.D.'s psychic visions.[380] Herring was aware of

[380] Friedman, *Analyzing Freud,* p. liii.

these shared codes. Just as Bryher would often sign her letters with some iteration of 'Love, barks, growls', Herring regularly finished letters in this same manner: 'All barks and love, Robert'.[381] Herring's 'barks' signal an inclusion within the intimate circle of 'Love, barks, [and] growls'.[382]

Figure 35: Photographs of Robert Herring, Kenneth Macpherson, and H.D. in Monte Carlo in August 1930. H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Scrapbook. Box 62, Folder 1430.

Herring's close friendships with H.D., Bryher and Macpherson have been cited in biographies of H.D. and Bryher, with McCabe including him in their 'extended family of exiles'.[383] His presence in H.D., Bryher and Macpherson's day-to-day lives is also signalled in Friedman's selection of H.D. and Bryher's correspondence, *Analyzing Freud,* many of which refer to Herring's social visits, his wellbeing, his writing and presence in their dreams.[384] Herring's correspondence with Bryher takes up 89 folders in her archive and 27 in H.D.'s,

[381] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML. Letter from Bryher to H.D, April 23 1933. Box 5, Folder 100; Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher, 1957. Box 21, Folder 791.
[382] Ibid.; H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML. Letter from Bryher to H.D, April 23 1933. Box 5, Folder 100.
[383] McCabe, *H.D. and Bryher*, p. 27.
[384] Friedman, *Analyzing Freud,* p. 48, p.57, p. 61, p. 99, p. 105, p. 108, p. 118, p. 125, p. 141, p. 145-6, p. 152-5, p. 203, p. 216, p. 235n15, p. 260-1, p. 266, p. 286, p. 314, p. 322-323n26, p. 420, p. 349, 436, p. 452n31, p. 487, p. 496-7. In November 1934, H.D. writes to Bryher to send her 'love to Bud [Herring], I wrote him and had a dream of "herring" which I think important' (p. 443), and Bryher also recounts that 'Dog [Macpherson] it appeared writhed in jealous dreams because I went out with Bud, so I hastily decided to see just as much of Bud as I possibly could as I adore teasing Kex [Macpherson]. Kex had the grace to giggle about them, dreamt he was chasing Bud with the Borderline knife' (p. 452).

attesting to the significant part he played in the group's intimate network. However, just two letters addressed to Herring are included in Friedman's selection.[385]

In the late 1920s, Herring's letters to H.D. indicate that he and Macpherson were lovers. Herring retrospectively refers to himself as Macpherson's 'Ex', including himself alongside Macpherson's other male lovers, Toni Slocum and Jimmie Daniels.[386] Herring and Macpherson's relationship is sometimes cited to indicate Macpherson's growing sexual interest in men around the time when his romantic relationship with H.D. dissolved.[387] Indeed, Herring's letters reveal he did play a small part in the 'drama' in Monte Carlo that unfurled between H.D. and Macpherson, although it was nothing to do with his own affair with Macpherson.[388] The fragmentation of H.D. and Macpherson's relationship can be pinpointed to December 1930, when Macpherson forgets plans to meet H.D. in Monte Carlo in favour of spending time with his new lover, Toni Slocum.[389] Herring apologises for inadvertently introducing Slocum to their circle of friends in August 1930, after meeting him at the Knickerbocker jazz club:

> I'm sorry if I'm responsible for what the Bocker stands for, sorry if T. might not have happened…. But something else would, one isn't responsible for K[enneth] he causes his own damage.[390]

These complex relationships converge with POOL's artistic production, where this shift in the intimate dynamics between H.D. and Macpherson signalled the end of what H.D. describes as

> the high-water mark of my faith in K[enneth] as a person and as a talented creator. […]the charm or the original spell of K is broken, though there are periods, occasional talks that bring back the echo of the original.[391]

Herring wrote in solidarity to H.D., 'one must as a kind of job, work not to be wounded'.[392] Tracking these rifts is crucial to constructing the history of the POOL group and in

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[385] Friedman, *Analyzing Freud,* pp. 409-412; pp. 419-420. See Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Boxes 18-21 and 70, Boxes 94-96, and Box 11 ; and H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Box 10, 17, 45, 54.
[386] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to H.D. 1933, Box 10, Folder 355.
[387] Friedman, *Penelope's Web,* p. 230; Friedman, *Analyzing Freud,* , p. 564, p. 99n22, p. 452fn31, p. 322fn26; McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher*, p. 133, p. 152.
[388] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Autobiographical Notes, Box 47, Folder 1181.
[389] Ibid.
[390] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to H.D. 1934, Box 10, Folder 357.
[391] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Autobiographical Notes, Box 47, Folder 1181.
[392] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to H.D. February 1 1931, Box 10, Folder 354.

identifying Herring's involvement in their queer constellation: as their close friend and "Buddy", who shared endless 'barks' with Bryher, as Macpherson's 'Ex', and as H.D.'s confidant.[393] Although this trip to Monte Carlo contributed to the dissipation of much of POOL's labelled productions, it inspired many works which exist in the group's wider orbit: the trips galvanised H.D.'s 'Mira-Mare', 'Kora and Ka' and 'Low Tide' (which she destroyed) and *Cactus Coast.*

Herring's *Cactus Coast* draws directly on his own queer romance in Monte Carlo, which Bryher encouraged him to redraft in 1934.[394] As well as soliciting *Cactus Coast,* Bryher also edited, funded, and printed it in 1934. Bryher's choice of printer is significant: she chose to preserve and publish *Cactus Coast* in the same manner as the first POOL books, the early issues of *Close Up*, and H.D.'s Dijon cycle.[395] Bryher's decision to use Darantiere situates these works within POOL's body of works and also within a wider network of early-twentieth century modernist experimentation. As Jean-Michel Rebaté writes, Darantiere was the 'master printer' of Dijon whose 'role in the modernist movement was quite unique': he was responsible for printing James Joyce's *Ulysses* for Sylvia Beach's 1922 edition.[396] Bryher's connections to Darantiere start with her work with her first husband of convenience, Robert McAlmon, on the Contact Publishing Company, where Darantiere printed: H.D.'s *Palimpsest* (1924), Bryher's autobiographical *Two Selves* (1923), Mina Loy's *Lunar Baedeker* (1923), *Ladies Almanack* (1928) by Djuna Barnes, among others. Bryher's working relationship with Darantiere continued with the POOL group: Rebaté suggests that her decision was motivated by Dijon's location, helpfully positioned between Montreaux and Paris; and Friedberg speculates that the choice may have been motivated by France's favourable exchange rate.[397] Whether it was the location, exchange rates, Bryher's familiarity or the prestige the printer carried in modernist circles, or a combination

[393] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher, 1957. Box 21, Folder 791; H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to H.D. 1933, Box 10, Folder 355; see, in particular, H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Box 10, Folder 354.
[394] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to H.D. 1934, Box 10, Folder 357.
[395] Friedman, *Analyzing Freud,* p. 420n39; Chadfield, p. 49n134; Friedberg, 'Writing About Cinema: "Close Up" 1927-1933', p. 318n126; Townsend, 'A Deeper, Wider POOL: Reading *Close Up* through the Archives of Its Contributors'; Spoo, p. x; Polly Hember, 'A Tale of Two Coasts: H.D.'s 'Mira-Mare' and Robert Herring's *Cactus Coast*', *Modernist Cultures,* 17.3/4 (November 2022), 344-363 (pp. 349-352).
[396] Jean-Michel Rabaté, '"Thank Maurice": A Note About Maurice Darantiere', *Joyce Studies Annual,* vol. 2 (Summer 1991), 245-251 (p. 246).
[397] Rebaté, p. 248; Friedberg, 'Writing About Cinema: "Close Up" 1927-1933', p. 115.

of all the above; Bryher chose Darantiere to launch *Close Up* and the first of POOL's books. Although Bryher moved *Close Up*'s printing to The Mercury Press after July 1928, she returned to Darantiere to print the Monte Carlo tales.[398]

Published nearly a year after *Close Up*'s final issue, *Cactus Coast* is a crucial part of POOL's body of work, where it challenges finite temporal markers imposed on the POOL groups' production. Instead, POOL's formation can be seen to change shape and evolve, with Bryher encouraging Herring and H.D. to print their Monte Carlo tales and purchasing the *Life and Letters* in April 1935 for £1200, and appointing Herring as editor alongside Dorothea Petrie Townshend as the magazine's business manager. [399] He held this post until 1950. Many familiar names and topics from *Close Up* appeared in the newly named *Life and Letters To-Day:* articles and reviews by Bryher, Blakeston, H.D., Macpherson and Richardson appeared over first two issues in September and December 1935, alongside pieces on film technique from Sergei Eisenstein and on psychoanalysis from Hanns Sachs.[400] *Life and Letters To-Day* placed more of an emphasis on contemporary fiction and poetry, although Herring 'enlarged' the film section, explaining in his first editorial that '[w]e have done this because the cinema, which plays so great a part in our lives, plays it uncontrolled and receives little serious or sociological consideration'.[401] Herring's statement echoes *Close Up*'s early intentions, with Macpherson writing in his first editorial, '[s]omehow something must be done to give films their due'.[402] Considering Herring's position within POOL's wider network is crucial in the light of his editorship of *Life and Letters To-Day,* which expanded and evolved the group's production and its legacy within modernist periodical cultures.

Herring's creative collaborations with Bryher did not stop with *Life and Letters To-Day.* In 1937, Bryher's Brendin Publishing Company produced the pamphlet *Cinema Survey*, which was comprised of short essays from Herring, Bryher, the film director Dallas Bower and illustrations by Blakeston. *Cinema Survey* took up the now well-trodden themes of how film engaged with education, art, entertainment, and politics; subjects introduced in *Close*

[398] *Close Up*'s transferal to The Mercury Press after July 1928 may have been because Darantiere relocated from Dijon to Paris, where he undertook more commercial projects in 1928 (see Rebaté, p. 248).
[399] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Box 19, Folder 712; McCabe, *H.D. and Bryher,* p. 202.
[400] Pieces from H.D., Eisenstein, Macpherson, Blakeston and Herring appeared in the first two issues of *Life and Letters To-Day,* with articles from Bryher, Richardson and Sachs first appearing in the second issue.
[401] Robert Herring, 'Editorial', *Life and Letters To-Day,* 13.1 (September 1935), pp. 1-2 (p. 2).
[402] Macpherson, 'As Is', *Close Up* (July 1927), p. 15.

Up continued *Life and Letters To-Day*, demanding that the 'cinema must learn' that 'it cannot be "art" without being "entertaining"'.[403] Bryher's support, interest and patronage of Herring's work continued into the 1940s. Herring's letters show that Bryher and H.D. read much of Herring's later work, with both their archives holding unpublished stories, poems and plays by Herring.[404] Revisiting themes from his early editorial work for Macmillan and *Adam and Evelyn*, Herring began experimenting with Restoration satires again. He wrote to Bryher about gender politics and symbolism in Restoration drama, asking for feedback on his 1943 satire 'Harlequin Mercutio', admitting 'as you say, they act better than they read'.[405] Bryher's publishing company also produced Herring's mock-Restoration drama *The Impecunious Captain or, Love as Liv'd: a play on the lives of George Farquhar and Anne Oldfield* in 1944. Herring dedicated this play to Bryher, referring to himself affectionately as her 'oblig'd and independent Servant'.[406] In 1945, Herring published a small volume of poetry, *Westward Look*, that included poems written from 1922 and 1945, where his acknowledgements hint to Bryher and H.D.'s support:

> No dedications are appended. A first-race writer dare not saddle himself to the Pegasus of others. But my pastors, masters, elders, editors and those paragons of patience, my friends, will know how much I owe them, even if I succeed little in replaying. They will know that theirs, and theirs entirely, are any pieces they are not insulted to accept—and I proffer them as a beggar his wares, to make some show of return for what he receives as alms of affection.[407]

What emerges from the archives is a sustained collaboration of long-lasting friendship, support and creative interest. In addition to Bryher reading Herring's later work, Herring also read and edited works by H.D.: he read and urged her to publish *The Sword That Went Out To Sea*, serialised *Tribute to Freud* in *Life and Letters To-Day*, and proofread *By Avon River*—which, significantly, H.D. dedicated to him and Bryher— and expressed unwavering loyalty to H.D. and Bryher, for example, he rejected a piece for *Life and Letters*

[403] Robert Herring, 'Film in Entertainment', *Cinema Survey* (London: Bredin Publishing Company, 1937), pp. 5-14 (p. 12).
[404] See Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Box 96, Folders 3464-5; H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Box 45, Folders 1146-1151.
[405] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher August 15 1943, Box 20, Folder 743; Robert Herring, 'Harlequin Mercutio; or, a Plague on Both Your Houses (A Ride Through Raids to Resurrection', *Transformation*, vol. 1, ed. by Stefan Schimanski and Henry Treece (London: Victor Gollancz, 1943).
[406] Robert Herring, *The Impecunious captain or, Love as Liv'd: a play on the lives of George Farquhar and Anne Oldfield* (London: Brendin Publishing Co., 1944), p. 6.
[407] Robert Herring, *Westward Look, 1922-1945* (Glasgow: William MacLellan, 1945), p. 3.

To-Day from Howell Dowding based on his 'behaviour' towards H.D..[408] Herring's long-lasting friendship with both H.D. and Bryher are evidenced by his frequent trips to Kenwin and to the hotels where H.D. lived throughout the 1930s, 1940s and early 1950s; through his extensive correspondence with Bryher and their continued creative collaboration along with Bryher's patronage; and a shared artistic interest in the issues that drove POOL's original production.[409] Although not labelled as such, we can see that these subsequent works were influenced by this network of friendship and artistic collaboration and are extensions of POOL's initial collaboration: tidemarks in the sand of POOL's diffuse legacy.

After the war, Bryher grew concerned about Herring's health. Her concerns increased following the loss of their friend Walter Schmideberg to complications from alcoholism in 1954. Herring initially rejected being labelled 'the next Alcoholic Addict' by Bryher, writing angrily to H.D. in October 1954. However, in the same letter he admitted that he would 'do anything to make [Bryher] happy' and conceded to various forms of treatment, which were funded by Bryher: 'I think I had better go into a Retreat for some time. Partly to do what one can for Bryher. Partly to Keep Out of Harm's Way'.[410] In March 1957, after his retreat and vitamin injections, Herring wrote Bryher with thanks for her support: 'you came to my rescue. At once, and without question.'[411] They continued to correspond into their old age, with Herring sending Bryher long letters and poems, and visiting her and H.D. in Switzerland. This not only attests to the importance of the POOL group in galvanising these friendships but also the part played in Herring's creative life and how POOL's ripples of influence and connection continued long after 1933.

Herring died in 1975. Indeed, Herring's obituaries in the *Chelsea News* and the *Evening Standard* make no mention of the POOL group or any of his work for *Close Up.*[412]

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[408] Louis Silverstein, 'Louis Silverstein's H.D. Chronology, Part Five (May 1946-April 1949), *Imagists.org* < https://www.imagists.org/hd/hdchron5.html> [accessed June 17 2022]; H.D., *By Avon River* (New York: Macmillan, 1949); Guest, p. 268.
[409] Silverstein, 'Louis Silverstein's H.D. Chronology, Part Five (May 1946-April 1949)'; Louis Silverstein's H.D. Chronology, Part Six (May 1949-1986, Misc. Info), *Imagists.org* <https://www.imagists.org/hd/hdchron6.html> [accessed 17 June 2022].
[410] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to H.D. October 31 1954, Box 11, Folder 369.
[411] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher March 2 1957, Box 21, Folder 791.
[412] 'Died In Blaze', *Chelsea News* (Friday 7 November 1975), p. 1; 'Author and his dog die in flat fire', *Evening Standard* (Tuesday 4 November 1975), p. 8.

Instead, they describe him as an author and playwright, citing a handful of his work in the '20s and '30s:

> Robert Herring, 72, and his Labrador dog died in a fire in the basement flat of a six-story Victorian mansion on Chelsea embankment today. Mr. Herring was a film critic of the Guardian from 1928 to 1938 and his publications include The President's Hat and Cactus Coast and between 1927 and 1934 he edited plays by Sheridan and Goldsmith.[413]

In addition to the absence of his other film writing, his roles in POOL's films or *Close Up*, the obituaries make no reference to any of Herring's work past 1938, leaving the subsequent 37 years of his life untouched, which speaks to the level of Herring's obscurity at the time of his death.

One of the unpublished poems that Herring sent to Bryher around Christmas 1967 among other poetic sketches of various animals including camels, swans, and unicorns, is titled 'Goldfish'. Made up of four lines, it reads:

> Is not the goldfish more vivid
> for its water-lily retreat?
> Yet we could do without leaves
> that hide him from our sight.[414]

'Goldfish' was written forty years after Herring's involvement with POOL's labelled projects and there is no reference to the group within the poem or the attached letter. However, Herring's reflections on visibility and obscurity captured in this short poem speak to the group's composition. Like the elusive fish in Herring's poem, or like the 'ripples in the process of clearing' described in *Cactus Coast*, or the 'expanding ripples from a stone dropped in a pool' from their manifesto, the legibility of much of the POOL group's artistic production is contingent on perspective, where it emerges 'more vivid' from its 'water-lily retreat'.[415]

Locating Herring's Presence within Criticism on the POOL Group

Despite Herring's significant engagement with the POOL group, where he experimented with literature, POOL films, wrote extensively for *Close Up*, and was a part of what McCabe describes as Bryher's 'extended family of exiles', his life and works have yet

[413] Ibid.
[414] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher December 29 1967. Box 21, Folder 795.
[415] Herring, *Cactus Coast*, p. 203; Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, POOL: Catalogues, n.d. Box 170, Folder 5679.

to be fully explored.[416] Having explored the reasons for the lack of critical attention in Chapter One, this section maps where Herring does appear in criticism on the POOL group. The way he is presented in criticism often varies between different studies, which has created an instability around the view of his role within POOL.

Most often, Herring is described as a "frequent contributor" to *Close Up* and its London Correspondent.[417] He is sometimes linked more loosely to POOL, where Low positions him as a 'Pool writer' and a 'frequent contributor' to *Close Up* in her study of British film in 1971.[418] Cosandey includes him under the 'Pool banner', and Friedberg's pioneering thesis dedicates a small section to Herring as one of *Close Up*'s 'staff writers'.[419] Some studies actively include him as a member of the POOL group, as Chadfield does within POOL's 'wider set'.[420] Others do so whilst also distancing him from POOL's founders: Jenelle Troxell notes that '[w]hile members of POOL were never made explicit, Bryher, Macpherson and H.D. comprised the core group—with Oswell Blakeston and Robert Herring as de facto members'.[421] Donald mentions Herring as a 'fourth but non-resident member of the POOL group', Kane locates him within a wider clique alongside Bryher and Blakeston in 1930s modernist periodical cultures, and Marcus highlights Herring's presence in H.D. and Bryher's archives, suggesting that this hints at 'something of the ways in which "the group" was constructed and sustained'.[422] Indeed, his friendships within POOL are often mentioned in biographical studies of H.D. and Bryher, where

[416] McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher,* p. 10.
[417] For studies that refer to Herring as *Close Up's* 'London Correspondent', see Friedman, *Analyzing Freud,* p. 564; Donald, Friedberg and Marcus, *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism,* p. 316; Kiryushina, p. 212; Robert Duncan, *The H.D. Book* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), p. 296. For studies in which Herring is referred to as either a 'frequent' or 'regular' 'contributor' to *Close Up,* see: Abravanel, *Americanizing Britain,* p. 100; Gledhill, 'Play as Experiment in 1920s British Cinema', p. 20; Abravanel, 'Britain's Hollywood: Cinema and *Close Up',* p. 153; Duncan Petrie, 'Paul Rotha and Film Theory', in *A Paul Rotha Reader,* ed. by Duncan Petrie and Robert Kruger (Exeter: University of Edinburgh Press, 1999), p. 49; Low, *History of British Film 1918-1929*, p. 22; Susan McCabe, 'Close Up & Wars They Saw: From Visual Erotics to a Transferential Politics of Film', p. 11; Schlun, p. 5; Guest, p. 205.
[418] Low, *History of British Film 1918-1929*, p. 116, p. 22.
[419] Cosandey, 'On Borderline', p. 48; Friedberg, 'The Film Journal Close Up: Writing About Cinema (1927-1933), pp. 32-3, p. 288, pp. 293-296.
[420] Chadfield, p. 61; p.67. Chadfield dedicates a chapter to Herring's editorial impact on the political coverage in *Life and Letters To-day* focusing on his inclusion of Muriel Rukeyser's work, pp. 236-290.
[421] Troxell, 'Shock and Contemplation: Close Up and the Female Avant-garde', p. 10n5. She elaborates that the reason for her focus on H.D., Bryher and Macpherson in her thesis is because they 'offer [more] consistent theoretical positions' than Blakeston and Herring (p. 13n13).
[422] Donald, 'As it Happened… *Borderline,* the Uncanny and the Cosmopolitan', p. 95; Kane, 'The Little Magazine in Britain: Networks, Communities, and Dialogues (1900-1945), p. 294; Marcus, *The Tenth Muse,* p. 321.

McCabe writes that 'Herring fit the Pool Group's dedication to crystalline, interactive, and queer forms' and characterises him as Macpherson's lover, and 'almost a younger brother' to H.D. and Bryher.[423] Yet even in studies which highlight the intimacies Herring found within the group, he is often still distanced and placed on the periphery: Friedman writes that he existed 'somewhat at the fringes of the ménage, there as a long-term, important friendship for H.D., but not in the innermost circle', and McCabe similarly placing him as '*[n]early* part of the family', despite his extensive archival correspondence with the group and lifelong friendship.[424]

Whilst definitions of Herring's relation to POOL are varied, there has been a consistent critical focus on specific aspects of Herring's work with POOL. Firstly, there is his role in *Borderline* as the pianist in the 'queer matrix' of the café-bar, playing alongside the cigar-smoking manager (Bryher) and the flirtatious barmaid (Charlotte Arthur), in what Donald describes 'as a kind of moral centre-cum-Greek chorus'.[425] Secondly, more extended interest appears to coalesce around one short article that Herring wrote for *Close Up* in April 1929, 'A New Cinema, Magic and the Avant-Garde'.[426] Within this essay, Herring envisions a new, embodied mode for watching film, in which light is projected by 'Magic fingers writing on the wall': 'It's fingers twitch, they spread in blessing or they convulse in terror. They tap you lightly or they drag you in'.[427] It neatly captures a strain of modernist thinking about film which prioritises the spectator's phenomenological experience and draws on mysticism and immersion to interrogate ideas of vision and perception. This

[423] McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher,* p. 135, p. 133. Guest, Robert Spoo and McCabe note Herring's presence on shared travels. See Guest, p. 205; McCabe, *H.D. & Bryher,* p. 146; Robert Spoo, 'Introduction', *Kora and Ka with Mira-Mare* (New York: New Directions, 1996), pp. v-xv (p. x).
[424] Friedman, *Analyzing Freud,* p. 398; McCabe, *H.D. and Bryher,* p. 186. Emphasis my own.
[425] Walton, 'White Neurotics, Black Primitives, and the Queer Matrix of *Borderline*', p. 258; Donald, 'As It Happened… *Borderline,* the Uncanny and the Cosmopolitan', p. 100.
[426] Herring, 'A New Cinema, Magic and the Avant-Garde'. Marcus has analysed the article most extensively; see: Marcus, *The Tenth Muse*, p. 372. Marcus also discusses 'A New Magic, Cinema and the Avant-Garde' with attention to Herring's use of cinematic time and film's 'aura' in Laura Marcus, 'How Newness Enters the World: the Birth of Cinema and the Origins of Man', in *Literature and Visual Technologies: Writing After Cinema,* ed. by Julian Murphet and Lydia Rainford (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) pp. 29-45 (p. 41). For a reading of Herring's engagement with magic and the "real", see Leigh Wilson, *Modernism and Magic: Experiments with Spiritualism, Theosophy and the Occult* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 149-150; Maclean; Rebecca Bowler, *Literary Impressionism: Vision and Memory in Dorothy Richardson, Ford Madox Ford, H.D. and May Sinclair* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 139; McCabe uses a quote from the article to demonstrate the sort of 'abstract phenomenology' within cinema that interested H.D., Gertrude Stein, Marianne Moore, and William Carlos Williams in McCabe, *Cinematic Modernism,* p. 12; and Susan Gevirtz also cites his views on spectatorship and projection as emblematic of many modernist's approaches to film in her study of Richardson in Gevirtz, p. 63-4.
[427] Herring, 'A New Cinema, Magic and the Avant-Garde', p. 51.

approach is also shared, as many have noted, by H.D. and Dorothy Richardson where Herring is often referenced to show how their fascination link to other work within *Close Up*.[428] Marcus argues that the writing of both Herring and Richardson are 'characteristic of modernized vision and its altered perceptions of subject/object relationships'.[429] Indeed, Herring's model of spectatorship focuses on the active participation of the viewer's body, where he questions the subject's bodily borders. To experience the magic of cinema, he explains:

> You need not be a chamber to be haunted, nor need you own the Roxy [cinema theatre] to let loose the spirit of cinema on yourself. You can hire or buy or get on the easy system, a projector. You then have, on the occasions on which it works, people walking on your own opposite wall. By moving your fingers before the beam, you interrupt them; by walking before it, your body absorbs them. You hold them, you can let them go.[430]

For Herring, film's power—its 'magic' to affect and transmit feeling—exists in the immersive play between the body and 'the spirit of cinema' that works to dissolve corporeal boundaries between the body and world.[431] It is film's transcendental properties that Richardson also celebrated in her 'Continuous Performance' column in *Close Up*, where she wrote that the 'whole power of the film' rests in 'this single, simple factor':

> the reduction, or elevation of the observer to the condition that is essential to perfect contemplation. In life, we contemplate a landscape from one point, or, walking through it, break it into bits. The film, by setting the landscape in motion and keeping us still, allows it to walk through us. And what is true of the landscape is true of everything else that can be filmed.[432]

Richardson's idea of 'perfect contemplation' is what Herring might call cinema's 'magic', and both operate through the absorption or intermingling of cinematic image and body.[433] These ideas can also be seen in *Pilgrimage*, where Abbie Garrington identifies echoes of Herring's 'touch-attuned' in the way Miriam's memories are projected cinematically against a wall, as if they were written 'with Herring's "magic fingers"'.[434]

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[428] See Marcus, *The Tenth Muse*, p. 361; Marcus, 'The Contribution of H.D.', 99-100; Garrington, pp. 142-154; Troxell, 'Shock and '"Perfect Contemplation": Dorothy Richardson's Mystical Cinematic Consciousness'; Jenelle Troxell, 'Mind Cure and Ecstasy on the Pages of *Close Up*'; Gevirtz, pp. 63-4.
[429] Marcus, 'The Contribution of H.D.', p. 99.
[430] Herring, 'A New Cinema, Magic and the Avant-Garde', p. 52.
[431] Ibid.
[432] Dorothy Richardson, 'Continuous Performance: Narcissus', *Close Up*, 8.3, (September 1931), pp. 182-185 (p. 185).
[433] Ibid.; Herring, 'A New Cinema, Magic and the Avant-Garde', p. 47.
[434] Garrington, p. 150.

Marcus draws parallels between Herring's ideas of projection in 'A New Cinema, Magic and the Avant-Garde' and H.D.'s "writing on the wall" vision recounted in *Tribute to Freud*.[435] H.D.'s describes how she witnessed a series of images—'a silhouette cut of light, not shadow'—projected onto a wall as if by a '*moving finger*', recalling Herring's mystical model.[436] There are also thematic resonances with H.D.'s poems 'Projector' and 'Projector II', both published in *Close Up*, in which light beamed through the projector 'calls the host / to reassemble', resulting in 'our spirits walk[ing] elsewhere / with shadow-folk'.[437] The fascination with light, its power to affect the body and what this means for the possibilities of film art is felt in many corners of *Close Up* and within POOL's larger network, and has been made visible by the studies that place Herring's article in dialogue with works by H.D. and Richardson.

'A New Cinema, Magic and the Avant-Garde' provides valuable insights into Herring's view on film art and also the thematic skein that stretches between different parts of the POOL group. However, it has received a marked critical weighting in contrast to his other writing for *Close Up*. The relatively large amount of criticism that draws on this one article in comparison to the scant attention that Herring's other writing—his 37 other articles written for *Close Up*, his film writing for other publications, his fiction and poetry—has received is perhaps due to its position within the revival of scholarship on *Close Up*. It was the only piece by Herring's included in the edited anthology *Close Up 1927: Cinema and Modernism* so the only one of his *Close Up* articles accessible outside private collections, archives, reading rooms and second-hand bookshops.[438] The limits of the anthology due to space (the anthology reproduces 60 of *Close Up*'s 584 authored pieces) and its intentional imbalance result in a skewed depiction of *Close Up*'s output, which may explain the narrow interest in Herring's contributions to the journal.

Looking beyond 'A New Cinema, Magic and the Avant-Garde', Townsend's revisionist investigation of *Close Up* presents a more holistic assessment of Herring's involvement with the journal. He shows Herring's significant contributions across the

[435] Marcus, *The Tenth Muse,* pp. 99-100.
[436] H.D., *Tribute to Freud,* p. 45, p. 52.
[437] H.D., 'Projector', *Close Up,* 1.1 (July 1927), pp. 46-51 (p. 47); H.D., 'Projector II', *Close Up,* 1.4 (October 1927), pp. 35-44 (p. 36).
[438] Robert Herring, 'A New Cinema, Magic and the Avant-Garde', in *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism*, ed. by James Donald, Laura Marcus and Anne Friedberg (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998) pp. 50-56. Also included within the anthology is a short biographical note for Herring under the umbrella of *Close Up*'s 'Contributors' (p. 316).

journal's six-year lifespan and tracks his connections to the British media industry. Townsend argues that Herring provided POOL with industry expertise garnered from his film writing for the likes of the *London Mercury*.[439] Using the group's archival correspondence, Townsend shows Herring's connections with commercial sources to map *Close Up*'s place within the expanding British popular media industry: Herring sent promotional copies of *Close Up* to local newspapers such as the *Yorkshire Weekly Post,* 'Liverpool or Bristol papers' and suggested that Bryher may be interested in publicity materials from the mainstream London production company, the Fox Studio as 'they have [commercial film directors, F. W.] Murnau, [Ludwig] Berger & [Frank] Borzage, it is often useful'.[440] This significantly reorientates *Close Up*'s cultural position, which is often depicted as sequestered in Switzerland and antithetical to popular culture.[441] Nikolova and Townsend further question the links between professional film cultures and amateur ones, and position Herring as a bridge between middlebrow publications (like *The Listener* and the *Manchester Guardian*) and *Close Up,* where he often covers similar—and sometimes the same—topics.[442] Herring is also used as a brief example of *Close Up*'s engagement with commercial film culture in Betsy van Schlun's study of POOL's ideas of universal art, where she refers to him as one of the regular film writers for *Close Up* who were 'clearly proponents of popular film culture', although Herring's particular investment in popular culture is not explored.[443]

Throughout scholarship on POOL, interpretations of Herring's cultural associations differ dramatically. Whilst Townsend and Nikolova reveal Herring's film writing as a 'productive exchange' between the emerging British mainstream media industry and *Close Up*, other studies cite him as an avatar for the journal's literary allegiances.[444] For example, Donald, Marcus and Friedberg emphasise Herring's 'literary training' and his 'air and

[439] Townsend, 'A Deeper, Wider POOL: Reading *Close Up* Through the Archives of its Contributors'.
[440] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher May 2 1928, Box 18, Folder 703; Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher December 19 1928, Box 18, Folder 703; quoted in Townsend, 'A Deeper, Wider POOL: Reading *Close Up* Through the Archives of its Contributors'.
[441] Townsend, 'A Deeper, Wider POOL: Reading *Close Up* Through the Archives of its Contributors'.
[442] Ibid., p. 185. Nikolova and Townsend list these shared topics as commentary in the *Manchester Guardian* on G. W. Pabst's *Pandora's Box* (1929), the film composer Edmund Meisel's work, and Sergei Eisenstein's *October* (1927), as well as the interest in 'negro films' in 1928 which would inspire *Close Up*'s issue on race and film in August 1929.
[443] Schlun, p. 10, p. 5.
[444] Nikolova and Townsend, p. 185.

expertise of a well-educated member of the British *literati*'; Dusinberre aligns him with the Film Society's intellectualism, noting that it is 'paradoxical that consistent support for the cinema as radical visual art came from literary directions'; Christine Gledhill includes him among 'the intelligentsia', in her category of 'Britain's incipient avantgarde of young Oxbridge intellectuals clustered around the Film Society and *Close Up*'.[445] Thus, a dissonance emerges between studies where Herring is an indicator of *Close Up*'s highbrow status and conversely as a gauge for the journal's investment in popular culture. This study reconciles these two stands of criticism. Through an exploration of Herring's literary work, his play with experimental modernist aesthetics and techniques are revealed. This co-exists with Townsend's view, where Herring's position as a freelance film writer imbricates him within mainstream media networks. Indeed, the space that Herring occupies within the POOL group demonstrates Lawrence Rainey's assertion that modernism 'intersect[s] with the public realm in a variety of contradictory ways' in a manner more 'complex than the rigid dichotomy between "high" and "low" allows'.[446]

In many studies that explore POOL, Herring is simply not mentioned.[447] His variable connections to the group between different studies along with his minor status in histories of literary modernism have produced a critical lacuna. This critical absence is noted by Meic Stephens, who points out that 'very little has been written about Herring'.[448] Stephens's short essay in 1997 is the first and only dedicated singular study on Herring, where he explores how *Life and Letters To-Day* championed Welsh writers under Herring's editorship, writing: 'This note will attempt to throw light on a man who remains a rather shadowy (not to say enigmatic) figure in the history of Anglo-Welsh writing'.[449] While studies have shed light on aspects of Herring's activities within *Close Up* and modernist periodical culture, Herring's fiction still remains 'rather shadowy'.[450] Aside from my comparative piece in

[445] Donald, Marcus and Friedberg, p. 316 (emphasis in the original text); Dusinberre, p. 78; Gledhill, 'Play as Experiment in 1920s British Cinema', p. 28, p. 20.
[446] Rainey, p. 3.
[447] For studies that do not include Herring in definitions of the POOL group, see: Baumgartner, p. 123; Abravanel, *Americanizing Britain,* p. 96; Nicholas Daly, 'Art and its Others I: The Aesthetics of Technology', *The Cambridge History of Modernism,* ed. by Vincent Sherry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 404-421 (409); David Seed, *Cinematic Fictions: The Impact of the Cinema on the American Novel up to World War II* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), p. 57; Connor, p. 19.
[448] Meic Stephens, 'The Third Man: Robert Herring and *Life and Letters To-Day'*, in *Welsh Writing in English: A Yearbook of Critical Essays*, ed. Tony Brown, vol. 3 (1997), pp. 157-169.
[449] Ibid., p. 157.
[450] Ibid.

Modernist Cultures tracing the parallels between *Cactus Coast* and H.D.'s 'Mira-Mare', there are no studies attending to Herring's fiction.[451] The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to exploring *Adam and Evelyn*, *Cactus Coast*, and the creative currents that run through them and to the POOL group.

The 'rotten system' in *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*

Adam and Evelyn at Kew hinges on the idea of transition. It exists on thematic borderlines and its evolution between 1926 and 1930 coincides with the advent of sound cinema and spans the time before Herring was introduced to the POOL group and his subsequent immersion within their network. Herring's use of intertextuality, historical pastiche and allegory are used to place the text in a liminal space between various historical periods. Herring's biblical parody is caught between the pull of its prelapsarian past and the urgency of modernity: set in the early-twentieth century in Kew Gardens, where buses 'rampage' beyond the gates, Kew is presented as the Garden of Eden: 'surely it cannot be fanciful to regard this garden-land as the fountain of all, the origin of the world, wherein which should be Eden but Kew?'[452] These two contrasting worlds collide when Adam meets Evelyn, and become increasingly unstable through Herring's use of mythic motifs, which combine to form a critical commentary on modern life and the future of film.

Adam is introduced as a gardener working under the oppressive watch of the Curator. He meets a film-star who he decides to call Evelyn, whilst she is at Kew Gardens shooting a new "talkie" and helps her hide from the jealous Director. Over the course of an afternoon, Herring narrates the beginnings of their "fall" from innocence, which occurs when Evelyn informs Adam about the invention of cinema, where 'he was struck by a new knowledge stirring inside him'.[453] Thus, a conflict arises between Adam's sense of tradition and Evelyn's modern (and modernist) ideas. Herring subverts the scriptural Fall of Man by introducing multiple falls throughout the narrative. These various falls instil a sense of instability that underlines the novel's liminal positions, which in turn, form an overarching commentary on the transition from silent cinema to sound technology. This parallels

[451] Hember.
[452] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*, p. 9, p. 16.
[453] Ibid., p. 80.

concerns expressed in *Close Up,* of how to engage with the 'new knowledge' of modernity.[454]

The first of many borderline states interrogated by Herring in *Adam and Evelyn at Kew* is the site of revelation, which is presented through parody. The text narrates the transition between not knowing and knowing over the course of one day, placing Adam and Evelyn in an unstable passage between innocence and 'new knowledge'. [455] Herring employs biblical parody to interrogate different forms of knowledge, where Adam and Evelyn hold fundamentally opposing beliefs about how to engage with Kew Gardens. This challenges ideas of universal knowledge or truth, speaking to broader concerns about contradictory ideas that modernity held, contending with inherited Victorian values whilst in the process of forming new ways of being—and being modern—in the world. Herring's use of parody produces this tension. Linda Hutcheon views parody as a form of imitation constituted by ironic inversion and difference: a definition which *Adam and Evelyn at Kew* readily fits into.[456] The humour within Herring's parody hinges on the markers of difference between his text and the biblical original, which operate thematically (through the play with different forms of knowledge), spatially (the compression of Kew Gardens and the Garden of Eden), temporally (the dissonance between ancient times and Herring's present-day London), and through a contortion of significant symbols from the original text.

There is no apple or serpent in Herring's Kew Gardens, as in the *Book of Genesis.* Instead, his parody transforms them into uncanny representations. As Eve learns about a rare flower in the garden, she mistakes the crack of a dead branch under her foot to be 'something unpleasant, a snake or a rotten apple'.[457] Thus, the biblical symbols do not exist as objects within the text, but as intangible and intrusive reactions that draw attention to their physical absence within the parody. Similarly, Eve does not pick an apple from the Tree of Knowledge. In fact, there is no Tree of Knowledge in Herring's text. Its absence and its imposing imagined presence is highlighted by Adam, who admits he believes that Kew's ailanthus tree (which is also known as the 'Tree of Heaven') might be the Tree of

[454] Ibid.
[455] Ibid.
[456] Linda Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth Century Art Forms* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p. 6.
[457] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* p. 80.

Knowledge, which Eve dismisses immediately.[458] Instead, new knowledge comes directly from Evelyn's mind:

> There was something in that last remark, could he only find it. She seemed to be giving him something, there must be a core, but it was a remarkably sleepy fruit, this that she was trying to pull from the distant boughs of her mind.[459]

The play between an apple core and the core of Evelyn's meaning produces a dissonance between the Biblical text and *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*, opening another in-between space within the diegetic distance of Herring' parody. As well as heightening borderline states within the book, the parody acts as a secular interrogation of religion. Drawing on the power structures that underpin the story of Adam and Eve, Herring critiques the oppressive forces of Evelyn's Director, who 'thinks he's God Almighty' and Adam's Curator (whose name carries the consonant echoes of "Creator"), with the omnipresent 'trick of hearing what you say', and 'seemed to spend a great deal of his time watching Adam', who was 'rather afraid'.[460] Herring's inversion of biblical motifs allows for a further commentary beyond the *Book of Genesis* and the patriarchal power structures it represents. As in Hutcheon's definition of parody, the 'critical distancing' between the parody and the backgrounded text sets up 'standards by which to place the contemporary under scrutiny', that interrogates issues of cinema.[461]

The issues that *Adam and Evelyn at Kew* explores are closely tied to questions at the heart of POOL's project. Herring's attention to anxious transitions overlaps with the group's awareness of their state of being in what Macpherson calls the 'critical age' that *Close Up* inhabits.[462] Borderline states recur throughout POOL's fiction and films, too. For example, Macpherson's *Gaunt Island* is set on the Hebrides, where life is depicted using a combination of brutal liminal spaces: 'There was life, the thing that beat in him, offering twilight and sea, and sense of seas and lands in chain of preposterous alternation.'[463] *Anatomy of Motion Picture Art* laments cinema's brevity, and the audience's inability to hold onto a film's meaning as the 'eye is not only deceiving, but physically incapable of taking every detail in' and his technical analysis looks to slow down and study the fleeting space

[458] Ibid., 115.
[459] Ibid., p. 99.
[460] Ibid., p. 100, p. 36, p. 24, p. 100.
[461] Hutcheon, p. 57.
[462] Macpherson, 'As Is', *Close Up* (July 1927), p. 5.
[463] Macpherson, *Gaunt Island*, p. 2-3.

between the film and its meaning.[464] The most overt examples of POOL's borderline states lie in films and film writings: *Close Up's* advertisement for *Wing Beat* situates the film on 'the very edge of dimensions in dimensions', *Monkey's Moon* follows a monkey's temporary freedom from captivity, and *Borderline* interrogates 'the cosmic racial borderline'.[465] *Adam and Evelyn at Kew* conveys a corresponding investment in intermediate spaces and the in-between. Herring uses parody to play with the lines between reality and fantasy, dreaming and consciousness, sanity and madness, silence and sound, tradition and modernity, and between the universal and the individual, in order to embrace the flux and uncertainty that accompanies borderline lives.

The uncertainty of film's future underlines *Adam and Evelyn at Kew.* Drafted and rewritten between 1926 and 1930, the book's material production spans the advent of synchronised sound in cinema. Herring's parody mirrors this transition, where on the surface, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew* seems to embody Bryher's reflection that silent cinema was 'what I call "the art that died" because sound ruined its development', by linking sound technologies symbolically to original sin.[466] Instead of a devilish serpent speaking to Eve in the Garden as in the *Book of Genesis*, it is the sound-actress Evelyn who talks into temperamental microphones—"mikes"—while filming on set at Kew, which she describes as 'perfect devils to manage'.[467] Adam takes Evelyn's comments literally. He is thoroughly alarmed, 'holding fast on to the fact that she had been talking of nothing less familiar than the devil'.[468] Herring presents an Eden of silent film where sound technology is synonymous with the devil. However, as with *Close Up*, Herring's depiction of sound technology is more complex than this biblical dichotomy of good and evil. Herring contorts these symbols throughout the narrative, developing an ambivalent commentary that parallels the early antagonism and gradual acceptance of the talkies that was taking place in other parts of POOL's production.

Close Up is often characterised by its hostility towards sound; where Michael North explores how their opposition to sound denied new media's transnationalism and Ian

[464] Elliott, *Anatomy of Motion Picture Art,* p. 15.
[465] Advertisement for *Wing Beat* in *Close Up,* 1.1 (July 1927), p. 58; Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Borderline Pamphlet (p. 5-6). Box 168, Folder 5637.
[466] Bryher, *The Heart to Artemis,* p. 290.
[467] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* p. 77.
[468] Ibid., p. 78, p. 76.

Christie's defines *Close Up* as the 'rearguard defence of aesthetics of silent art cinema'.[469] Schlun's explanation of the POOL group's dissipation is predicated on the advent of sound, asserting that the language barriers and expensive studio equipment destroyed film's 'original artistic potential' for POOL.[470] Friedberg and Marcus, too, draw on Bryher's framing of silent cinema as the 'art that died' alongside some of Macpherson's more pessimistic editorials to gauge *Close Up's* resistance to sound.[471] For example, when *Close Up* announced its shift from a monthly to quarterly format, Macpherson offers an explanation that emphasises the changes that sound film instigated:

> With the establishment of the talking film, the world situation with regard to films was completely altered. Whereas, during the period of silent films, world distribution was fluid, now films are becoming more and more tied up within national limits. Circulation has to an enormous extent come to end.[472]

However, commentary within *Close Up*—especially regarding sound film—rarely functions cohesively or consistently. As Tim Armstrong, Donald, Nikolova and Townsend all show, *Close Up* acted not in homogenous opposition to the talkies, but as a site of debate and conjecture.[473] Armstrong describes the journal as a 'snapshot of modernist uncertainty', where *Close Up*'s initial scrutiny gives way to an uneven and latent excitement surrounding the possibilities of sound.[474]

Donald tracks the disjointed movement between suspicion and excitement within *Close Up*. He cites two opposing articles that appeared in April 1929: one by Jean Lenauer, claiming sound would be cinema's 'salvation', and one by Ernest Betts, who asserts that the talkies were an 'unsound' 'injustice' to the medium and refuses to treat them as cinema, writing 'you will get speech plus film but you will not get a film.'[475] Donald places these two articles in dialogue with Macpherson's appraisal of Alfred Hitchcock's talkie *Blackmail*

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[469] Michael North, 'International Media, International Modernism, and the Struggle with Sound', in *Literature and Visual Technologies: Writing After Cinema,* ed. Julien Murphet and Lydia Rainford (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 49-66; Ian Christie, 'Introduction', in *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents*, ed. by Richard Taylor and Ian Christie (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 6.
[470] Schlun, p. 414.
[471] Friedberg, 'Introduction', p. 25-6; Marcus, 'The Contribution of H.D.', p. 101.
[472] Macpherson, 'As Is' (December 1930), p. 367.
[473] Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body*; Donald, 'From Silence to Sound', p. 81; Nikolova and Townsend, 'Dorothy Richardson and *Close Up:* Amateur and Professional Exchanges in Film Culture', pp. 181-201.
[474] Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body* p. 231.
[475] Donald, 'From Silence to Sound', pp. 81-82; Jean Lenauer, 'The Sound Film: Salvation to Cinema', *Close Up,* 4.4 (April 1929), 18-21 (p. 18); Ernest Betts, 'Why "Talkies" Are Unsound', *Close Up,* 4.4 (April 1929), pp. 22-24 (p. 24).

(1929), published in October 1929, which concludes 'I don't mind telling the world I miss the sound now in a silent film', demonstrating the changing and changeable views expressed in *Close Up*.[476] Nikolova and Townsend view the Spring of 1929 as a critical point in the evolution of POOL's discourse on sound: with articles from Lenauer and Hugh Castle, who acknowledges the need for development in cinema and concedes that the 'talkie situation' is alive and 'acute'.[477] Nikolova and Townsend also look outside of *Close Up,* tracing Herring's early advocacy for sound film, which can be seen in his praise for *The Doctor's Secret* in the *Manchester Guardian* in April 1929 and a talk for the BBC in August on the talkies.[478] The debate around film art and the role of sound that evolved throughout *Close Up* is distilled within *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* providing insight into the views of one of the key members of POOL's network.

The time spanning the development of *Adam and Evelyn at Kew* in 1926 and its publication in early 1930 not only spans the shifting outlooks on sound technology that occurs within *Close Up,* but also the changes in Herring's own views. In 1926 he wrote in *The London Mercury* that speech 'stung' film.[479] By March 1929 his evolved opinion is reflected in his praise for Vsevolod Pudovkin, where he states that if you 'think of sound imagery in his terms', then you 'thank yourself that you are alive'.[480] Thus, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew* functions as a non-linear amalgamation of these contrasting views, where his reservations and tentative optimism for film's future are presented through Evelyn's journey through Kew Gardens. Evelyn is described as a 'Modern Girl': she was 'made' by her Director who, on hearing her voice, proclaimed '[t]hat girl must be synchronised'.[481] She brings new knowledge into the garden about film's existence, sound technology, questions of language—she teaches Adam new words like 'fired' and 'assert'—and questions his

[476] Kenneth Macpherson, 'As Is', *Close Up,* 5.4 (October 1929), 257-263 (p. 263). Macpherson praises Hitchcock's use of 'cinematic sound', where the sound of a shop bell clangs succeed in revealing 'a picture of a mental state' (p. 261).
[477] Hugh Castle, 'The Future of the British Cinema', *Close Up,* 4.4 (April 1929), pp. 33-40 (p. 40); Nikolova and Townsend, p. 188.
[478] Robert Herring writes to Bryher in February 1929 reporting that the BBC have invited him to advise and present on 'some talks on the future of cinema', see: Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring 12 February 1929, Box 18, Folder 704; Nikolova and Townsend, p. 188; see also Townsend, '*Close Up* After *Close Up: Life and Letters To-Day* as a Modernist Film Journal', p. 250.
[479] Herring, 'The Movies', p 89.
[480] Robert Herring, 'Storm Over London', *Close Up,* 4,3 (March 1929), pp. 34-44 (p. 44).
[481] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* p. 78, p. 134, p. 79.

traditional beliefs.[482] I suggest that Eve operates as a symbol for film art, allowing Herring to explore his perspective on film art's current-day practices and its future.

Evelyn herself is suspicious of sound technology. She expresses her distaste for microphones as she explains their function to Adam: 'It's not quite a person. It's the thing that takes up everything we say. I wish they had never been allowed in.'[483] Evelyn's critique of sound's invasion forms only a small fragment of her thoughts on film, through which Herring offers a much wider critique of the industry. As the narrative progresses, Herring shows that the real danger to Evelyn's future—both in terms of her personal safety and within his framing of Eve as film art personified—is more complex.

The first major force that threatens Eve is her Director. Although he never appears in the narrative, his presence looms throughout: Eve worries that if he catches her with Adam, she will be 'fired' from the production and 'turned out' of the garden.[484] He is described as the 'Power behind the Stars', however his film is a 'muddled' disaster that seeks to compromise Evelyn's acting abilities, her agency and her physical safety.[485] Billed as a 'British film about Kew', it doubles as a biography of Fanny Burney—played by Evelyn—who was a satirist, diarist and playwright who was Keeper of the Robes to Queen Charlotte, the wife of King George III, from 1786-1790. Eve explains that Burney is 'naturally the heroine, or at least the easiest person to make an heroine; we did it by banning one of her books.'[486]

Burney's association with Kew Gardens stems from a single entry in her diary titled 'Miss Burney's Alarm On Being Chased By The King. Kew Palace, Monday, Feb. 2 [1789]'.[487] She recounts 'the severest personal terror that I have ever experienced in my life', entering a 'state of fear really amounting to agony', where she ran away from King George III, who pursued her through the gardens in one of his episodes of madness.[488] Burney's 'personal

[482] Ibid., p. 66, p. 132.
[483] Ibid., p. 76-7.
[484] Ibid., p. 66.
[485] Ibid., p. 100, p. 113.
[486] Ibid., p. 113.
[487] Madame D'Arblay, *The Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, vol. 2 (London: Vizetelly & Co., 1891), p. 287 <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/6042/6042-h/6042-h.htm> [accessed 11 January 2022].
[488] Ibid.; King George III suffered several bouts of mental illness in 1765, 1788-9, 1801 and 1810-12. There is speculation surrounding the cause of his symptoms, with theories ranging from arsenic poisoning, a hereditary condition called porphyria, and bi-polar affective disorder Type 1. See Timothy Peters, 'Royal Medical Entourages: Analysis of the Roles of Doctors during the Episodes of Madness of King George III', *The Court Historian,* 24.1 (2019), 48-66; and Timothy M. Cox et al, 'King George III and porphyria: an elemental hypothesis and investigation', *The Lancet,* 366.9482 (July 2005), 332-335.

terror' is both the linchpin that holds the film and the broader narrative of *Adam and Evelyn at Kew* together.[489] The scene is the sole link between the film's protagonist and Kew Gardens, set against a patchwork of anachronisms and errors. It is also the point at which Evelyn appears and meets Adam. He first sees Evelyn playing Burney in his dream, where scenes from the film infiltrate his sleeping mind as they shoot nearby. The text's form alters as Herring descends into his dream, moving from prose to a mock epic poem, which is disrupted by Burney's flight, causing the shoot to end abruptly and for Adam to be woken from his dream. However, the lingering motifs of Burney's 'agony' persist throughout the narrative, underlining Herring's critique of cinema.[490]

The Director rewrites Burney's diary scene into his fictional film, which chaotically dissolves into violence and underlines Herring's central critique of filmmaking. This critique is not angled towards sound and the devilish microphones, but rather, the approach to filmmaking that the Director represents. As with many of the historical events and figures in his film, the Director contorts Burney's diary entry, causing Evelyn to abandon the film set. Whereas Burney recounts how she escapes the pursuit unharmed and untouched by the King, Evelyn's is chased by a 'rake Regent' who:

> grasps her shoulder—she is quick, escapes
> (being a novelist, she knows these rapes)
> and as a tearful stag, when fleeing slaughter,
> seeks added brine, she rushes to the water;
> but not before his practiced hand has caught her
> and, where the lace unmentionably rips,
> his fingers fly, swift-following his lips. [491]

Evelyn is physically attacked and flees into a pond to escape the Regent's 'rapes', where she is then chased by swans and saved by Adam.[492] The rewritten narrative not only obscures Burney's original story, but overlays the scene with overt sexual violence.

Evelyn's peril is intensified by the poem's layered intertextuality. Within his retelling of Fanny Burney's flight, Herring alludes to the legend of the 13th century noblewoman Lady Godiva and the Greek myth of Leda and the Swan, as the Regent shouts after Evelyn:

> A grim Godiva you, who would surround
> virtue with water—that, it may be drowned!

[489] D'Arblay, p. 287.
[490] Ibid.
[491] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*, p. 63.
[492] Ibid.

Yet, as by flight you fiercely led me on,
take care lest the same way you Leda swan.[493]

The parallels between Evelyn and 'grim Godiva' draw attention to the voyeuristic nature of the scene. As Godiva rode naked through Coventry in a trial designed by her husband to exploit 'her great modesty', she was seen by 'Peeping Tom'.[494] The comparison works to highlight Evelyn's nudity, with her 'dress in George's hands more than her own', accentuating the 'grim' nature of both tales of public humiliation.[495] Similarly, the wordplay around "leading" and 'Leda Swan' insinuates that Evelyn incited the Regent's attack, playing on the myth of Leda's rape to further underline the multiple forms of abuse that Evelyn is subject to at the hands of her Director, in a parody of commercial British cinema production.

Herring's commentary corresponds with the frustrations expressed about British film production in *Close Up*. Blakeston's view that '[m]ost British producing companies are in a state of chaos' is mirrored throughout *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*.[496] The sense of chaos stems from a number of places: the commercial British film industry was reeling from the changes in cinema-going and distribution that took place in the 1920s, overshadowed by the dominance of Hollywood, shaken by the popularisation of sound technology, and producing an influx of "quota quickies" following the 1927 Cinematograph Films Act.[497] For many members of POOL, this environment did not support the type of cinema that they wanted. Macpherson summarises that instead of making 'film for film's sake', it 'meant that one film producer was competing with other film producers, and it was up to them to get in first on anything new, and watch out, and borrow or purloin ideas'.[498] Herring's Director embodies this approach to film, where his film is 'a splendid business' idea' produced to 'placate their shareholders', or else 'the banks would withdraw'.[499] The Director has

[493] Ibid., p. 63.
[494] Thomas Archibald Marrs, *Lady Godiva, The Earl of Mercia, Peeping Tom, and Ancient Coventry: A Historical Narrative* (Coventry: T. A. Marrs, 1851), p. 6, p. 14.
[495] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*, pp. 63-4.
[496] Oswell Blakeston, 'British Solecisms', *Close Up*, 1.2 (August 1927), pp. 17-23 (p. 21-22).
[497] For an account of the changes in cinema distribution and exhibition, see Simon Brown, 'From Inventor to Renter: The Middleman, the Production Crisis and the Formation of the British Film Industry', *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 11.2 (2013), 100-112 (p. 105-106). For an analysis of the impact of the Quota Act and "quota quickies", see: Steve Chibnall, *Quota Quickies: The Birth of the British 'B' Film* (London: BFI Publishing, 2007) and Lawrence Napper, *British Cinema and Middlebrow Culture in the Interwar Years* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2009), pp. 17-34.
[498] Macpherson, 'As Is' (July 1927), p. 14.
[499] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*, p. 101

designed the film to keep up with Hollywood's technological advances, as 'England's first out-door talkie', it is a history of Kew Gardens made in 'record time', despite knowing little about Kew Gardens, how to shoot a film outside, or how to record sound.[500] This results in a 'rather confusing' and 'muddled' film of historical and technical blunders that actively endanger Evelyn.[501]. The film's plot is relayed through Adam's dream, where it sprawls from the Battle of Brentford in 1016 and ends anticlimactically in 1907 as Queen Alexandra rearranges Kew's lilac trees. The crew, having never used microphones before, loses one in a closed-up water-lily, whilst another is drowned out by the sound of swarming bees, and a third is placed in the beak of a drugged pelican. As Adam learns about the Director's careless approach to time, money and Evelyn's wellbeing, he remarks: 'I shouldn't have thought you would have been allowed to do anything so foolish'.[502]

Herring's symbolic framework positions Evelyn, who is representative of film art, within the Director's 'rotten system'.[503] She outlines her frustrations with the Director:

> You never know where you are with him. Sometimes he's so nice, he seems to anticipate my least wish, and other days he won't let me do things—solely, I believe, because he knows I like doing them, and do them, too, all by myself—without help from him. He's dreadfully jealous. Although he "made" me, he doesn't like to feel I am independent of him. And often I think he uses me to make clear the faults in his rotten system, and lets me go on my own ways for a little so that he can correct my mistakes at the end....[504]

Herring's extended metaphor interrogates how although British media culture has popularised and made cinemagoing and the larger film industry possible, it is now actively opposed to supporting film's growth outside of its own structures. Despite her love for the filmmaking—'I like doing them'—Evelyn has struggled to extricate herself from 'his rotten system' until she meets Adam, which is the text's embarking event.[505]

Having escaped from the film shoot, Evelyn faces a new set of questions. Where to go from here? As Virginia Woolf asks in her essay on cinema in 1926, what might cinema 'do if it were left to its own devices'?[506] Without her Director, Evelyn panics: 'Oh, Adam, you must never leave me in these Gardens. It's all so new to me. I shall leave everything to you.

[500] Ibid.
[501] Ibid., p. 114.
[502] Ibid., p.106.
[503] Ibid., p. 100.
[504] Ibid.
[505] Ibid.
[506] Woolf, 'The Cinema', p. 35.

Where are we going?'[507] Evelyn defers her agency to Adam, letting him lead her. Within the metaphorical framework, if Evelyn embodies film art and the Director represents commercial industry, what might Adam stand for? He is initially presented as Evelyn's salvation, where he helps her from the pond, clothes her and helps her hide from the Director. However, as the narrative progresses, Adam's rigid worldview is revealed to be just as oppressive as the Director's 'rotten system'.[508] I argue that Adam can be read to symbolise the weight of tradition bearing down on film, which is played out through a power struggle between Adam and Evelyn and reinforced by Herring's intertextual references to the Greek myth of Narcissus.

Figure 36: Illustration by Edward Bawden, where Evelyn meets Adam. Robert Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew; or, Revolt in the Gardens* (London: Mathews & Maret, 1930), p. 67.

Within his role as one of the gardeners at Kew's Eden, Adam maintains order. He has been taught by the 'Great Power' to curate, not to create.[509] On the other hand, Evelyn

[507] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*, p. 80.
[508] Ibid.
[509] Ibid., p. 21.

acts as a catalyst for change: her intrusion into the narrative incites the text's titular "Revolt in the Gardens", where both Adam and Evelyn abscond from their respective Gods. Woolf argues that film took much of its early inspiration from literature and other arts, 'like a gardener mowing the lawn', and operating more like a 'parasite' than of its own volition.[510] Using similar horticultural imagery, Herring speculates how film might be able to grow and develop uninhibited by what has come before, away from Adam's neat flowerbeds and walkways and the Director's 'rotten system'.[511]

Adam's investment in preserving order is exemplified by a disagreement with Evelyn on the name of a flower they come upon as they walk through the garden, which she believes are 'lilies of the valley'. Adam corrects her, using its Latin name, '*Convallaria Majalis'.* When Evelyn asks why Adam insists on using 'such ugly names', he explains:

> We have to learn them. It is the professors, and they go daft on Greek. But the names they give aren't Greek, they're latinised Greek, and there's no one in the world can understand them but professors.[512]

Adam's commitment to a dead, classical language demonstrates his ties to the past and the power structures that allow its influence to persist. He upholds inherited systems of knowledge that seek to obscure meaning, legible to almost 'no one in the world'.[513] Adam delights in imparting his knowledge at every possible opportunity, as he recounts biblical tales, ancient myths, and more Latin flower names to Eve. When there is 'something Adam knew', he welcomes it 'as an opportunity of re-instating, as he feared, or embellishing, as he hoped, his superiority'.[514] It has the opposite effect on Eve. She views his 'dry, dry lecturing' as the very 'worst of Adam'.[515]

Another debate over what the Tree of Knowledge might look like demonstrates how Evelyn sees the world. Adam gestures to a tree growing close to a cluster of statues in the garden, which Evelyn disagrees with:

> "Because it's by those statues? No, that tree was not a Tree of Heaven—it was the shoot of Hell, sown in Paradise." She looked up at the feather-tipped branches. "This isn't a pear, is it? I think the Tree of Knowledge must be a pear, because that's the only fruit like a question-mark. For though it isn't a tree at all, really it's the

[510] Virginia Woolf, 'The Cinema', p. 35.
[511] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* p. 80.
[512] Ibid, p. 93.
[513] Ibid.
[514] Ibid., pp. 150-1.
[515] Ibid., p. 156.

> imagination prompting 'How?' and 'Why?' The fruit it produces at every turn or branch is a query, pear-shaped, upside down. Can't you see it?"[516]

Adam's conception of knowledge is associated with statues—an insignia for the preservation of the past—which Evelyn dismisses as the 'shoot of Hell'. The tree of her imagination forgoes the traditional image of an apple and turns the symbol quite literally 'pear-shaped, upside down'. Whereas an apple is shaped like a blunt full stop that would conclude a sentence, a 'question-mark' shaped pear calls for more.[517] For Evelyn, knowledge is constituted by curiosity: as boughs full of hanging questions orientated towards uncertainty and plurality. This directly contrasts Adam's worldview which is fixed like a statue with ideas of singular knowledge, absolutism, and unerring answers inherited from the past. Herring encapsulates many of the contradictions of modernism and film: as Marcus writes, early-twentieth century cinema was simultaneously perceived as 'entirely new' and yet also inextricably bound up with the past.[518]

What might Herring's idea of cinema art look like without the constraints of the 'splendid business idea[s]' or statues?[519] Evelyn's own approach to the gardens directly opposes Adam's neat preservation of flowerbeds and convention:

> So Evelyn liked scents; she could make them her own, which, of course, was why she liked them—possession, amalgamation, absorption. If a flower smelt, you picked it, or pulled it, you trod on it or set it to die—it smelt better.[520]

The swirling sensory interaction between scent and self alters both Evelyn and the flower. They fuse in 'amalgamation, absorption', resulting in a destructive renewal that—Evelyn believes—is for the 'better'.[521] Herring's hopes for film's future are presented as a chaotic force, engaged in an ongoing process of becoming. Evelyn's drive to pick, pull, crush, or wreck the flowers echoes some of the blasting aesthetics of Italian Futurism, Dada or Vorticism, which Sascha Bru summarises as the 'hybridisation or reorganisation of the old. Rather than oppose the old, the avant-gardes thus set out to "make it new", in Ezra Pound's

[516] Ibid., pp. 115-6.
[517] Ibid.
[518] Laura Marcus, 'How Newness Enters the World: the Birth of Cinema and the Origins of Man', p. 29.
[519] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*, p. 101.
[520] Ibid., p. 138.
[521] Ibid.

famous phrase'.[522] For Herring, cinema's 'possession, amalgamation, absorption' of the world around it is crucial.[523]

Adam's approach to the gardens not only forestalls any new development, but also invokes a deathly sense of stasis. Herring expands on these ideas through further intertextual play, weaving the Greek myth of Narcissus into his biblical framework to extend his commentary on British cinema practice through Adam's fundamental misunderstanding of Evelyn's identity. In Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, the young and beautiful Narcissus falls in love with his own image, staring into a pool of water, he cannot move: 'He looks in speechless wonder at himself and hangs there motionless in the same expression, like a statue carved from Parian marble'.[524] He is 'wasted with love, pine[s] away, and is slowly consumed by [the sun's] hidden fire' until he dies, becoming a narcissus flower (more commonly known as a daffodil): 'In place of his body they find a flower, its yellow centre girt with white petals'.[525] Katherine De Boer Simons notes how *Metamorphosis* is constituted by these transformative events, interpreting some of them as 'terminal metamorphosis[es]', in which characters undergo an irreversible transformation, ceasing to be human.[526] Herring subverts the Narcissus myth in order to demonstrate the dangers that Evelyn—and therefore, film's future—faces, where Adam would like to see her slip into her own terminal metamorphosis, fixed in the Garden of Eden with him forever.

Adam's odd obsession with daffodils is crucial to Herring's intertextual play, which gestures to the sad symbol of Narcissus. On meeting Evelyn, Adam immediately suggests taking her to the daffodil beds, begging her to go with him: 'Daffodils, please, Eve [...] I want to crown your head in daffodils'.[527] The 'daffodil-crown' that Adam imagines is oddly violent (conjuring images of Christ's crown of thorns), childlike and invokes Narcissus's own deathly transformation. Eve resists: 'I don't think I want to look at daffodils. I'd rather see

[522] Sascha Bru, *The European Avant-Gardes, 1905-1935: A Portable Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), p. 174.
[523] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* p. 138.
[524] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* ed. by Robert Squillace, trans. by Frank Justus Miller (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005), p. 55.
[525] Ibid., p. 57.
[526] Katherine De Boer Simons, 'Death and the Female Body in Homer, Vergil, and Ovid' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2016), p. 131. Although De Boer Simons does not include Narcissus in her list of Ovid's characters that undergo this fate, focusing primarily on female characters and their transformations into wood, rock and stone, I believe her definition encompasses Narcissus's death and subsequent transformation into plant life.
[527] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* p. 80.

the Pagoda'.[528] As the narrative progresses, Evelyn becomes increasingly vexed by Adam, recalling the incident with the daffodils in order to challenge him:

> I think you are only interested in yourself [...] When you offered me the daffodils, you were not thinking whether I wanted daffodils; you were only thinking you wanted to give them to me. You wanted to assert yourself [...] to stand between me and the light so that I only see you.[529]

Herring's daffodils represent the challenges that film art faces, where Adam wishes to eclipse everything but him from her view, where she would stand forever in the shadows of tradition. Her accusation recalls Narcissus's own terminal metamorphosis, staring back at his own image even in death: 'he kept on gazing on his image in the Stygian pool'.[530] Such stagnation would prohibit her wandering mode of 'possession, amalgamation, absorption' and would therefore stall film's development.[531]

The Narcissus myth is twisted throughout *Adam and Evelyn at Kew* to highlight how misguided Adam's world view is. Whereas Narcissus mistakes his own reflection for another being, Adam mistakes Evelyn as an extension of himself. He assumes that she is a real-life fantasy forged from his own dream, remarking '[c]ouldn't she see that it was the sleep that brought her about?', and bemusedly explaining to her, '[y]ou didn't exist for me till I went to sleep, and woke up and found you remaining out of my dream'.[532] Adam's error here overtly parodies the creation myth, and yet more subtly contorts the story of Narcissus.[533] Evelyn 'suddenly appears out of a pond', as Narcissus's reflection emerges from the 'elusive pool', and both Adam and Narcissus 'vainly seek to clasp' at a 'fleeting image'.[534] In Ovid's retelling, the image is a watery reflection, yet in Herring's metaphorical schema, it is the 'fleeting' cinema image that Adam seeks to capture.[535]

The Narcissus myth is also rooted in Evelyn's name, which heightens Herring's concerns about filmmaking. The film-star is not called 'Evelyn'; Adam names her after misunderstanding her joking comparison between herself and the Bible's Eve. He asks:

> "Is that your name?"
> She answered that it might be, she shouldn't wonder, and laughed.

[528] Ibid., pp. 80-81.
[529] Ibid., p. 132.
[530] Ovid, p. 57.
[531] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*, p. 138.
[532] Ibid., p. 69, p. 99.
[533] The Book of Genesis (Chapter Two. 2.21-2.23).
[534] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*, p. 66; Ovid, p. 55.
[535] Ovid, p. 55.

> "I shall call you Evelyn, for it's not in the nature of the Garden to let anything have a short name if there's a long one that will do."[536]

Adam's elongation of the biblical name—preferring Evelyn over Eve—not only establishes his fixation with categorisation and order, but it also introduces further layered allusions to Narcissus. Herring outlines its etymology:

> Adam bestowed upon this girl, who came to him when day was sunk in night, the fullest name she might have. The first woman he had known was naturally to him a goddess. She came, like that other goddess, out of the water and he called her Eve, and added a suffix [Lyn] with the rich meaning, among others, of "a pool at the bottom of a waterfall."[537]

The 'pool at the bottom of a waterfall' that recalls the 'clear pool' that Narcissus looks into.[538] Herring hides a metaphorical pool within Evelyn's name, furthering Adam's ontological misunderstanding, where instead of a being with her own agency, he sees himself reflected in her.

Adam and Evelyn at Kew's commentary on cinema parallels his views in expressed in *Close Up.* Through his fiction, his film criticism expands on and is animated using tangled parodies and allusions. His review of Murnau's *Sunrise* touches on many of the themes in *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* where he critiques Murnau's decision to model film on literature. *Sunrise* is adapted from a short story by Carl Mayer, which Herring admonishes, writing 'literature did its job very well and the cinema is not doing its own by repeating the process'.[539] Instead, Herring states, '[t]he cinema should be the means of this age to express what this age feels and there is nothing of this age in *Sunrise*'.[540] These views are mirrored in *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* where Adam's desire to fix Evelyn in his traditional image and ideologies would succeed 'repeating the process' and disallowing her—a 'Modern Girl'— anything from 'this age' of modernity.[541] Herring upends the figure of Narcissus to highlight his concerns with Adam's attitudes towards Evelyn, and therefore the current attitudes toward cinema.

The uncertainty around the future of film culminates in *Adam and Evelyn at* Kew's final scene. The scriptural Fall that Herring's parody anticipates never arrives. Instead of

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[536] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* p. 79.
[537] Ibid., pp. 97-80.
[538] Ibid.; Ovid, p. 55.
[539] Herring, 'Synthetic Dawn', p. 44. The short story that *Sunrise* is adapted from is 'The Excursion to Tilsit' by Carl Mayer.
[540] Herring, 'Synthetic Dawn', p. 44.
[541] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* p. 78; Herring, 'Synthetic Dawn', p. 44.

being expelled from the garden (Eden), the narrative concludes with Adam and Evelyn locked in Kew Gardens, unable to escape. Herring leaves Evelyn, and therefore his hopes for film, in a state of unrest. The ambiguous ending can be seen to enact Evelyn's own pear-tree logic, answers are not provided, and the reader is left instead with 'the imagination prompting "How"? and "Why"?'.[542] In this sense, irresolution of the ending can be read as optimistic, affirming Evelyn's mode of being and independence, where Adam's efforts have failed. However, there is a more ominous undertone to the uncertain ending, which is furthered through the creation of various types of falling, as Evelyn tries to fend off Adam's advances.

The final scene takes place at twilight: the bell signalling the closure of Kew Gardens rings out and 'dim light' descends.[543] Night*fall* invokes a vertical trajectory that parallels the Fall of Man (descending from a celestial plane to a mortal earth), yet Herring's description complicates this downward direction. He writes:

> The flowers were burnt out, the last discernible tint in the trees was drawn out, into a green river in the sky, and after shadows, shadow spread out.[544]

The order in which Herring narrates the encroaching darkness works to resist the downward trajectory of a typical fall. The sentence begins on the ground, with the 'burnt out' flowerbeds, before moving upwards to the trees, whose colours are 'drawn out' and then merging with the sky overhead, into an infinite galaxy of spreading shadows.[545] Night falls *upwards* in a seemingly endless ascension. Just as the colour of the flowers are 'drawn out', the text is similarly prolonged by the repetition of 'shadow', and the sibilance that carries through 'sky', 'shadows', and 'shadow spread', stretching out the words as they continue their upwards trajectory.[546] Herring's description syntactically reverses the notion of an earthbound fall, dictated by gravity. It ends instead by rising to celestial realms and thus further subverts the biblical parallel, as Herring reverses the notion of a vertical cosmology. Herring's nightfall narrative and its distorting shadows place the ending in a grey area—both metaphorically and literally—as the 'last discernible tint' of colour fades from the garden.[547]

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[542] Ibid., pp. 115-116.
[543] Ibid., p. 160.
[544] Ibid., p. 161.
[545] Ibid.
[546] Ibid.
[547] Ibid.

Adam has been "falling for" Eve throughout the text and as the shadows lengthen, he acts on his infatuation. This, in turn, anticipates another fall: the Victorian myth of the fallen woman. As Amanda Anderson writes, the rhetoric of 'fallenness' in Victorian society and literature was often represented through a range of feminine identities signifying a 'complex of tabooed behaviour and degraded conditions' intersecting with anxieties surrounding Victorian ideals of womanhood, innocence and sexual purity.[548] This notion contrasts Herring's representation of Evelyn as a 'New Woman', a cultural icon that Sally Ledger describes as a '*fin-de-siècle* phenomenon' which challenged Victorian ideals of sexual purity and subservience.[549] By weaving in this additional threat of fallenness, Herring reinforces the ending's tension and invites further commentary around ideas of moral action, gender, control and autonomy that the figures of the Fallen Woman and the New Women both inspire. Adam demands, 'Kiss me now, Eve', to which she combats, 'I shan't let you. […] No. We had better be going'.[550] Despite her clear rejection, he remains undeterred, the final lines of the text hinging on Adam's critical misunderstanding of Evelyn's discontent:

> She moved, a thicker shadow, to be lost under the trees' shadow.
> "Oh, well, it's been a lovely day," she said.
> Adam noticed that she had enjoyed it, now it was over. He felt encouraged.
> "It will be a fine evening, too," he said.[551]

While Evelyn introduces a polite note of finality to their interaction to stall Adam's advances, he interprets this as a cue to continue. He anticipates a 'fine evening' ahead, which—within the context of Adam's demands for Eve to kiss him and the loss of innocence that Herring's biblical parody entails—takes on sinister undertones.[552]

The ending falls away with Adam feeling 'encouraged', pursuing the unwanted kiss, whilst the question of Evelyn's safety is raised. It also falls back to the first page of the text and Herring's epigraph—a stanza from Jean-Arthur Rimbaud's poem, 'First Evening'—which speaks directly to this uncomfortable dynamic. In the poem, the speaker initiates sex with a new lover:

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[548] Amanda Anderson, *Tainted Souls and Painted Faces: The Rhetorical of Fallenness in Victorian Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), p. 2.
[549] Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 1.
[550] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*, p. 161.
[551] Ibid.
[552] Ibid.

—She had very few clothes on
And big indiscreet trees
Threw their leaves against the panes
Slyly, very close, very close.[553]

These four lines share many similarities with *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*. Evelyn and the woman in 'First Evening' are connected through their nudity, and by the fact that the reader does not know their real names. The texts both end with a sinister combination of ambiguity and sexual overtones. Just as it is unclear what will happen to Eve as she slips away into the shadow and Adam advances, 'encouraged', 'First Evening' is similarly vague.[554] In the poem's final line, who is moving '[s]lyly, very close, very close'? What are they 'very close' to? Is it the nearness of bodies, a sexual climax, or the poem's proximity to its own ending, as it edges closer to its final syllables? Both *Adam and Evelyn at Kew* and 'First Evening' end in disorientation: the authors leave the reader 'very close' to clarity but withhold any sense of resolution.[555] Both Adam and the speaker in 'First Evening' wilfully misinterpret their respective partners. 'First Evening' is told from the speaker's perspective, ignoring the woman's protests of '[p]lease stop!', and focusing instead on her laughter. He construes the sound as 'a kind of laugh that was willing…'.[556] Similarly, Adam is undeterred by Evelyn's explicit rejection, interpreting her last line as an invitation to continue.[557] By using 'First Evening' as *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*'s epigraph, Herring actively pulls on the poem's themes of consent, subjectivity, and sex. Both texts demonstrate how women's desires and perspectives are often misinterpreted or dismissed, hinting at the dangers that lay ahead.

From the epigraph's initial warning of sexual assault to the intertextual mythic backdrop, Herring distils a sense of foreboding throughout the novel. In 'First Evening', this manifests in the alarming juxtaposition between the woman's words and the speaker's actions, and the oddly violent intrusion of the trees as they push against the window of the private moment. The intertextual parallels centre figures who are tricked, misled or subjugated, repeatedly aligned with Eve. These range from her biblical namesake, who is 'beguiled' by the serpent; to Leda, who Zeus deceives and rapes 'beneath swan's wings'; to

[553] Jean-Arthur Rimbaud, 'First Evening', *Rimbaud: Complete Works, Selected Letters, A Bilingual Edition,* trans. by Wallace Fowlie, ed. by Seth Whidden (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 27.
[554] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* p. 161.
[555] Rimbaud, p. 27.
[556] Ibid.
[557] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* p. 161.

Fanny Burney, who runs away in 'terror' from King George III; to the 'grim Godiva', who is ordered to travel nude through her town by her husband; to 'Francis's Brother Wolf', the wild wolf of Gubbio who is tamed by St Francis; to Philomel's story of rape and mutilation, which is told to Eve by Adam 'a trifle inappropriately'; to the story of Shakespeare's tricked Titania, 'aside with Bottom'.[558] By stacking references upon references that invoke exploited characters, Herring underlines the mounting threats faced by Evelyn, both as a New Woman and—within Herring's metaphorical schema—as a modern art form struggling to move forwards in a patriarchal and hegemonic society, structured by inherited traditions. Indeed, from the moment she enters the narrative, where she 'escapes [from the Regent] / being a novelist, she knows these rapes', to the ending, with Adam's demands of 'Kiss me', her journey through the garden is revealed to be a battle for her own autonomy.[559]

Herring's proto-feminist commentary is made apparent not only through his references to the imbalanced power dynamics implicit in the myths and poems like 'First Evening', but also in Adam's overtly sexist comments scattered throughout the narrative. For example, Adam believes that when he admires the gardens, it is because he is 'interested in human nature'. However, when Eve discusses Kew's trees, he believes that she must be 'really thinking how fine these trees would be for clotheslines', thereby disallowing her the same anthropological insights that he grants himself, grounding and gendering her thoughts instead in domestic labour.[560] This highlights the independence Evelyn desires: to leave Adam and her Director. The question of Evelyn's freedom is in a state of freefall throughout the narrative, as Herring outlines the numerous obstacles she faces. These erupt at the end of the text, as hope for Evelyn's survival—and the future of film—threatens to fall away, too.

Despite the disorientating falls and Adam's ominous advances, the ending remains quietly optimistic. Although Adam has the last word, Evelyn's final movements counter his advances: 'She moved, a thicker shadow, to be lost under the trees' shadow'.[561] By using the auxiliary verb, 'to be', Herring constructs an oddly precarious phrase that gestures

[558] The Book of Genesis (Chapter Three); Ovid, p. 105; D'Arblay, p. 287; Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* p. 63, p. 145.
[559] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*, p. 63, p. 161.
[560] Ibid., p. 132.
[561] Ibid., p. 161.

hopefully towards—but does not necessarily guarantee—Evelyn's escape into the trees.[562] As well as offering a potential route for flight to safety, Herring's final description of Evelyn can also be read as a transformative act. Evelyn's escape into the shadows enacts her process of 'possession, amalgamation, absorption' of the world around her.[563] In the final lines of the text, Evelyn becomes 'a thicker shadow, to be lost under the trees' shadow', which anticipates an 'absorption' of self and other.[564] If viewed from this perspective, the ending positions Evelyn on the cusp of achieving her desired mode of being despite being trapped in the garden. Thus, a tentative and shadowy optimism cloaks *Adam and Evelyn at Kew* and Herring's hopes for the future of film.

Herring writes in *Close Up* in 1929 that '[w]e cannot approach to a new cinema unless we understand what is at the bottom of cinema' which, he insists, is the 'magic as part of the rock bottom of cinema'.[565] Paralleling the plight of Evelyn as a New Woman with the emergence of a 'new cinema', Herring's critical views are animated. He outlines the dual obstacles that cinema faces: the figure of the careless Director the ossification that Adam imposes.[566] *Adam and Evelyn at Kew* exists at the intersection of many borderlines, between day and night, between innocence and knowledge, between silent cinema and sound technology, to envision a hopeful future for independent cinema. This sense of hope continues in his next novel, *Cactus Coast,* where instead of optimism around ideas of film he turns his attention to queer forms of desire.

Cactus Coast's Queer Temporalities

If *Adam and Evelyn at Kew* hovers on the cusp of Herring's involvement with the POOL group—written before his induction and published at the height of POOL's artistic production in 1930—then *Cactus Coast,* which was commissioned by Bryher in 1934 just a few months after *Close Up*'s final issue was published, operates as a coda of sorts. This is not to say that *Cactus Coast*'s publication in the summer of 1934 acts as a finite end or full stop for POOL. Indeed, as I have argued, POOL's diffused influence persists beyond their labelled productions. Rather, it sits at the tail end of POOL's intense period of labelled

[562] Ibid.
[563] Ibid., p. 138.
[564] Ibid., p. 161, p. 138.
[565] Herring, 'A New Cinema, Magic and the Avant Garde', pp. 47-48.
[566] Ibid., p. 50.

activities as something separate, yet it draws on the group's driving interests and narrates significant moments in their intimate dynamics. It draws on autobiographical fragments from trips that Herring took with H.D. and Macpherson to Monte Carlo. H.D. describes this point as the POOL's group's 'high-water mark' and of her 'faith' in Macpherson 'as a person and as a talented creator'.[567] As well as contributing to the POOL group's 'intimate archives', to use Melanie Micir's term, whereby Herring's autobiographical *Cactus Coast* can be seen as an actively curated project of preservation, the book also encapsulates many themes that underpinned the POOL group's project as a whole.[568]

Cactus Coast asks how to exist in a changing world, how to engage with a painful history, and experiments with ways to forge a future imbued with new possibilities whilst being bound backwards to the past. As a coda, it works to underscore and expand on POOL's modernist ambitions whilst also marking a shift in the group's dynamics. It continues POOL's creative energies but is not a POOL production, as Bryher's artistic interests and funds turned away from *Close Up* and POOL after 1933, and towards publications like *Cactus Coast* and H.D.'s collections *The Usual Star* and *Kora and Ka* (all published in 1934). It acts as a textual bridge from one iteration of the group to another, which ultimately coalesces to form the collaborative project *Life and Letters To-Day*, which Bryher purchased in April 1935. By analysing *Cactus Coast* and placing it in dialogue with the POOL group's archives and aesthetics, I uncover new insights into their artistic lives. Not only does this expand the understanding of POOL's literary registers, but also further demonstrates Herring's significant contributions to the group.

Very little attention has been given to *Cactus Coast.* In existing criticism around the POOL group, references to Herring's third and final novel mostly appear in footnotes or are briefly mentioned in passing, usually in relation to Bryher's financing of the project, its autobiographical traces of Monte Carlo, and the relationship between H.D. and Macpherson that it touches on. [569] Indeed, in his introduction to H.D.'s *Kora and Ka* ([1934] 1996), Robert Spoo writes that 'Monte Carlo had become the stamping ground for H.D. and

[567] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Autobiographical Notes, Box 47, Folder 1181.
[568] Micir, p. 10.
[569] For references to Bryher's financial backing of *Cactus Coast,* see: Friedman, *Analyzing Freud,* p. 564, p. 420n39, p. 497n49; Friedberg, 'The Film Journal Close Up: Writing About Cinema (1927-1933)', p. 318n126; Sarah Chadfield, p. 49n134. For notes about *Cactus Coast*'s autobiographical connections to Monte Carlo and trips taken there with H.D. and Macpherson, see: Friedman, *Analyzing Freud,* p. 469n10; and Townsend, 'A Deeper, Wider POOL: Reading *Close Up* through the Archives of Its Contributors'. Chadfield also situates it 'in a fashionable European resort' (p. 49n134), although does not mention Monte Carlo.

her friends, some of whom set to work on their own "Monte" stories. Robert Herring's *Cactus Coast,* printed by Darantiere in 1934, was one of these'.[570] The connections to Bryher, H.D., Macpherson, Monte Carlo and the printer Darantiere all gesture to the complex dynamics that constituted Herring's engagement with POOL. In a recent article, I have argued for the consideration of *Cactus Coast* as a text that allows for further understanding of the POOL group's aesthetic interests, analysing it alongside H.D.'s short story 'Mira-Mare'—which also fictionalises aspects of a trip taken to Monte Carlo in 1930—where I suggest that Monte Carlo is a significant geographic and affective locus for POOL.[571] Here, I expand on these ideas, exploring how Herring plays with alternate temporalities to allow for a sense of queer hope to be felt on his coastline which, I contend, is emblematic of the POOL group's artistic drives.

Before casting forward into Herring's queer futurity, it is necessary to examine how *Cactus Coast* came into being to understand how deeply intertwined it is with the POOL group. As I have touched on in Chapter One, H.D. and Herring both wrote a small collection of texts that were inspired by trips to Monte Carlo taken together in 1930, organised and funded by Bryher. This is laid out in H.D.'s autobiographical notes:

> 1930; [..] July 14, Bryher sends K[enneth] and self off to Monte Carlo, to a big empty hotel. We find bathing rocks. Return to much rain; I work in the downstairs back-room, the "cellar" in Riant Chateau, on a story I call Mira Mare and later, Kora and Ka.[572]

H.D. and Macpherson returned to Monte Carlo a month later, where this time they were accompanied by Herring: 'Bryher invites Robert [Herring] to join K[enneth] and self again, in Monte Carlo, at Hotel Reserve, August'.[573] Macpherson stayed on without H.D., before she returned in December. This visit in late December was devastating for H.D., and would precipitate the fracture of the group. Her reflections and the surviving 'Kora and Ka' and 'Mira-Mare' centre Monte Carlo and these trips as powerful catalysts for creation, narrativizing elements of the POOL's intimate workings.

In addition to H.D.'s short stories and *Cactus Coast,* Macpherson also drafted his own Monte Caro tale. In a letter to Bryher in November 1934, H.D. abjures Macpherson's writing, accusing him of using her own work, where she states: 'that [Macpherson's] story

[570] Spoo, p. x.
[571] Hember.
[572] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Autobiographical Notes, Box 47, Folder 1181.
[573] Ibid.

about Toni [Slocum], was half written by M E, and I am not pleased at the idea of its being set up. But I don't suppose Hogarth [Press] will take it—though they might of course.'[574] No traces of Macpherson's story survive, either in POOL's archives or at Hogarth Press. This letter is significant not only because it documents tensions within the group after *Close Up*, but also in further highlighting how meaningful POOL's trips in the early 1930s were in inspiring multiple stories.

Cactus Coast flits around the edges of H.D.'s 'Monte Carlo episode'.[575] The group returned to Monte Carlo again in 1932, but not together: in her notes, H.D. documents that while she took a '[l]ate summer return to Kenwin', 'K[enneth] and R[obert] go to South of France', with H.D. and Macpherson travelled together in October 1932: 'Monte Carlo again'.[576] Herring explains to H.D. that *Cactus Coast* is a diffuse amalgamation of the short trips taken with H.D. and Macpherson in the early 1930s:

> So one day there will be arriving mixed-up story [...] which is 1930, and 1932, and other atoms, whirling, combining, cooling into worlds... I go to type now, and probably shan't therefore be heard of for weeks![577]

Herring's text is therefore imbricated within POOL's affective terrain that spawned 'Mira-Mare', 'Kora and Ka', 'Low Tide' and Macpherson's unpublished story. Although these texts are catalysed by different 'atoms' from their various, shared and sometimes separate trips, they all coalesce and combine—'cooling into worlds'—which come together to form a crucial part of POOL's intimate archive.[578]

One of the central questions flowing through 'Mira-Mare' and 'Kora and Ka' is what sort of relationships between self and other are sustainable. These questions are explored through Alex and Christian's dissolving relationship in 'Mira-Mare', and the complex dynamics between John and Ka, a sad spirit attached to John like 'that sort of shadow they used to call a Ka, in Egypt', and between John and Kora, who cares for him while they process their dual war-trauma and loss.[579] In both stories, thick tension surrounds ideas of intimacy. Séan Richardson describes this as part of the text's 'fractured eroticism', which is dragged down into what Friedman sees as 'the vortex of Helforth's desire' and the threat of

[574] Letter from H.D. to Bryher, November 16 1934, quoted in Friedman, *Analyzing Freud*, p. 480.
[575] Letter from H.D. to Bryher, May 26 Friday 1933', in Friedman, *Analyzing Freud,* p. 322.
[576] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Autobiographical Notes, Box 47, Folder 1181.
[577] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, 'Letter from Robert Herring to H.D. 1934', Box 10, Folder 357.
[578] Ibid.
[579] H.D., 'Kora and Ka', p. 9.

complete destruction.[580] The problems with intimacy and identity within 'Mira-Mare' and 'Kora and Ka' are felt in *Cactus Coast*, too, which can also be read through the autobiographical paradigm that POOL's paratextual archive establishes.

Herring's letters outline the relationships that informed *Cactus Coast.* He writes jokily to H.D. that 'Bryher must one day scream if she hears of a single more Man Met In Night-Club!'[581] The similarities between *Cactus Coast* and H.D.'s Monte Carlo stories and Herring's brief relationship with Macpherson in the late 1920s and early 1930 leads to Friedman suggestion that the 'Man Met In Night-Club' story that Herring presents is centred around the 'erotic entanglements' between Macpherson, Slocum and himself.[582] However, Herring's letters reveal that this is not the case, with no trace of either men in *Cactus Coast*:

> I am slightly surprised that despite all that always happened in the way of K[enneth]'s "crises" every time down there, [...] when I sat down to write, K simply didn't come into it. Nor any of his life.[583]

Instead, he describes *Cactus Coast* as a 'slightly demented diary' that depicts his relationship with the Viennese pianist Bobby Rice, writing that the 'Coast-book is Rice'.[584] Rice shares many similarities with *Cactus Coast*'s Ricka. They both played piano in the Fond

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[580] Séan Richardson, 'A Queer Orientation: The Sexual Geographies of Modernism 1913-1939' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Nottingham Trent University, 2019), p. 104; Friedman, *Penelope's Web,* p. 269.
[581] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, 'Letter from Robert Herring to H.D. 1934', Box 10, Folder 357.
[582] Ibid.; Friedman, *Analyzing Freud,* p. 469n10.
[583] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, 'Letter from Robert Herring to H.D. August 4 1934', Box 10, Folder 357.
[584] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, 'Letter from Robert Herring to H.D. August 4 1934', Box 10, Folder 357; H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, 'Letter from Robert Herring to H.D. 1934', Box 10, Folder 357. As Herring's letters to H.D. reveal, Bobby Rice's full name was Robert Eisinger (Herring, who shared H.D.'s mystic interest in names and numerology, writes about 'getting great shocks' at how the 'numbers' in Rice's name correspond with his own: 'The name of "Robert" is bound to be. But when you first write down "Robert Rice" and then "Eisinger", the family name, you don't quite expect them to turn out the same as "Robert Herring" and "Williams" The Soul Urge (vowels) is the same for all three – not only in total, but each name' (see H.D. Papers, Box 10, Folder 357). After meeting Rice in 1930, Herring returned to see him in 1932 and kept in contact. By 1934, Rice had moved back to Wien, Vienna, and was singing at the Bristol Bar, where Herring travelled to see him, where his trips were funded by Bryher (see Bryher Papers, Box 19, Folder 714). Herring also visited Rice in Cannes and Portschach throughout the 1930s, but lost touch after 1938 when German troops invaded Austria. Herring recounts to Bryher how 'when Hitler walked into Wien, I sent him £10, which was all I could in those days. He says that enabled him to get out, and to reach the East, and get established with the English, and all the time he decided he was not going to go under, because he wanted to survive and to see me again, and tell me it was that £10 had started it' (see Bryher Papers, 'Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher', August 16 1946', Box 20, Folder 750). Rice reconnected with Herring in 1946 (after a three-and-a-half-year imprisonment in a concentration camp after being captured in the Battle of Singapore in 1942), where he'd since moved to London, married an Englishwoman and started work for the BBC.

d'Artichaut night club in Monte Carlo, with Herring reflecting 'poor R, not changed at all, same work, same ways, same colour eyes, even at moments called Tiger, no disguise at all'.[585] Herring's letters also map out a biographical schema for the book's central characters: Ricka, Lily, and Howard. He parallels himself with Lily ('she is me'), who loses her mind and falls in love with Ricka, identified by Herring as Rice.[586] After Lily's suicide in the narrative, Herring explains '[a]t this point, I arrive as myself', where Howard appears and finds a redemptive, queer love with Ricka.[587] These texts weave through the personal lives of POOL, where autobiographical threads come together to craft an intimate archive. They present an impression of these pivotal years within the group's artistic life, whilst also interrogating questions about intimacy and queer lives within their fiction that are moored to their experiences on the coast.

Herring purposely locates *Cactus Coast* in Monte Carlo. Although he presents it as the town of 'Neiges d'Antan', he does very little to conceal its autobiographical inspiration. The fictional name recalls the medieval *ubi sunt* tradition, evoking François Villon's melancholic line, 'Mais où sont les neiges d'antan? [But where are the snows of yester-year?]', yet the Neiges d'Antan of *Cactus Coast* buzzes with the frenetic, urban urgency of Monte Carlo in the early 1930s.[588] Herring describes the '[g]aiety, gossip, gaming or gambolling' of 'Europe's end, its last word and limit [...] overlaid by something that is burlesque of civilisation itself—the life of the coast', which is lit up on the Riviera with casinos, nightclubs and aeroplanes flying overhead.[589] He declares the connection outright to Bryher in his letters, writing 'I called Monte, - Neiges d'Antan'.[590] Herring's description of Monte Carlo emphasises its borderline state, not only through its liminal position on the coast, caught between land and sea, but through a narrative of extremes. He encapsulates the tension of Neiges d'Antan's 'coast-magic' through the symbol of a cactus, its sprouting prickly pear flower and a 'strangeness in the air':[591]

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[585] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, 'Letter from Robert Herring to H.D. August 4 1934', Box 10, Folder 357.
[586] Ibid.
[587] Ibid.
[588] François Villon, 'The Ballad of Dead Ladies', in *Poems,* ed. by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (F. S. Ellis, 1870), pp. 177-178 (p. 177) <http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/1-1870.1stedn.rad.html#0.1.21> [accessed 19 November 2022].
[589] Herring, *Cactus Coast,* p. 141, p. 13.
[590] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, 'Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher, July 30 1934.' Box 18, Folder 703.
[591] Herring, *Cactus Coast,* p. 180, p. 15.

> The cacti express everything in it; the wildness, the sweetness, the cruelty you will meet here. They combine the starkness and the luxuriance which take it in turns to defeat you. They are totem-poles of the region [...] You will be as bare and as broken as they are before the coast has done with you; and then, in your bleakest moment, will put forth a sudden surprising flower, as they do in winter, a poised scarlet star, or a citron rod that seems a rocket caught in mid-flight, testifying to the healing power of a place which at first seems bent on disintegration.[592]

The setting is both destructive and restorative. This foreshadows Lily's 'disintegration' and the subsequent 'healing power' that Ricka and Howard find in one another afterwards, while gesturing to the extremes of Neiges d'Antan.[593]

With its casino culture, Monte Carlo itself runs on a sense of precarity. It is a relatively modern district, brought into being through Monaco's legalisation of gambling in the mid-1800s and its newly built casinos, receiving its name in 1866. As John Baxter remarks, Monte Carlo was 'founded on cynicism and sustained by chance'.[594] The atmosphere of excess that Herring instils within his setting informs the extremes that *Cactus Coast* will encompass, where issues of identity and love are pushed to breaking point. Like a high-risk bet, Herring's Monte Carlo is caught 'mid-flight' between devastation and joy.[595]

Cactus Coast's attention to place is useful not only in unravelling its thematic and autobiographical skein, but in mapping the POOL group's movements and situating Monte Carlo within their lifespan as a significant locus of creation. Both Herring and H.D. attach their works to Monte Carlo at specific times. H.D. describes her Monte Carlo works as 'a sketch' of 'one summer to Monte Carlo', where on rereading them, she was 'glad to find the atmosphere so living'.[596] Herring, too, writes that he 'set out to "fix" a bit of the Blue Coast'.[597] Conceiving of *Cactus Coast* and H.D.'s Dijon works as part of POOL's diffuse production requires a rethinking of the critical tendency to locate the POOL group solely in Switzerland. For example, Roland Cosandey 'stress[es] the geographical specificity of Pool', rooting them in Territet where Bryher commissioned the villa Kenwin, 'a unique location at

[592] Ibid., p. 15, 13-14.
[593] Ibid., p. 14.
[594] John Baxter, *French Riviera and Its Artists: Art, Literature, Love, and Life on the Côte d'Azur* (New York: Museyon, 2015), p. 223.
[595] Herring, *Cactus Coast,* p. 14.
[596] H.D., 'Compassionate Friendship', p. 130.
[597] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, 'Letter from Robert Herring to H.D. Monday 1934', Box 10, Folder 357.

the heart of the rather diffused avant-garde movement of those years'.[598] Similarly, Schlun argues that their base in Switzerland was synonymous with their 'liberal and autonomous life-style'.[599] However, as I have argued in *Modernist Cultures,* members of the POOL group were often elsewhere.[600] As the group's archival correspondence demonstrates, they were often travelling, writing from hotel stays or from London residencies. Diana Souhami helpfully reminds us, too, that Kenwin was Bryher's home, not Macpherson's or H.D.'s.[601] Instead of treating Kenwin as the heart of POOL's artistic creation, I view it as part of a wider network of activity, where the group's movements are apparent in their productions.

This is not just true for *Cactus Coast.* Many other POOL outputs depict places not typically associated with what Schlun calls their 'Swiss residency': Oswell Blakeston centres *Through a Yellow Glass* and the 'Milky Way Film Company' in *Extra Passenger* in London, based as they were in his own experiences in the Gaumont Company.[602] Bryher's *Civilians* orientates itself towards Britain, describes itself as 'an oxy-aceteline flame burning to the very heard of Wartime England', whereas Macpherson's *Gaunt Island* narrates the 'island life' of the 'devastating' Scottish Hebrides.[603] *Close Up,* too, presented itself self-consciously as an international entity. Although the journal's masthead situated it in Riant Chataeu, Territet, Switzerland to start with—where Bryher was based at the time—from September 1927, there were also offices listed in London (24 Devonshire Street, moving to 26 Litchfield Street in April 1930).[604] *Close Up*'s contents page also added a list of correspondents, expanding its international image, where writers were based in Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Genova, New York, Hollywood and Moscow.[605] Bryher chose to print the first 13 issues and the first wave of POOL books with Maurice Darantiere in Dijon, France,

[598] Cosandey, p. 51.
[599] Schlun, pp. 5-6.
[600] Hember.
[601] Souhami, pp. 180-1.
[602] Schlun, p. 6; Blakeston, *Extra Passenger,* p. 123.
[603] Advert for *Civilians, Close Up,* 1.6 (December, 1927), p. 88; Macpherson, *Gaunt Island*, p. 11.
[604] See *Close Up,* 3.5 (September 1928); *Close Up,* 6.4 (April 1930).
[605] It seems that while *Close Up*'s correspondents mainly functioned as all other writers for the journal, contributing articles and reviews here and there, their constant presence on the contents pages of *Close Up* demonstrates the journal's emphasis on their international scope. Marc Allegret was listed as the Paris Correspondent in August 1927; Robert Herring was announced as the London Correspondent in November 1927; in March 1928, Clifford Howard was introduced as the Hollywood Correspondent and Symon Gould as the New York Editor; F. Chevalley was noted as the Geneva Correspondent in July 1928; in September 1928, A. Krazsna-Krausz was added as Berlin's Correspondent; Jean Leneur joined Allegret as *Close Up*'s second Paris Correspondent in November 1928; April 1929 saw P. Attasheva added as their Moscow Correspondent; H. A Potamkin came onboard in September 1929 as the New York Correspondent; in January 1930, Trude Weiss was added as Correspondent for Vienna.

before moving to The Mercury Press based in London, Ilford and Chelmsford in August 1928. Friedberg notes that the 'reason for the change is not apparent but proximity to London was probably a necessity'.[606] In 1931, Territet vanished completely from *Close Up* and was replaced by a new Swiss office ('c/o F[reddy] Chevalley, Case Postale, Carouge s/Geneve').[607] Cataloguing POOL's geographical nodes decentralises Territet as a fixed locus of personal and artistic production and allows for consideration of events that occurred in the 1930s in Monte Carlo and the texts that document them as part of their constellate network.

I am interested in how POOL's Monte Carlo texts inform and reflect the shape of the group, through analysis of autobiographical records and how the queer themes of identity and intimacy which are threaded through *Cactus Coast* intersect with the wider network, and how an affective dialogue is revealed through this reading. Herring believed that reading 'Kora and Ka' felt like 'going into that time' and is crucial to Herring's narrative project in *Cactus Coast*, which is enmeshed with themes of time and sexuality.[608] His letters map out a fluid model for both writing and reading, which dissolve linear conceptions of temporality:

> I set out to "fix" a bit of the Blue Coast. I wanted to "fix" both the glitter on the waves and what was below. But the more I look, the waves dissolve, and what was below comes up – the fishes become waves and show something else beyond them. Everything that at first seemed solid become as layer of glass through which one sees something else. I can't tell whether I may or may not have "fixed" a bit of the Coast. It doesn't you see STOP – as writing always has before.[609]

The process that Herring describes is unstoppable, free flowing, disorientating and surprising. These are all characteristic of what Tyler Bradway describes as the way that 'queerness takes forms', working against ideas of linearity and logic.[610] Indeed, fish become waves in the dissolving fragments of '1930, and 1932, and other atoms' that are caught in a rolling tidal wave of literary experimentation.[611]

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[606] Friedberg, 'Appendix 3: Publishing History', in *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism*, ed. by Laura Marcus, James Donald and Anne Friedberg (New Jersey; Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 318.
[607] *Close Up*, 8.1 (March 1931).
[608] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, 'Letter from Robert Herring to H.D. Saturday 1934', Box 10, Folder 357.
[609] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, 'Letter from Robert Herring to H.D. Monday 1934', Box 10, Folder 357.
[610] Tyler Bradbury, 'Queer Narrative Theory and the Relationality of Form', *PMLA*, 136.5 (2021), 711-727 (p. 712).
[611] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, 'Letter from Robert Herring to H.D. 1934', Box 10, Folder 357.

Bryher's unseen presence in the Monte Carlo texts is a crucial element of POOL's archives and activities. Although she was absent from the trips in the 1930s to Monte Carlo, identifying Bryher's editorial hand in *Cactus Coast*, 'Mira-Mare' and 'Kora and Ka' is paramount to discussing them within the POOL group's wider body of activity. As with all POOL's books, films and *Close Up*, Bryher's artistic drive, organisational force and her inherited wealth made *Cactus Coast* and H.D.'s Dijon texts possible. She funded and arranged the trips for Herring, Macpherson and H.D. (and continued to fund Herring's trips to visit Rice—the inspiration for *Cactus Coast*'s Ricka—in Vienna throughout the '30s).[612] Furthermore, Herring's letters document Bryher's involvement in *Cactus Coast* at every stage of its creation, where she solicited, financed, and edited it. As Herring wrote excitedly to H.D. in 1934: 'I've jumped at Bryher's offer. [...] Br[yer] suggests the coast-book herself', reflecting that '[i]t WILL be funny, re-working "Cactus"'.[613] He also relays the unconventional setting where Bryher edited the manuscript, which took place in a London cinema:

> All proofs of Cactus have passed. What a moment. More and more kept on coming and I got so interested in the story, which I read as a story for the first time, that I cut and cut and read on – and Bryher found plenty of mistakes I hadn't found! She brought them along to the Curzon.... can you imagine, they were serving punch to use before the film, [...] Bryher walked in with proofs and said "Can we not go into the now, if you have time?" So we sat in the cinema, correcting them till the lights went down.[614]

As well as providing a 'lifeline' to Herring, Bryher also encouraged and funded H.D.'s 'Mira-Mare' and 'Kora and Ka'.[615] Bryher persuaded her to publish these two works, which had been lying dormant since 1930 when they were first drafted. She tells Havelock Ellis: 'Br[yher] had set [*Kora and Ka*] up for me', and on receiving praise from Marianne Moore about the stories, she wrote to Bryher to tell her 'I have Y O U to thank for all this'.[616] It is also telling that, unlike Herring or H.D.'s texts, Macpherson's Monte Carlo tale did not have

[612] H.D. Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Autobiographical Notes, Box 47, Folder 1181; Bryher Papers, General Collection, BRBML, 'Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher, 1935', Box 19, Folder 714.
[613] H.D. Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, 'Letter from Robert Herring to H.D., 1934', Box 10, Folder 357.
[614] H.D. Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, 'Letter from Robert Herring to H.D., Saturday 1934', Box 10, Folder 357.
[615] H.D. Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, 'Letter from Robert Herring to H.D., 1934', Box 10, Folder 357.
[616] Letter from H.D. to Havelock Ellis, 26 September 1934, quoted in Friedman, *Analyzing Freud,* p. 423; Letter from H.D. to Bryher, 28 October 1934, quoted in Spoo, p. viii.

Bryher's support or interest. Instead, he appeared to pursue publication with Hogarth Press in late 1934 (although no records exist in their archives).[617] Thus, its psychical absence and its divergence from Bryher's channels of production denote how far Macpherson had drifted from the group at this point, following the emotional fallout from the events of 1930. Instead, the group's archival correspondence attests not only to Bryher's integral involvement in H.D. and Herring's work, but her investment in preserving the tales that were galvanised in Monte Carlo; what Herring calls '1930, and 1932, and other atoms [...] cooling into worlds'.[618] The different worlds created by H.D. and Herring and circulated by Bryher make up crucial parts of the constellation which constitutes the POOL group.

These Monte Carlo texts are deeply connected to many different parts of the POOL group. They were produced by the same printers that helped launched POOL's first projects, financed by the same funds that brought POOL to life, edited by the same person who oversaw all of POOL's productions, they preserve crucial moments within the authors' private lives that they felt compelled to document which, in turn, touch on events that shaped the public trajectory of the group itself. Having established Herring's *Cactus Coast* as part of the POOL group's production and how it exists contingently within POOL's affective network, I now turn to the thematic currents and concerns of queer lives and temporalities that run through *Cactus Coast* to see it informing POOL's aims and ethos.

Cactus Coast is an anxious book. Multiple love stories collide, circling questions of identity and intimacy. These questions are often expressed through concerns about time. When Lily dreams of the object of her affection, Ricka, her desire is located within a temporal dilemma: she sees him as 'something that didn't exist. Something she wanted, which was simply a state of change crystallised'.[619] Lily wishes to fix Ricka in his present state, within the "here and now" of their courtship. Just as Adam resists change and progress in *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* Lily fears futurity. She also acknowledges the impossibility of such a desire, which is 'something that didn't exist'.[620] She realises the present moment—'a state of change'—cannot be 'crystallised' or contained.[621] Instead, Lily

[617] Letter from H.D. to Bryher, November 16 1934, quoted in Friedman, *Analyzing Freud,* p. 480.
[618] H.D. Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, 'Letter from Robert Herring to H.D., 1934', Box 10, Folder 357.
[619] Herring, *Cactus Coast,* p. 86.
[620] Ibid., p. 83.
[621] Ibid.

recognises Ricka as a 'shadow. Of coming events'.[622] Foreshadowing an uncertain future, Ricka's identity is cast backwards, an indefinite outline formed from a future that has not yet happened. Within this description, time diverges from a linear path. Ricka's presence elicits feelings from the future, of 'Hunger, happiness, discovery doubt, darkness', that are felt before they happen. This is complicated, as Lily then contradicts herself, continuing in the past tense: 'But they *had* come. And he lay behind them, a hole downing all things, including herself.'[623] Ricka collapses chronological time: a temporal vortex swirling with shadows of the future that '*had* come' already, sitting 'behind' the present, where the past, present, and future collide.[624] Explorations of desire are accompanied by alternate experiences of time in *Cactus Coast,* as Herring plays with notions of temporality to imagine different ways of being in the world that ultimately allows for queer joy to surface.

Questions about time and desire are not new for Herring. I have explored how ideas of the past, present and future work together in the face of art and experimentation in *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* where Eve represents modernity, and Adam embodies stagnation in an idiosyncratic fable of what happens when change is resisted, which is reified by the patriarchal gender lines Herring draws. Although *Adam and Evelyn at Kew* operates within a rigid world governed by clock-time, set over the course of one day, and is mainly preoccupied by questions of how art exists throughout time, Herring does begin to experiment with the idea of alternate temporalities. He compresses centuries in the Director's retelling of the history of Kew Gardens, positions the text's own circadian countdown alongside the backdrop of a prelapsarian past, and formally alters the text to make way for unruly temporalities. When Adam descends into his dreamland, Herring shifts from prose to a mock epic ballad, where Dream and Time appear as personified characters:

> Dream fires Time's Palace, and his hour-hand sheathes
> and after battle, roundabouts bequeaths;
> where, as he watched, Man finds, under dreaming
> all of earth's contrasts drawn into one seeming.
> till dead things take on strangely human features
> and stock and static turn unrooted creatures.[625]

[622] Ibid.
[623] Ibid.
[624] Ibid.
[625] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* pp. 50-51.

Time 'bow[ing] to democratic Dream' actualises the odd feeling of time moving differently while the body sleeps. Herring destabilises chronological or universal notions of time, where Adam's experience of time shifts as he enters this different state. Herring creates a change for the reader's sense of time, too: reading a line of poetry takes a different amount of time than a line of prose, where Herring shifts both Adam and the reader's experiences of temporality through formal play. The figurative battle is visualised in 'Time's Palace', where the linear progression of past-present-future is overpowered: ghostly 'dead things' peer uncannily into the present from the past with 'strangely human features'; they are 'unrooted' from time's ranks and roam freely.[626] The playful handling of temporality is continued and expanded in *Cactus Coast,* where instead of exploring art's existence throughout time, Herring turns to questions of love.

Many modernist writers experimented with the concept of time.[627] Writing about the 'temporal chaos' that modernists often made the subject of their works, Jesse Matz summarises, they 'tried to break the sequence, to put things out of order, to work from the present back to the past, to dissolve linear time in the flux of memory and desire'.[628] Indeed, D. H. Lawrence writes in *Apocalypse* that '[o]ur idea of time as a continuity in an eternal straight line has crippled our consciousness cruelly', Clarissa's kiss with Sally in *Mrs Dalloway* is remembered as 'the most exquisite moment of her whole life' that interrupts clock-time, the opening of T. S. Eliot's 'Four Quartets' challenges this straight line, where 'Time present and time past / Are both perhaps in time future, / And time future contained in time past', whilst the last line of *The Great Gatsby* famously complicates the notion of succession: 'So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past'.[629] Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz contend that, even now, 'no other name for a field of cultural production evokes quite the constellation of negativity, risk of aesthetic failure, and bad behavior that "modernism" does'.[630] Modernism's 'bad' behaviour

[626] Ibid.
[627] See Ronald Schleifer, *Modernism and Time: The Logic of Abundance in Literature, Science, and Culture, 1880-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space: 1880-1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
[628] Jesse Matz, *The Modern Novel: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 62.
[629] D. H. Lawrence, *Apocalypse and the Writings on Revolution,* ed. by Mara Kalnins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 97; Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (London: CRW Publishing, 2003 [1925]), p. 41; T. S. Eliot, 'Burnt Norton', in *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1943), pp. 3-8 (p. 3); F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Scribner, 2018 [1925]), p. 180.
[630] Mao and Walkowitz, 'Introduction: Modernisms Bad and New', p. 1.

often works to undermine teleological rules, narratological structures and sequences, allowing for different relations to temporality to form.[631] It is precisely this modernist tendency towards incoherence that Kate Haffey argues makes literary modernism and queer temporality 'appropriate bedfellows'.[632] In her book, *Literary Modernism, Queer Temporality: Eddies in Time,* Haffey explores contemporary work on queer time and its 'specific indebtedness to modernist literature, literature known for its tendency to think against the grain of dominant narrative conventions', where both work to question rigid developmental narratives and deviate from straight lines.[633] Haffey's study uncovers the 'pockets of temporality that are not ruled solely by genealogical time' in the works of Woolf, Faulkner and Stein, and places these alongside contemporary writers to show how modernist literary techniques continue to evolve.[634] I follow Haffey's approach in exploring *Cactus Coast* alongside contemporary queer theory to track how the book embraces incoherency, where time stalls, turns backwards, melts and lurches forward to envision new ways of being.

Queer critiques of linear temporality propose alternative relationships to time. Queer time, Jack Halberstam writes:

> emerges most spectacularly at the end of the twentieth century, from within those gay communities whose horizons of possibility have been severely diminished by the AIDS epidemic [...] it flashes into view in the heart of a crisis, exploits the potential of what Charles-Pierre Baudelaire called in relation to modernism "The transient, the fleeting, the contingent."[635]

As a result, queer subcultures imagine futures 'according to the logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death'.[636] These markers often enforce a linear temporality, which Lee Edelman critiques as 'reproductive futurism', described as politically oppressive in its positioning of the child as the symbol of the future, its insistence on heteronormativity and the notion of history as inherently linear.[637] Edelman explains how linearity operates based on the fantasy that

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[631] Ibid.
[632] Kate Haffey, *Literary Modernism, Queer Temporality: Eddies in Time* **(**London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 12.
[633] Ibid., p. 4.
[634] Ibid., p. 10.
[635] Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: NY University Press, 2005), pp. 13-14.
[636] Ibid., p. 14.
[637] Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 2, p. 4.

'meaning succeeds in revealing itself—*as itself*—through time'.[638] Queer time thus questions the straight or straightening developmental narratives, desires, politics and institutions that enforce heteronormative ideologies as 'somatic facts' through a 'refusal of linear historicism'.[639] "Straight time", as understood by Tom Beollstorff, Valerie Rohy and José Esteban Muñoz, explicitly links linearity and heteronormativity which, Muñoz writes, acts as a 'temporal stranglehold' on the present.[640]

Neiges d'Antan itself is described as a 'prison of ghosts', trapped within the town where residents are constantly confronted by their haunted past.[641] *Cactus Coast* attempts to reconcile the past, present, and future. To do this, Herring uses ghostly figures, *ubi sunt* tropes and anachronisms to reveal the trappings of linear time. These are expressed through Lily and Ricka's destructive love affair that then reorientates the narrative towards a queer horizon through alternate experiences of time, realised through Ricka and Howard's relationship. In exploring Herring's use of time, I am interested in the queer moment that forms in *Cactus Coast.* Queer, in the sense that *Cactus Coast* challenges normative narratological techniques, following David M. Halperin's assertion that 'queer is by definition *whatever* is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant'; queer as modernism and queerness are inextricably linked through their marginality, exile and illegibility, where Heather Love asks '[i]s queer modernism simply another name for modernism?'; and queer in the sense that Herring's subversion of linear temporality allows for moments where nonnormative desire can come into view.[642] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's description of the queer moment as 'recurrent, eddying, *troublant'* is particularly useful here.[643] Recurrent, in the way queer moments are often resurgent, eddying in that they move in unpredictable manners, and *troublant* in that they can disturb, unsettle and thrill.

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[638] Ibid., p. 4.
[639] Elizabeth Freeman, 'Introduction', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies,* 13.2/3 (2007), 159-176 (p. 160); Carolyn Dinshaw, Lee Edelman, Roderick A. Ferguson, Carla Freccero, Elizabeth Freeman, Judith Halberstam, Annamarie Joagose, Christopher S. Nealon, Tan Hoang Nguyen, 'Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies,* 13.2/3 (2007), 177-195 (p. 178).
[640] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity,* 2nd edn (New York: New York University Press, 2019), p. 32; Tom Boellstorff, 'When Marriage Fails: Queer Coincidences in Straight Time', *GLQ,* 13.2.3 (2007), 227-248 (p. 228); Valerie Rohy, *Anachronism and Its Others: Sexuality, Race, Temporality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009).
[641] Herring, *Cactus Coast,* p. 40.
[642] David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 62; Heather Love, 'Introduction: Modernism at Night', *PMLA,* 124.3 (2009), 744-748 (p. 744-745).
[643] Sedgwick, *Tendencies,* p. xii.

She writes in her foreword to *Tendencies* that 'something about queer is inextinguishable': it 'is a continuing moment, movement, motive'.[644] In normative timeframes, moments are generally conceived of as an instant, as successive, finite, and forward moving. However, the queer moment persists. Haffey draws attention to Sedgwick's choice of the word "eddying" and its association with water, like a small whirlpool or a current of water that moves against the tide. Indeed, one of the most common metaphors for the flow of time is that of a river and within this temporal image, Haffey reminds us that rivers 'have snags, eddies, and do not always flow at the same rate'.[645] Haffey follows Sedgwick's description of the queer moment, and views it as a whirlpool: 'an image for time that flows in a circle or swirls', which does not flow steadily forward but instead 'moves in strange ways'.[646]

Time moves in many strange ways throughout *Cactus Coast.* The book beings with a framed narrative, where various love stories and temporal states are mediated by Anna Mohn, a beautician, masseuse and match-maker who owns a failing parlour on the coast of Neiges d'Antan. Anna's plight is paralleled with the town's odd temporal dilemma, where her commercial 'loss' is due to her relationship with time, which is defined by 'short-sightedness':

> Nothing surprised her more than to find she had made money, and her one idea was to make something else of it. The one thing she never thought of making was a *future*. She sought only to prolong the *present*, and that was because Cactus Coast had laid its spell on her, making time lateral and the rest of the world non-existent.[647]

Anna's sense of time stands still. She experiences time "laterally", as if an hourglass has been knocked sideways, trapped in the present moment with the sands unable to move. The prolonged present is defined by Anna's loss: the financial loss of her failing beachfront shop and the loss of Lily, who, Anna tells us, died by suicide two years ago. Lily's absence haunts *Cactus Coast* from the very first sentence: 'There was a reason why the villa was called *Felo-de-se* and there was a reason why Anna Mohn mattered'.[648] *Felo-de-se,* which translates from Latin as a "felon of oneself", is an archaic legal term denoting death by suicide, and reaches both forward in the narrative and backwards into Anna's memories, to the moment where Lily, heartbroken, jumps from the cliffs: 'His memory enveloped her;

[644] Ibid.
[645] Haffey, p. 169.
[646] Ibid., p. 169, p. 17.
[647] Herring, *Cactus Coast*, pp. 25-26. Emphasis is my own.
[648] Ibid., p. 11.

was too heavy; she fell. Lily, who had been out of her mind for so long, let go of the rest. She entered the eyes of the sea'.[649] Anna's sense of meaning is largely defined by the knowledge of Lily's death. Indeed, the recurrent refrain, 'Anan Mohn mattered', is tied to the fact that 'she knew why the villa on the top was called *Felo-de-se'*, which is the site of Lily's suicide.[650] Herring uses her predicament, her fixation with the past, to represent the town more broadly, which 'typified the madness of the coast'.[651]

Anna describes herself as a 'warder in a prison of ghosts', where all hope 'was dead': 'All that was left was a ghost. Behind each person, a ghost—at the bar, in the door, at a table, crossing the floor, at the piano'.[652] Anna's framed narrative at the start of *Cactus Coast* reorientates the narrative to peer into the past. As many queer temporality theorists have noted, ghosts disrupt normative ideas of time as linear, chronological, and stable: they are a spectral snag in time, a temporal flicker, where, as Carla Freccero writes, the 'past is in the present in the form of a haunting'.[653] Anna's sense of time shifts when she meets Howard Seton, someone 'from the past', an old acquaintance who has just returned to Neiges d'Antan.[654] At first, she does not believe this ghostly apparition is real:

> out of the aloes came Seton. She did not see him at first, for she did not believe what she saw. She had thought of the past, and he came from the past. Then he spoke, she saw him..... and she saw more. Howard Seton was back. Her path became clear. To her credit be it said, she did not know where it would lead. [...] She cried "MR. Seton! 'Ow funny!" and her path became clear. That it should be to others, two years must roll back.[655]

Anna paves a route that deviates from the linear path of time. Howard's intrusion into the narrative prompts a temporal excavation, where 'two years must roll back'.[656] Anna wishes to bring Ricka 'back to life' from his ghostly state and believes that 'Seton might do it. He had been unhappy. If the two pooled their losses, they might share their gains. Her mind

[649] Ibid., p. 175.
[650] Ibid., p. 11, p. 23.
[651] Ibid., p. 223.
[652] Ibid., p. 40, p. 148.
[653] Carla Freccaro, 'Queer Spectrality: Haunting the Past', in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, ed. by María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 335-360 (p. 366). See also Freccero, 'Queer Times'; Haffey, p. 8; Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?*,p. 127; Molly McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past: Spiritualism and the Cultural Politics of Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkely: University of California Press, 2012), pp. 154-176.
[654] Herring, *Cactus Coast,* p. 43.
[655] Ibid., pp. 43-4.
[656] Ibid., p. 44.

ran into its ordinary channels'.[657] The possibility of Anna's 'ordinary channels' paving the way for Ricka and Howard's 'pooled' affective confluence causes the narrative to twist backwards, contorting chronological time and allowing for new paths to come into view.[658]

Feeling backwards is a crucial component of many queer modernist texts. As Heather Love explores, the backwards glance is a 'temporal splitting' that reveals the 'losses of queer modernity' and the 'queer modernist melancholia' of the period.[659] *Cactus Coast* is constantly cast backwards. One of the ways that Herring orientates the text towards the past is through his allusion to the *ubi sunt* trope. By naming *Cactus Coast*'s ghost town Neiges d'Antan, Herring evokes the Medieval Latin lament, *ubi sunt qui ante nos fuerunt*, (*where are those who were before us*), which surfaces in many Old English poems. Its deployment distils an anxious nostalgia, prompting existential questions about mortality which ask, as Sarah Gilead summarises, 'where we stand in history, time, and circumstance'.[660] Neiges d'Antan alludes to Villon's famous 'Ballad of the Ladies of Times Past', which asks where history's women are now (dead and buried) and where the snows of yesteryear—*neiges d'antan*—are (long since melted). [661] Lily's absence from the start of the narrative—Anna tells us, 'there is one ghost you won't see, Lily'—retraces the plaintive formula, which forces the question: where is Lily now?

Neiges d'Antan poses a temporal dilemma, drawing attention to the town and text's painful senses of history. The town is displaced within an ambiguous "yesteryear", constantly retrieving something that does not exist in the "here and now", opening up a temporal and spatial chasm that the text falls into. Gilead reminds us that the *ubi sunt* tradition is not only about nostalgia: it is also about how to navigate a moment of crisis and heightened historical awareness.[662] This certainly rings true for Herring, writing in the interwar period, where he repeatedly poses questions about whether it is possible to make peace with the trauma of the past. For example, Howard's return to Neiges d'Antan is to engage with what has come before: 'Seton had come to dive after the past—to show

[657] Ibid., p. 44.
[658] Ibid.
[659] Heather Love, *Feeling Backwards: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 5-6.
[660] Sarah Gilead, '*Ubi Sunt:* Allusion and Temporality in Victorian poetry', *Victorian Poetry,* 56.3 (Fall 2018), 265-285 (p. 266).
[661] Villon, p. 177.
[662] Gilead, p. 265.

himself that he could dive after it, like a plate, and return with it, unfrightened.'[663] Howard's desire to retrieve the past—to be submerged, but to be able to rise again to the surface unencumbered by the weight of fear—mirrors Villon's anxious lament and the *ubi sunt* topos more broadly. Posing the quandary of where the snows of yesteryear reside evokes questions of mortality and the passage of time. By using this trope, Herring acknowledges the desire to resolve the past's burdens, and to 'return' with the knowledge of life's transitory nature, 'unfrightened' and thus able to continue.[664]

Villon's "snows of yesteryear" bookend *Cactus Coast.* Herring borrows the phrase 'Neiges d'Antan' as the title of his first and final chapters. By recalling the *ubi sunt* tradition at these crucial moments, Herring draws on the trope's cyclical nature and its themes of repetition, retrieval, and return. By framing the text in this fashion, Herring complicates the traditional structures that open and close a text, setting up a temporal and spatial movement that eddies and circles rather than moving steadily from beginning to end. The temporal disequilibrium embedded within the *ubi sunt* trope interferes with linear progression, allowing Herring to experiment with a sense of time, that operates more like Sedgwick's conception of the queer moment: it is 'recurrent, eddying, *troublant*'.[665] The final chapter's return to Neiges d'Antan also demonstrates the redemptive potential that an alternate sense of time might offer through Herring's thematic and textual play. Villon's speaker mourns what has been lost—the snows of yesteryear and, by extension, the past—yet concomitantly retrieves them and brings them into awareness. Herring textually mirrors this retrieval, with his final title reaching back to the first. It also echoes Howard's wish, to 'dive after the past' and 'return', which is, in turn, realised thematically through Howard's homecoming.[666] On his return, he is 'transformed' by his conversations with Ricka:

> What Seton had left in Neiges d'Antan, what he had lost there and elsewhere, was returned, grown and ready to fit proportionately with his development.[667]

Howard's loss has not remained still in the past, but instead continues growing autonomously, existing on different temporal and spatial planes than Howard himself,

[663] Herring, *Cactus Coast*, p. 181.
[664] Ibid.
[665] Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, p. xii.
[666] Herring, *Cactus Coast*, p. 181.
[667] Ibid., p. 199.

'there and elsewhere', before they mend 'the gap of its absence'.[668] Thus, Herring's engagement with *ubi sunt* and Villon's 'Ballad of the Ladies of Times Past' utilises their temporal disruption, circumventing their paralysing melancholy, to show how divergent experiences of time are not only possible but can also be transformative.

Although Herring explores the restorative possibilities offered through alternative temporalities, he begins by denouncing the trappings of linear time, as realised through Lily's experience. Lily's identity is repeatedly aligned with rigid boundaries and straight lines: from her first interaction with Ricka, where the 'very straight-ness of her attack made him think that she perhaps knew no obstacles because she expected none'—to her desire—'there sprung up a love as straightforward as that of Lily'—which all reinforce the idea that Lily's life is ruled by linearity.[669] Herring spins Lily's story as a tragedy, which can be taken as a warning against following such straight lines and the temporal strictures they impose.

Lily's narrative is impelled by straight temporality. She links her own lifeforce to her attraction to Ricka, telling him that '[y]ou have […] brought me to life', and her tragic death is tied to the dissolution of their relationship.[670] Following Muñoz's notion of normative linear temporality, which underscores heterosexual and heteronormative life, I argue that Lily is caught within the temporal 'prison house': the 'here and now' of straight time.[671] For Muñoz, straight time is a 'naturalized temporality that is calibrated to make queer potentiality not only unrealized but also unthinkable', operating in the 'here and now of everyday life. The only future promised is that of reproductive majoritarian heterosexuality, the spectacle of the state refurbishing its ranks through overt and subsidized acts of reproduction'.[672] Lily's attraction to Ricka parallels her newfound impulse towards traditional feminine beauty standards, which she previously dismissed as 'needless waste'.[673] However, as she prepares to meet Ricka for a second time, she finds her face 'not as I'd like'.[674] She is suddenly attuned to the naturalised (and therefore previously hidden) heteronormative matrix of gender:

> The design and structure of life became clear, all led to this and all this morning asked her to be at home in it, play her part […] for the spectacle she now had the

[668] Ibid.
[669] Ibid., p. 68, p. 21.
[670] Ibid., p. 125.
[671] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia,* p. 1.
[672] Ibid., p. 165, p. 22. See also: Rohy, p. xiv.
[673] Herring, *Cactus Coast*, p. 60.
[674] Ibid., p. 73.

> right to play, she who had remained in the wings. […] Lily left, with the first sign of femininity showing—a pair of flatly red lips—to wait for the pianist.[675]

The 'design and structure' of linear time is enmeshed with normative ideas of gender and sexuality, where Lily identifies herself as performing a 'part' in a play that is, at first, unrecognisable to her: 'Lily was surprised at herself in the glass, smoothed, subtleised. She was not ready to wear herself yet.'[676] Judith Butler has argued that the 'abiding self' is 'structured by repeated acts that seek to approximate the ideal of a substantial ground of identity, but which, in their occasional *dis*continuity, reveal the temporal and contingent groundlessness of this "ground"'.[677] By showing Lily's identity as a participatory performance—a 'spectacle'—Herring highlights the '*temporal* and contingent groundlessness' of the structures of straight time.[678]

This is further complicated by Herring's autobiographical admission that Lily 'is me'.[679] He writes to H.D., 'I put my own feelings into her', attempting to decode his own ideas of gender: 'what it seems to mean is that my feminine side roused [Ricka/Rice's] worse male side (mean, masculine), and then this mellowed and I mellowed (only I have to be two persons to do it and he doesn't!) and balance is found'.[680] Herring consciously recasts his queer relationship with Bobby Rice to negotiate his feelings on gender and sexuality, through Ricka and Lily's affair. In doing so, he critiques scripts that enforce heteronormativity and disallow queer relationality. Lily's death, therefore, can be seen as a warning against following and perpetuating such inherited strictures that do not adhere with one's own identity, gender, or sexuality.

This warning is also signalled through the temporal quandary that Neiges d'Antan poses. Pulling on the inherited dissonant temporal and spatial logic of the *ubi sunt* trope, Herring pinpoints Lily's downfall to her experience of the town. The first thing we learn about Lily is that she 'went out of her mind quite suddenly. The place did it, of course.'[681] Later, Herring elaborates on the temporal dimension of Neiges d'Antan that troubles Lily:

> It was not [Ricka] that had beaten her, but the place, Neiges d'Antan, which was waking to one more lengthless day. […] Gaiety, gossip, gaming or gambolling with

[675] Ibid., p. 77.
[676] Ibid., p. 85.
[677] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 141.
[678] Herring, *Cactus Coast,* p. 77; Butler, p. 141. Emphasis my own.
[679] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, 'Letter from Robert Herring to H.D., August 4 1934. Box 10, Folder 357.
[680] Ibid.
[681] Herring, *Cactus Coast,* p. 45.

> anything that one valued would begin. Had, in fact, never stopped. Those who slept now, would awake; those who were up, go to bed. Nothing changed. Neiges d'Antan went on. There was no hope that tomorrow might lessen suffering or whirl up joy, for to-morrow was to-day, which never ended. Things could not happen differently, while Neiges d'Antan went on. It lay, crocodile-eyed, crocodile-jawed, watching in fern-shaded sun-pool for dead life to snap at […] crunch, and leave bleeding.[682]

The relentless succession of the never-ending 'lengthless day' is overwhelming. Here, linear time is depicted as caustic and monstrous, where 'to-day' rushes into 'to-morrow' with 'no hope' of change or joy.[683] As Muñoz writes, straight time 'tells us that there is no future but the here and now of our everyday life', which resonates with the temporal logic that overpowers Lily, where the "here and now" stretches endlessly.[684] Herring attempts to reconcile his queer desire through Lily, who battles against a 'lengthless' and linear experience of time which—once the fight is lost and she is 'beaten'—leaves her 'bleeding', and vulnerable against a 'crocodile-jawed' futurity.[685]

Herring's depiction of the future here as 'dead life' is entirely pessimistic.[686] In this way, it resonates with Edelman's notion of reproductive futurism, which reproduces 'the past, through displacement, in the form of the future'.[687] Indeed, Lily's sense of time follows an endless repetition that enforces the status quo, where 'to-morrow was to-day, which never ended'.[688] She lives her life propelled by a continuous successive logic which is, in Edelman's words, 'lethal'.[689] However, Herring's vision of the future shifts in the book's final section. As Haffey notes, modernists 'often seek to find their way out of temporalities that bear striking resemblances to reproductive futurism'.[690] This is exactly what *Cactus Coast* does. Howard and Ricka's relationship emerges through a very different relation to time which, although still unclear and not fully formed, is profoundly hopeful. It resembles Muñoz's utopian approach to futurity, which differs drastically from Edelman's handling of the future. Using futurity as conceptual, methodological, and affective tool, Muñoz critiques the idea of reproductive futurism as a product of straight time, arguing that this is

[682] Ibid., pp. 140-1.
[683] Ibid., p. 141.
[684] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, p. 22.
[685] Herring, *Cactus Coast*, pp. 140-1.
[686] Ibid., p. 141.
[687] Edelman, p. 31.
[688] Herring, *Cactus Coast*, p. 141.
[689] Edelman, p. 31.
[690] Haffey, p. 191.

not the only way in which the future can be imagined. Muñoz sees queerness as an 'ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future', in order to:

> dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds. Queerness is a longing that propels us onward[691]

Cactus Coast is, then, a mediation on what sort of alternate models of intimacy—what kind of 'new worlds'—might be possible.[692]

Within Herring's autobiographical schema, 'balance is found' between his own ideas of 'masculine' and 'feminine' once straight time—the 'lengthless day'—has been dissolved and a new, queer relationship is able to bloom between Howard and Ricka, which works to resolve the lingering temporal dilemmas.[693] Indeed, whereas Lily is aligned with routine and order—she is described as a 'machine', working systematically and chronologically—both Ricka and Howard appear as subjects that are in the process of forming, that repeatedly trouble fixed definitions; between past, present and future; between self and other; and between human and non-human.[694] As Ricka explains:

> I live, weisst Du [you know], in the mind's open sea. Lily swam in a pool, with sides and fixed depth. My eyes were deep water to her.[695]

Herring's metaphor highlights the differences between the two halves of the book. Lily's existence is hemmed in by lines that are man-made, logical, linear, and 'fixed' in place, which oppose the idea of the 'mind's open sea', which is an imagined space that constituted by unpredictable currents, unknowable depths, pulls, swells, riptides and—recalling Sedgwick's phrasing of the queer moment—eddies.[696]

Open water is a central motif that Herring uses to discuss the relationship between Howard and Ricka. Upon meeting, Ricka and Howard are both overcome with the shared sensation of being at 'sea-bottom'.[697] Howard notes the 'sky floating above them in sea-layers of blue' and feels the entire 'Garden was under-water', where:

> At last he comprehended the stillness. The anemone-cushions of cactus, the star-fished strands and upraised motionless arms of agave in green coral hung there….

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[691] Muñoz, p. 1.
[692] Ibid.
[693] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to H.D., August 4 1934. Box 10, Folder 357; Herring, *Cactus Coast,* p. 141.
[694] Herring, *Cactus Coast,* p. 114.
[695] Ibid., p. 208.
[696] Ibid.; Sedgwick, *Tendencies,* p. xii.
[697] Herring, *Cactus Coast,* p. 212.

> sea weeds, from which waves had withdrawn, leaving only the effect, and the expectation, of swaying.[698]

Ricka and Howard stand atop Monte Carlo's cliffs looking out to sea, yet in this instance, their embodied experience of the world dissolves the logic of perception: the sky becomes the sea; cacti are anemones; their spikes are green coral; their branches are seaweed. Sensory stimuli are interpreted in such a way that reverses spatial logic—up is down, down is up, and the bottom of the sea is now at the top of the cliffs—through the act of desiring. As Ricka tells Howard, 'If you wish the sea-bottom, it is up here', which Howard affirms: 'It was'.[699] An alternate experience of reality and a new view of the world is thus crafted through wishing and wanting, where they are now submerged. As well as challenging spatial logic, their wish also reconceptualises temporal norms through movement. Whereas time is often depicted through the imagery of a flowing river, this passage imagines time moving differently. Ricka and Howard are unmoored from the flow of successive time. Their imagined seascape questions the chronology of cause and effect, where their underwater world is structured around anticipation: 'only the effect, and the expectation' of 'swaying' exists, as opposed to the motion itself, which results in a charged 'stillness'.[700] Willed into being by a 'wish', this is the 'mind's open sea' that Ricka's describes, where they both inhabit an alternate way of experiencing time and space together.[701]

Water is also significant for how *Cactus Coast* presents queer relationality. Both Ricka and Howard are depicted in and associated with aqueous images. For example, the chapter in which they meet is titled "Aguas Quietas", which translates to "Still Waters". It follows Anna's analepsis in which Lily and Ricka's affair is told, jumping in time to where the narrative began. Thus, "Aguas Quietas" may gesture to an aftermath of Lily's suicide. It also anticipates the 'stillness' of Howard and Ricka's shared underwater vision; it could also allude to a Spanish bolero song, 'Aquellos ojos verdes', with which Ricka serenades Howard and likens his green eyes to 'quietas aguas': a calm 'pool where love lies'.[702] Following Herring's association between Ricka, Howard and fluid qualities, the chapter title, "Still Waters", can also be seen to describe their meeting: as two converging bodies of water. Reflecting on his meeting with Ricka, Howard notices that he comprehends his own sense

[698] Ibid., pp. 212-213.
[699] Ibid., p. 212.
[700] Ibid., p. 213.
[701] Ibid., p. 212, p. 208.
[702] Ibid., pp. 200-201.

of self differently, he 'had come whirling together, not wholly from inner sources'.[703] Corporeal borders become diffuse and Howard's identity is composed of a catalytic meeting of internal and external currents. This resonates with Ricka's confession, where he explains to Howard: 'I do not exist. I am ripples in process of clearing. But as yet I am not clear enough to see…'[704] Ricka and Howard both discover their identities to be in the process of forming, as ripples or whirls on the brink of comprehension and form.

This is intensified by Herring's relentless characterisation of Ricka as an embodiment of the sea: he has a 'drowned face', a 'damp memory', his eyes are 'deep water', his body is 'blood (liquid coral) flesh', '[s]eas seemed bottled within him', and his laughter 'was like the silver glint which shows the sea lives'.[705] On their first meeting, Howard mistakes Ricka for a sea-wrecked ghost, asking: 'Have you risen up? […] From the sea?', to which Ricka replies, 'My heart is in the sea. Or it may be in my head, since my thoughts are so full of it'.[706] Both Ricka and Howard position themselves at 'sea-floor', in their 'drowned garden', where they are able to meet and talk freely with one another.[707] Astrida Neimanis's posthuman feminist theories offer a useful framework for understanding Herring's configuration of identity, which rethinks embodiment as 'bodies of water': 'we leak and seethe, our borders always vulnerable to rupture and renegotiation', and always 'implicated in a common way of being and becoming, in relation to others'.[708] In this sense, Ricka and Howard are in a state of 'becoming, in relation to others': they are 'ripples in process of clearing'.[709] Just as ripples change shape and direction if they are met by a counter ripple, Ricka and Howard's relationship is a convergence of two bodies of water: a queer conflux.

By imagining Ricka and Howard's relationship as a tidal assemblage, Herring presents a model for queer intimacy. Their affective joy is depicted in curiously aqueous terms, where Ricka 'was laughing and his laughter sought Seton's to run in with, twin waves, on to silver shore'.[710] Their euphoria, envisioned as two crashing waves, merging

[703] Ibid., p. 198.
[704] Ibid., p. 203.
[705] Ibid., p. 85, p. 206, p. 208, p. 85, p. 145, p. 209.
[706] Ibid., p. 177.
[707] Ibid., p. 216, p. 214.
[708] Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 2, p. 111.
[709] Ibid., p. 111; Herring, *Cactus Coast*, p. 203.
[710] Herring, *Cactus Coast*, p. 220.

together within the churning sea as they crash onto the shore, moving as part of the same body of water. This paradigm is further realised through Ricka and Howard's lengthy philosophical reflections on intimacy, which Ricka describes as the 'love of two persons changed into one life':

> Those two halves of two do not make one—they have to be fused and then split, and then something can grow. Whether that is living or dying, does not matter. It is change. It must be. One is a process.[711]

The natural imagery used to depict Ricka and Howard's affective convergence enacts the mode of intimacy being sought throughout *Cactus Coast* that is described here. Just as 'twin waves' collide, they are also constantly in motion—the 'process' of change—and will, by virtue of their presence within a wider oceanic body of water, inevitably 'split' as the waves form different, endless configurations.[712] Intimacy is bound up with identity here, showing the inherent permeability of the body and how external phenomena can affect change. As they ready themselves to leave the garden, Howard makes a curious observation that further reinforces this notion of intimacy, noting that they have 'left many selves there. I think there will be two new cacti. Our misery their moisture, our suffering their spikes'.[713] Their affective melancholy is again depicted in aqueous terms and aligned with cacti, whose bodies store large amounts of water, has congealed. The pooling of what Sianne Ngai would term 'ugly feelings' is further emphasised by the syntax's repeated rhythms, carrying the sound of waves lapping onto the shore.[714] Once fused, the 'many selves' must 'split', fragmenting and forming a new formation, so 'something can grow'.[715] As well as exploring the ontological contingencies that intimacy entails, Herring also radically unsettles the narrative of romance, marriage and reproduction that reproductive futurism enforces, where instead of a child, it is a non-human plant that grows within this process of becoming, blurring the boundaries between self and other, human and non-human, and between subject and world. Both intimacy and identity, for Herring, are predicated not on an entrenched or predetermined set of institutions, ideals or binaries, but rather on change: 'One is a process'.[716]

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[711] Ibid., pp. 221-222.
[712] Ibid., p. 220, p. 222.
[713] Ibid., pp. 220-221.
[714] Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005).
[715] Herring, *Cactus Coast*, p. 220, p. 222.
[716] Ibid., p. 222.

Their ambivalence to whether the 'process' 'is 'living or dying' has temporal implications. Ricka proposes a method of living outside of traditional temporal makers that typically structure straight time. At first, Howard appears anxious about accepting such a state of change, complaining that 'You talk always of death, sooner or later', and that '[c]hange is a soft word for dying'.[717] Ricka counters these concerns, offering instead to '[c]all it birth, then'.[718] He continues, '[t]hat is the first death—of love, into life'.[719] Accepting this reconfiguration of birth, death, life, and love necessitates a complete reorientation of how the body exists in time and space. It is only once both Howard and Ricka embrace this temporal redirection that they can leave the garden, through a gate which (according to Anna) 'opens on to a new life'.[720] This is a life lived outside of the delineations of straight time, bookended by birth and death. They instead exist as expanding and concentric 'ripples in process of clearing' within a wider body of water—the dreamscape of 'the mind's open sea'—which defies linear movements and instead oscillates in the same manner that Sedgwick's 'continuing' queer moment does: it is 'recurrent, eddying, troublant'. [721]

Ricka and Howard's 'new life' is lived beyond the delineations of straight time. Indeed, as Ricka states: 'Time does not last. So there is none. We outlive it'.[722] *Cactus Coast*'s final chapter offers a glimpse of what life and love might look like outside of the strictures of normative desires and traditional temporalities. Following Ricka and Howard's exit from the gardens, Herring denies the reader any sense of closure, resolution or finality. Instead, he undermines narratological norms, catapulting the final chapter years ahead into an unknown time, with fragments of Ricka and Howard's life together relayed by an unknown narrator, unlike the rest of the book, which is invariably focalised through Anna, Lily, and Howard's perspectives. It is a profoundly happy life: 'So the villa became the happiest home on the coast'.[723] Even when the rest of Neiges d'Antan quietens:

> the villa still glowed. Its lights from the top rivalled the sea's glint at the foot of the cliff. They were a beacon. […] The villa seemed a proof that even on the coast, one could win, at something, and it was the particular fascination of the place that no one quite knew at what. It exuded victory. That was all, and enough.[724]

[717] Ibid., p. 221.
[718] Ibid.
[719] Ibid.
[720] Ibid., p. 220.
[721] Ibid., p. 208; Sedgwick, *Tendencies,* p. xii.
[722] Herring, *Cactus Coast,* p. 130.
[723] Ibid., p. 223.
[724] Ibid.

The villa is inherently linked to Ricka and the 'mind's open sea'.[725] It is compared to 'the sea's glint'; a word that Herring uses to describe Ricka's laughter and his thoughts: 'he laughed, which was like the silver glint which shows the sea lives. And as glint is the turn of a wave, his mind turned, and showed it was well'.[726] The villa thus exists in the imagined seascape of Ricka's mind. What is more, it is wholly aligned with joy. It is a 'beacon' that 'glowed'; it is the 'happiest home' and embodies 'victory' and contentment: it 'was all, and enough'.[727]

The villa's namesake initially seems at odds with its immense happiness. Named 'Felo-de-se' after Lily's act of suicide, the villa is thus aligned with both joy and tragedy.[728] Yet this semiotic clash is the same one that underlines Ricka's thoughts on the 'love of two persons changed into one life'.[729] If Ricka and Howard's conversation in the garden is the theory, then the villa is the practice. Through the blurring of death, birth, and change, they are able to occupy the alternate temporal orientation that Herring offers as a route to queer desire. Furthermore, when read alongside Herring's autobiographical schema in which Lily and Howard are continuations of the same being, Lily's death comes to represent an integral part of the 'process' of becoming.[730] Even the villa's 'crest is a phoenix', which further enforces the ongoing themes of death and rebirth. It calls, rather pointedly, on the symbol of a bird that can rise from its own ashes, which complicates ideas of linear time through its ability for renewal, while its ancient mythological nature also gestures to the possibility of alternate realities.[731]

Herring's hopeful 'beacon' of a queer love plays on the fiery imagery of the phoenix, furthering the notion of the villa as a site of renewal.[732] As well as the association with hope, beacons also send messages. They alert the viewer to a future moment or, like a lighthouse signalling the presence of cliffs to boats, can act as a guidance. Herring layers meaning, signals and symbols onto the villa, which all combine to make it the 'happiest home on the coast'.[733] It also seems to anticipate aspects of Muñoz's concept of queer time's utopian

[725] Ibid., p. 223, p. 208.
[726] Ibid., pp. 209-210.
[727] Ibid., p. 223.
[728] Ibid., p. 216.
[729] Ibid., p. 221.
[730] Ibid., p. 222.
[731] Ibid., p. 216.
[732] Ibid., p. 223.
[733] Ibid.

hermeneutics, which is 'a path and a movement to a greater openness to the world'.[734] Herring's mode of intimacy is being imagined and resonates with Muñoz's description of queerness as a 'horizon': as a 'modality of ecstatic time' that interrupts straight time through bursts—or perhaps, to use Herring's word, 'glint[s]'—of laughter, pleasure, and 'moments of contemplation when one looks back at a scene from one's past, present, or future'.[735] Indeed, through Anna's analepsis, the weaving of *ubi sunt* tropes, and through Ricka and Howard's reflective conversations, each section of the book seems to reach, from different directions and alternate aspects, towards a 'contemplation' of time.[736] By imagining an alternate temporality and way of life in this way, the temporal wounds caused by Lily's death seem to heal. Ricka has transformed from the 'ghost in the Garden', Anna is no longer a 'warder in a prison of ghosts', and Howard has discovered 'what he had been looking for' that swims beneath the 'surface' of the 'coast-magic': the ability to 'dive after the past' and 'return […] unfrightened'.[737] Haffey argues that queer moments within modernist literature often look towards the past so that they may 'attempt to produce new relations to time'; to craft a moment that 'preserves the past', but does not repeat it.[738] This is exactly what *Cactus Coast* endeavours to do. The book operates as a textual exploration of temporality and queer desire on one hand, and on the other as an autobiographical project that, as Herring writes, 'is 1930, and 1932, and other atoms […] cooling into worlds'.[739] Herring preserves moments in his own life and his relationship with Rice to craft utopian 'worlds' that imagine a different experience of time and an alternate plane of reality: Herring and Rice never shared a villa on the coast.

Despite the burst of ecstatic queer time realised in the final pages of *Cactus Coast*, Herring still withholds any sense of closure. Just as Muñoz defines queerness through hope and 'ideality', as the 'warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality', Herring also positions this moment as similarly just out of reach.[740] Ricka and Howard's joyous moment hovers on a precipice. This precipice is thematic as well as textual: the villa stands on the cliffside, between land and sea; and the moment it occupies sits at the very end of *Cactus*

[734] Ibid., p. 224; Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, p. 25.
[735] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, p, 32; Herring, *Cactus Coast*, p. 210.
[736] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, p. 32.
[737] Herring, *Cactus Coast*, p. 40, p. 181.
[738] Haffey, p. 191, p. 195.
[739] H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, 'Letter from Robert Herring to H.D. 1934', Box 10, Folder 357.
[740] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, p. 1.

Coast, on the very edge of the book itself. The final lines involve another temporal lurch, where Herring sends the text reeling into an unknown and unknowable moment:

> Seton and Ricka have left, and Anna's a memory. But the wall pulls and cacti wait, the sea's there and the air is the same,—one can't say they will not come back, for life's funny and who wouldn't return to a place where one has won? After losing *(to be continued).*[741]

Herring disallows traditional narratological resolution, closing the book with open-ended and unanswered questions and halfway through an ambiguous sentence. The metatextual '*to be continued*' overtly points to the unfinished nature of the narrative, highlighting the ongoing and continuous potentiality.[742] It is unclear why Howard and Ricka left, where they are now, or whether they are still together, but the ending's optimistic tone offers a sense of hope. Again, by resisting traditional narrative structures and straight teleologies—the proverbial happy ending—the text enacts the 'process' of becoming that Ricka sets out: *Cactus Coast* imagines a queer temporal mode that is always changing, growing, and renewing.

The POOL group's project was deeply invested in exploring new modes of living and new ways of being together. Analysing *Cactus Coast* and including it in the wider body of POOL's work allows for a further understanding of the thematic concerns that motivated POOL's private and artistic endeavours. Enmeshed in Bryher's modes of production and influence as it was, and narrating relationships that were being formed within the milieu of tension and malaise of the POOL group's Monte Carlo trips, where H.D. and Macpherson's romantic relationship was beginning to fragment, *Cactus Coast* speaks to many aspects of POOL's project. Herring explores deviant temporalities, queer desires, and the struggle to imagine a mode of living that allows for those desires to be felt, which are all continuations of POOL's interests. Herring toys with *ubi sunt* tropes to send the narrative cascading backwards, where it confronts painful questions of mortality and the oppressive strictures of straight time as felt by Lily, before imagining an oceanic ontology and temporal flow that allows queer joy to be realised, in a moment that is caught in a current that is realised as relentless, ongoing, and always '*to be continued*'.[743]

[741] Herring, *Cactus Coast*, p. 226.
[742] Ibid.
[743] Ibid.

Chapter Three

Oswell Blakeston: 'O.B.' and 'Dear Supervisor'

Oswell Blakeston's name flickers throughout criticism on the POOL group where, much like Herring, much of his artistic activity has yet to be mapped. He is often cited as a significant contributor to *Close Up,* its assistant editor for the last three years of its publication, and sometimes in lists of '[a]dditional members', as Schlun casts him, alongside Richardson and Herring.[744] However, his role in the group has yet to be fully interrogated, where his fiction and short stories have received little analysis. Blakeston's POOL publications, *Through A Yellow Glass* and *Extra Passenger* parody commercial cinema practices, providing autobiographical insights into early-twentieth century studio life, and *Few Are Chosen* and *Magic Aftermath* tease out further currents from his labelled POOL books, where a fascination with haptics, desire and perception are spun across the electric queer skein of his work. The *Close Up* years also mark a period of personal and professional transition for Blakeston, as he shifted from working as a commercial camera-assistant to publishing experimental fiction, poetry, writing about films and directing his own. An exploration of Blakeston's early life and the literary texts he produced during POOL's labelled period of activity, illustrates a complex relationship between industry, art, and cinema. As with much of *Close Up*'s film writing, twinned stands of contempt and captivation with the cinema can be seen in Blakeston's fiction, where he interrogates what the starry-eyed Donald in *Extra Passenger* calls 'the possibilities, the infinite possibilities, of the screen'.[745]

Blakeston's Early Life and POOL years

Blakeston's prolific and eclectic career began when he left his bourgeois home at 16 to become a magic 'conjuror's assistant'.[746] From running away to effectively join the circus in 1923, his life is full of idiosyncratic sketches, and an abundance of work that ranges from film, poetry, film writing, fiction, crime thrillers, cookbooks, travel writing and painting.

[744] Schlun, p. 5.
[745] Blakeston, *Extra Passenger* p. 154, p. 131.
[746] Max Chapman, 'Oswell Blakeston', *The Times* (Saturday June 8 1985), p. 10.

Blakeston's long term partner Max Chapman describes his 'quick eye for the bizarre and the outrageous'.[747] Indeed, in a short profile for *The Times* in 1970, Elizabeth Novick writes:

> "I don't believe", wrote one journalist recently "that Oswell Blakeston exists." [...] the more one learns about him the more improbable he seems, but he exists all right, a writer of murk and tinsel and brilliance.[748]

Novick continues to list tales about how Blakeston has appeared as 'the voice of a chicken for a ventriloquist', how he once wrote a poem on an egg yolk, claims he is the first painter to work with chemicals on canvas, the first to publish fiction with a spiral binding, and his description of cooking shellfish nearly led to making a film with André Gide and Jean Cocteau, which never came to fruition as he offended Cocteau by 'sitting on a wax hand', who 'never spoke to him again'.[749] Fragments of Blakeston's bizarre biography are scattered throughout obituaries, articles and his correspondence with Bryher, which form a patchwork tapestry of Blakeston's idiosyncratic life and career.[750] Pitching himself in a letter, Blakeston provides a brief description of his life in his own words:

> Dylan Thomas called me "a friend of all boozey poets, and me too" [...] Aleicester Crowley invented a drink for me called "eagle's tail["], M.P.Shiel made me a Duke of Redonda in company with Victor Gollancz and Henry Miller and [Luis] Bunuel called me "a real cineaste" when an angry gentleman hurled his brief case through the screen at the first showing of one of my avant[-]garde films in Paris. I am also a painter [...] and I have the first exhibition in England in a butcher's shop.[751]

Indeed, Blakeston was good friends with Dylan Thomas, where they may have briefly been lovers in the early 1930s, and the writer M. P. Shiel did proclaim Blakeston a duke of his unrecognised micronation monarchy.[752] The film Blakeston refers to is his POOL film, *I Do*

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[747] Ibid.; David Buckman, 'Obituary: Max Chapman', *Independent* (30 November 1999) <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/obituary-max-chapman-1129749.html> [accessed 21 February 2021]. David Buckman interviewed Chapman in January 1994 in his home in Hampstead (nine years after Blakeston's death) to inform the biographical notes in Buckman's *Artists in Britain Since 1945*, and Chapman's obituary in the *Independent* in 1999. Many thanks to David for his kind and helpful replies to my emails and for sharing his thoughts on Blakeston.

[748] Elizabeth Novick, 'Pooter', *The Times* (August 29 1970), p. 8.

[749] Ibid.

[750] Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to access Blakeston's archives at the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas. However, I am very grateful to Tim Armstrong who provided me with some photos of Blakeston's correspondence with Bryher, pages from Blakeston's unpublished biography and from his scrapbook.

[751] See Austin, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Oswell Blakeston Collection 1927-1985, 'Letter from Oswell Blakeston to Mr. Wolfe, undated'. Box 3.

[752] Quoted in Paul Ferris's biography of Thomas, Blakeston describes Thomas as 'a beautiful grubby angel in those days. Maybe the whole thing was an act to please one. That would have been much more likely. But he was in bed with me'. Thomas and his wife, Caitlin Thomas, spent their Cornish honeymoon in Newlyn and

Like to be Beside the Seaside, which was screened in The Ursulines Cinema in Paris, where he seems equally proud of being named 'a real cineaste', and at having provoked someone to fling their briefcase at the screen.[753] This section traces some of these eccentric tales, presenting the first extended biography of Blakeston to give context to his introduction and involvement with the POOL group.

Blakeston was born Henry Joseph Hasslacher to a wealthy family in 1907.[754] Chapman writes that from Blakeston's start as a successful conjuror's assistant, his career progressed in a 'characteristically off-beat fashion', where he found work as a cinema organist and as a studio clapperboy.[755] Working as part of a magician's show, Blakeston would have performed in variety shows in music halls which, as Andrew Shail notes, included cinema, live music and theatre.[756] Thus, Blakeston's introduction to cinema would have been in music halls and theatres, performing magic tricks or playing the organ to accompany popular silent films. This presents a stark contrast to other members of POOL's network, where Bryher describes her own initiation into film art in Berlin 1927:

> I had rarely been to a cinema in my life, the idea of film seemed alien to me, I thought in 1927 only in terms of literature, of books, but when Kenneth Macpherson said he saw in imagination a new world of pictures that not only moved but moved as if they were reflexions of intellectual thoughts. I was perfectly willing to go to Berlin where apparently the "movement" had its heart.[757]

Whereas Bryher's film education was inspired by the experimental film scene in 1920s Berlin, Blakeston's grew from working as a clapper boy at Gaumont in London. Chapman notes that he first started work acting as a double for film star's hands, where Blakeston's were often featured in shots of 'hands holding letters, visiting cards and so on'.[758] He progressed to work as a camera assistant. The director David Lean praises his tutelage during the 1920s, where the biographer Gene D. Phillips notes how Lean 'worked with a

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Mousehole with Blakeston and Chapman. Paul Ferris, *Dylan Thomas: A Biography* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), p. 129, p. 161. David Buckman confirms the claim about Shiel in his obituary of Max Chapman. See Buckman, 'Obituary: Max Chapman'.

[753] Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Oswell Blakeston Collection 1927-1985, 'Letter from Oswell Blakeston to Mr. Wolfe, undated'. Box 3.

[754] David Buckman, 'Oswell Blakeston 1907-1985', *Artists in Britain Since 1945,* vol. 2 (Bristol: Art Dictionaries, 1998), p. 151. Searches on ancestry.co.uk show that Blakeston's grandfather was Johann Jacob Aloysius Hasslacher, who ran the wine company Deinhard's London office.

[755] Chapman, 'Oswell Blakeston', p. 10; Buckman, 'Obituary: Max Chapman'.

[756] Shail, *The Cinema and the Origins of Literary Modernism,* p. 17.

[757] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Autobiographical Notes: Berlin, n.d. Box 72, Folder 2855.

[758] Max Chapman, quoted in Buckman, 'Obituary: Max Chapman'.

more experienced camera assistant, Henry Hasslacher', and evaded his open sexual propositions.[759]

It was Blakeston's work at Gaumont and his colloquial industry knowledge of commercial film studios that gained him entry into POOL's network. He pitched himself to *Close Up*, writing to Bryher on July 7 1927. He unwittingly calls her 'Dear Sir' and uses his birthname, 'H. Hasslacher', with his pseudonym '(Oswell Blakeston)' sitting in parenthesis underneath. The letter is typed on The Gaumont Company's official stationary, although the studio's Limehouse address is scribbled out and replaced with Blakeston's home address in Wimbledon instead, indicating that Blakeston had taken this from his work to corroborate his connections to the film industry. Within the letter, he praises *Close Up*'s first issue and expresses keen interest in contributing to the magazine himself, presenting himself as 'a member of the Gaumont Company': 'I have had ample opportunity to study British production methods from within. I wonder if you would care for an article on the subject?'[760] Bryher took him up on this offer, and so Blakeston's literary career began. Novick writes in her profile that the 'cinema started him writing'.[761]

Blakeston's first piece of writing was published in *Close Up*'s second issue in August 1927 under his pseudonym. Macpherson and Bryher introduced his article with a brief note: 'Written by a member of one of the leading British Film Studios this article contains some *inside facts* which cannot be disputed'.[762] Emphasising his unique insight within *Close Up*, Blakeston wrote, as his introductory letters to Bryher promised, 'from within'.[763] In an article published in 1964, Blakeston reflects on *Close Up*'s legacy, where he describes his involvement in similar terms to the caveat accompanying his first article:

> With the second issue I forged an association with the magazine which lasted until the end. My role was mainly to contribute back-stage stuff about the studios in which I was working. Sometimes I reported on technical innovations, and sometimes I simply related a joke[764]

[759] Gene D. Phillips, *Beyond the Epic: The Life and Films of David Lean* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2006), p. 18.
[760] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from H. Hasslacher (Oswell Blakeston) to Bryher July 7 1927. Box 3, Folder 118.
[761] Novick, p. 8.
[762] Blakeston, 'British Solecisms', p. 17. Emphasis my own.
[763] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from H. Hasslacher (Oswell Blakeston) to Bryher July 7 1927. Box 3, Folder 118; Blakeston, 'British Solecisms', p. 17.
[764] Blakeston, 'Retrospect 14: Close Up', p. 38.

Blakeston's technical knowledge and gossipy anecdotes are integral to his role within POOL. His 'back-stage stuff' contradicts one of *Close Up*'s tenets, proclaimed in capital letters on their cover wrappers: 'THEORY AND ANALYSIS', with 'NO GOSSIP'.[765] This discrepancy between *Close Up*'s mantra and Blakeston's quotidian contributions from the studios was not lost on Blakeston, who playfully begins one review for *Close Up* noting '[t]he purchaser has been generally warned, by a slip gummed to the cover, that *Close Up* contains NO GOSSIP but I feel constrained to repeat a little anecdote which is both enlightening and true.'[766] Blakeston's writing constituted a substantial part of *Close Up's* content and his ability to discuss studio practices and new film techniques largely informed the journal's discourse on British film, with 56 articles over *Close Up's* 54 issues, and additional pieces in almost every single 'Comment and Review' section.[767]

Blakeston's first book, *Through A Yellow Glass,* was published in 1928. It was promoted in *Close Up* as a 'complete guide to the cinema studio', containing '[e]very possible variety of information for the professional, the amateur and the merely interested'.[768] The book's insights into the industry were emphasised to such an extent that the book is often described as a cinematography survey or study and treated solely as an educational text.[769] *Through A Yellow Glass*'s complex address expands on Blakeston's 'back-stage' *Close Up* material, where offers a queer embodied experience of studio life, as I will explore later.[770] A year later, POOL published his second novel, *Extra Passenger.* It follows a Künstlerroman narrative, following Donald through his unhappy schooling, uptight bourgeois upbringing and into maturity where he starts work at the fictional Milky Way Film Studios. He is quickly disillusioned with the film industry, where it was advertised in *Close Up* as an 'acid and withering indictment' of the British film studios.[771] The first advertisements in *Close Up* stressed Blakeston's representation of a 'stifling family

[765] Cover wrapper, *Close Up*, 3.4 (October 1928).
[766] Oswell Blakeston, 'Note On The Magic Clock', *Close Up,* 4.2 (February 1929), pp. 75-76 (p. 75).
[767] The only issues that do not have an article from Blakeston are the first one (July 1928) before he started contributing, and the issues in May 1928, September 1929 and February 1930.
[768] 'Advertisement for *Through A Yellow Glass*', *Close Up,* 5.5 (November, 1929), p. 458.
[769] Donald, Marcus and Friedberg describe the book as 'a survey of lighting and camera terminology and styles of cinematograph', see Donald, Friedberg and Marcus, p. 315; Schlun refers to the text as a 'pragmatic' 'study of cinematography', see Schlun, p. 117; and Cosandey depicts *Through A Yellow Glass* as an 'expanded form' of Blakeston's 'introductory articles on production techniques', see Cosandey, 'On Borderline', p. 49.
[770] Blakeston, 'Retrospect 14: Close Up', p. 38.
[771] 'Advertisement for *Extra Passenger*', *Close Up,* 5.3 (September 1929), p. 270.

environment'.[772] However, in later issues of *Close Up*, the emphasis was shifted away from Donald's early years, and increasingly positioned as an authentic depiction of studio life. Advertisements for *Extra Passenger* invited the 'reader behind the scenes of film production', as the 'only realistic account of the way British pictures are made', with 'cruel sketches of studio personalities'.[773] The advert overtly plays on Blakeston's position within the industry, showing how significant his insider insight was to POOL's books, as well as throughout *Close Up.*

POOL Films

Blakeston's technical knowledge of film was employed in *Close Up*, POOL books and POOL films. He directed the short film *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside* in 1929, which was announced in *Close Up* in June as 'a new POOL satire by Oswell Blakeston'.[774] The German actor Sybille Schmitz appeared in the film, as did H.D., Bryher and Macpherson (although Macpherson's sequence may have been cut).[775] Blakeston describes the motivation behind his film: 'to show film criticism in a film (to prick the vogue of using symbols superficially alike to express an abstract idea, etc.)', as 'a visual commentary on some of the absurd pretensions of high-brow film criticism of the time'.[776] Blakeston's parody of high-brow technique is also demonstrated by Hugh Ross-Williamson, describing it as 'the first attempt to make a cinematograph criticism of cinema, which could take its place in news-reel theatres together with other visual translations of journalistic columns of print'.[777] This film introduces a playful element to POOL's production, which parallels Blakeston's criticism in *Close Up.* For example, he bemoans the oblique nature of Man Ray and Walter Ruttmann, writing: 'I do not say that the public would understand the "Emak Bakia" of Man Ray or the

[772] 'Advertisement for *Extra Passenger*', *Close Up,* 5.3 (September 1929), p. 270.
[773] 'Advertisement for *Extra Passenger*', *Close Up,* 7.1 (July 1930), p. 100.
[774] 'Films stills from *I Do Love to be Beside the Seaside* (1929)', *Close Up,* 4.6 (June 1929), p. 48.
[775] Blakeston writes to Norman Pearson Holmes with a description of *I Do Like To Be Beside The Seaside* with a still that shows H.D.: 'I made this short in Switzerland for Bryher's Pool (the imprint of "Close up", the books and such films as "Borderlines", etc.). It was released by Studio Films of Paris where Branerger (the Studio Film boss) handled all the avant-garde shorts, Man Ray, etc. […] Bryher, Kenneth and H.D. all appeared—although, if I remember rightly, the Kenneth sequence was cut.' See Austin, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Oswell Blakeston Collection 1927-1985, 'Letter from Oswell Blakeston to Norman Holmes Pearson October 16 1967', Box 3, Folder 7.
[776] Austin, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Oswell Blakeston Collection 1927-1985, 'Letter from Oswell Blakeston to Norman Holmes Pearson October 16 1967', Box 3, Folder 7; Oswell Blakeston quoted in Donald, Friedberg and Marcus (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 315-317 (p. 315).
[777] Hugh Ross-Williamson, 'The Cinema in 1933', *The Bookman,* 85.507 (December 1933), 163-165 (p. 163).

"Absolute Operas" of Ruttmann, but (and I say this at great risk of offending the highbrows) who does? These things are a cult'.[778]

Blakeston's archival correspondence with Bryher also reveals that he assisted with the production of *Borderline*. In February 1929 Blakeston sourced equipment for *Borderline*, and organised its shipment from London to Territet, informing Bryher of his choices: 'the N & S'; 'I am getting a K3 and K2 filter, as I believe they will both be necessary'). He also placed orders at Gaumont Film Company to produce reflectors to use during shooting, advising Bryher on what brand of make-up to use on actors, recommending 'Panchro foundation'. *Borderline* was a collaborative effort, yet Blakeston's role behind the scenes in London has not been acknowledged. Blakeston's technical knowledge was integral to the planning of the production. His letters also locate him in Territet for the filming of *Borderline*, too. Blakeston writes to Bryher in late February 1929 with his travel plans, stating: 'I shall set out on the 8th […] I am getting terribly excited, but dreadfully nervous at the thought of being one Low-brow amongst three High-brows'.[779] Blakeston's depiction of himself as an anxious 'Low-brow' in relation to POOL as 'High-brows' provides further insight into the POOL group's dynamics: how Blakeston saw—or perhaps presented—himself in relation to Bryher, H.D. and Macpherson.[780]

From Hasslacher to Blakeston

Somewhere along the way, Blakeston dropped his birth name, Henry Hasslacher, completely. His pseudonym was pieced together from Osbert Sitwell's name, who he admired, (borrowing *Os* and *well* for his first name) and adapting his surname from his mother's maiden name, Eleanor Lelia Marie Blakiston.[781] He went by Henry Hasslacher at Gaumont, as evidenced by David Lean's autobiographical account working with him in the studios.[782] Oswell Blakeston seems to be a penname specifically crafted for his work for *Close Up*, where he signs off his first letter to Bryher in July 1927 using both, with a handwritten signature for Hasslacher, with Blakeston typed underneath in brackets. Hasslacher is nowhere to be seen in his public productions, writing for *Close Up*, POOL's

[778] Blakeston, 'An Epic – Please!', p. 64.
[779] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Henry Hasslacher to Bryher, Feb 22nd 1929. Box 3, Folder 118.
[780] Ibid.
[781] Buckman, 'Obituary: Max Chapman'.
[782] Phillips, *The Life and Films of David Lean*, p. 18.

book or films, published exclusively under Oswell Blakeston, whilst he continued to sign his letters to Bryher using his birthname. Lean's reflections explicitly outline the divide between Blakeston's personas: 'Henry Hasslacher, who wrote film criticism for the highbrow film journal *Close-Up* in his spare time under the pseudonym Oswell Blakeston'.[783] This dissonance between his public by-line and his private birthname can be partly explained by his 'essential' wish that he outlined in his first pitch to Bryher, which was to obscure his connection to Gaumont to preserve the firm's anonymity, 'for the sake of frankness'.[784] Elsewhere, Paul Rotha had been fired from his post at British International Pictures Limited, after writing critically about their 'lack of creative opportunities' in an article for *Film Weekly* in 1928.[785] Indeed, Blakeston's penname preserved his anonymity, as his articles for *Close Up* rarely painted Gaumont in a positive light, writing that British film studios have 'no organization, no centralization, no efficiency'.[786] His pseudonym is ostensibly, then, a protective measure. However, I suggest that this shift also signifies the extent to which he was immersed within POOL, demonstrating his professional move from Gaumont and industry to the group's creative network: from Gaumont's Hasslacher to POOL's Blakeston.

The last trace of Hasslacher in his letters to Bryher appears in February 1929. This is the same letter where he plans his trip to Territet to see Bryher, H.D. and Macpherson. Before this, he consistently used his birthname in his correspondence and formally addressed her as 'Mrs Macpherson'.[787] At this point, he was creatively embedded in all of POOL's streams of production and was working his manuscript for *Extra Passenger*.[788] Although *Extra Passenger* incorporates many of the themes and inspiration from his film writing in *Through A Yellow Glass,* Townsend notes that the 'self-conscious cine-novel' represents an aesthetic departure from his trade pieces, where Blakeston becomes 'a

[783] Ibid. p. 18.
[784] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from H. Hasslacher (Oswell Blakeston) to Bryher July 7 1927. Box 3, Folder 118.
[785] Paul Rotha, *A Survey of World Cinema* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1949), p. 21; Herbert G. Luft, 'Rotha and the World', *The Quarterly of Film Radio and Television,* 10.1 (Autumn 1955), 89-99 (p. 90). Thank you to Martin Stollery for bringing this fact to my attention.
[786] Blakeston, 'British Solecisms', p. 21.
[787] See early letters in Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML. Box 3, Folder 118.
[788] In January 1929, Blakeston writes to Macpherson confirming the receipt of the film negatives from *I Do Like To Be Beside The Seaside:* 'Thank you so much for the Seaside negatives'. This indicates that the film was filmed in late 1928. Blakeston writes to Bryher in on 8th May 1929 that the proofs of *Extra Passenger* are at the 'Close-up office'. See Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Box 3, Folder 118.

different sort of writer'.[789] A strong friendship was crystallising between Blakeston and Bryher. Having corresponded since July 1927, they met in-person in 1928.[790] After his trip to Territet to assist with *Borderline*, where he stayed with the 'three High-brows', his Hasslacher persona disappeared and he wholly adopts Blakeston in both his professional and private life, at the same time leaving The Gaumont Company.[791] He took to signing 'O.B.' in his letters to Bryher and instead of addressing her officially 'Mrs Macpherson', started playfully writing to her as 'Dear Supervisor'; a practice he would continue for the rest of his life.[792] In 1931, he became *Close Up*'s assistant editor, following which the journal's format changed dramatically: the pages and typesetting looked glossier, the film stills integrated more stylistically and French and German translations for film captions were included.

Leaving London in February 1929 as Henry Hasslacher and returning as 'O.B.', Blakeston's adoption of a pseudonym signals a meaningful reinvention. As with other POOL members, names were significant, illustrated by H.D. writing in *HERmione*, '[n]ames are in people, people are in names', stressing the connection between names and identity.[793] Blakeston is protective of his POOL name, which was often misspelt as Oswald, Blackston or Blakistone.[794] Novick writes 'he looked up and saw they'd spelt his name wrong: he knew it was the pattern of life', and he corrects letters that mistype his name, on one occasion writing: 'Please don't think me too much of a bastard if I say that I'm a little

[789] Townsend, 'A Deeper, Wider POOL: Reading *Close Up* through the Archives of its Contributors'.
[790] Bryher wrote to Blakeston confirming when they met: 'I woke up this morning thinking "why, it's FORTY years since I First met O.B." Close Up started in 1927 and though you corresponded with us, I think we did not meet till 1928. And it is now 1968.' See correspondence in: Austin, The Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Oswell Blakeston Collation 1927-1985, Letter from Bryher to Oswell Blakeston, 1968. Box 1, Folder 3.
[791] See Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Henry Hasslacher to Bryher, Feb 22nd 1929. Box 3, Folder 118.
[792] See Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from H. Hasslacher (Oswell Blakeston) to Bryher May 8th 1929. Box 3, Folder 118.
[793] Bryher, *The Heart To Artemis*, p. 301; H.D., *HERmione* (New York: New Directions, 1981), p. 5, p. 128.
[794] This misspelling occurs throughout his life and in contemporary criticism. For example, The Film Society's Programme credits *Light Rhythms* to Oswald Blakeston and Francis Bruguière, see *The Film Society Programmes, 1925-1939* (New York: Arno Press, 1972); an advert in *Life and Letters To-Day*, see *Life and Letters and the London Mercury*, vol. 19-20 (London: Brendin, 1967), p. 125; in *The Fortnightly Review*, vol. 136 (1931), p. 260; Walter Summers, 'No! Mr. Blakeston', *Sight and Sound,* 17.65 (Spring, 1948), p. 15; Huntly Carter, *The New Spirit in the Cinema* (London, Harold Shaylor, 1930), p. 283, p. 286-8. For references to Oswald Blakeston in recent criticism, see: Connor, p. 22; Michael O'Pray, *Avant-Garde Film: Forms, Themes, and Passions* (London and New York: Wallflower, 2003), p. 41; Malte Hagener, *Moving Forward, Looking Back: The European Avant-Garde and the Invention of Film Culture 1919-1939* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 200&), p. 44; Schlun, p. viii, p. vii, p. 252, p. 369.

shaken that you think my name is Oswald. But that's trivial of me.'[795] Although he uses the name 'Simon' for his collaboration with Roger Burford and he may have operated under the alias 'Mercurius' to review films for *The Architectural Review,* Oswell Blakeston is used throughout the rest of his life.[796]

The Expanding Ripples of Blakeston's Career

Blakeston's creative experimentation with POOL led to further collaborations within the group's expanded networks and beyond. He worked with the American photographer Francis Bruguiére, whose photography had been featured on the dust cover for *Extra Passenger,* on the short abstract film *Light Rhythms* (1930). Dusinberre explains how the film's rhythmic patterning was achieved using 'static designs in cut paper over which various intensities of light were moved', experimenting with the narratological capacity of light.[797] *Light Rhythms* was self-funded by Blakeston and was enthusiastically advertised and discussed in *Close Up*. Blakeston details how the film was made using 'navel ciné camera' bought in a 'junk shop for a couple of pounds' in an article for *Close Up* and four stills were included over the course of two issues.[798] Blakeston and Bruguiére collaborated again in 1931, on the short story collection *Few Are Chosen* which was funded by the

[795] Novick, p. 8. Austin, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Oswell Blakeston Collection 1927-1985, 'Letter from Oswell Blakeston to Mrs. Duval, December 9, 1971', Box 3, Folder 8.

[796] Blakeston and Roger Burford wrote a series of crime thrillers together. These are: Simon, *Murder Among Friends* (London: Wishart, 1933), which also had a cover by Bruguière; Simon, *Death on the Swim* (London: Wishart, 1934), which had a cover designed by Paul Rotha; Simon, *The Cat with the Moustache* (London: Wishart, 1935), which was reprinted in paperback as *The Mystery of the Hypnotic Room* (London: Curtis Warren, 1949). Blakeston appears as a character in *The Mystery of the Hypnotic Room* who is robbed. The four books vaguely follow the cases of the fictional Superintendent Deering. Further stories by "Simon" were published in John Gawsworth's anthologies written solely by Blakeston without Burford's collaboration. These are: 'The Flying Worm' (pp. 479-491) and 'Borderlines' (pp. 703-715) in John Gawsworth (eds), *Masterpiece of Thrills* (London: Daily Express, 1935); 'Death for the Gander' (pp. 458-461) and 'The Disappearance' (pp. 533-539) in John Gawsworth (eds), *Crimes, Creeps and Thrills* (London: Samuel, 1936). There is an air of mystery surrounding Mercurius's identity: Marcus draws attention to the favourable reviews of *Close Up* written by the anonymous film critic Mercurius, questioning the relationship between Mercurius and Blakeston, who took over Mercurius's column in 1931 (Marcus, *The Tenth Muse,* p. 320). Cosandey stated that Mercurius was the pseudonym of James Burford, who was Roger Burford's brother, contributor to *Close Up* and Blakeston's collaborator (Cosandey, p. 79), a view that is shared by Dusinberre, who interviewed Blakeston (Dusinberre, p. 47). Marcus writes that '[w]hen I contacted the *Architectural Review,* I was told that no archive existed, but a note was found which referred to 'Mercurius' as the pseudonym of Oswell Blakeston, itself the pseudonym of Henry Hasslacher. It is, however, true that the style of the 'Mercurius' articles does not seem to tally with that of Blakeston' (Marcus, p. 493-4).

[797] Dusinberre, p. 68.

[798] Oswell Blakeston, 'Light Rhythms', *Close Up,* 6.3 (March 1930), pp. 225-227 (p. 227). The films stills appear in March and April 1930.

lexicographer Eric Partridge. Blakeston's collaborations with Bruguiére all play with light, affect and perception, to see how they can be used to represent meaning in modernist literature and on the screen.

Blakeston started to write prolifically for other periodicals and publications, which demonstrates Townsend's analysis of Blakeston's reciprocal model of collaboration within *Close Up*, which utilised Blakeston's first-hand industry expertise and, in return, provided access to POOL's various connections like Bruguiére, forming the foundations of his eclectic career.[799] Indeed, from the early 1930s Blakeston contributed film criticism to B. Vivian Braun's journal *Film Art*, *The Architectural Review*, *The Bookman* and *The Sackbut.* He also published the long poem *Death While Swimming* (1932) and his short story *Magic Aftermath* (1932). *Death While Swimming* was published by an Indian medical doctor K. S. Bhat.[800] Bhat produced his own little magazine, *Soma*, in which Blakeston's short stories appeared, which was reviewed favourably in *Close Up*.[801] *Death While Swimming* was illustrated by the New Zealand artist Len Lye, and one of the drawings was included in *Close Up* alongside a favourable review by Blakeston's friend and collaborator, Burford.[802] *Magic Aftermath* was funded by the printer and writer Herbert Jones, who co-edited the journal *Seed* alongside Blakeston.[803] *Seed* was advertised repeatedly in the pages of *Close Up*, as 'a paper of growth' which also featured Bryher, H.D., Herring, Burford, Lye and Bruguière.[804] Blakeston wrote to Bryher in November 1932 proposing: 'Do you think Close Up would care to exchange an advertisement with Seed (first number in January) in the December issue?'[805] Indeed, *Close Up's* December 1932 issue shows a large advert for *Seed*

[799] Christopher Townsend, 'A Deeper, Wider POOL: Reading *Close Up* Through the Archives of its Contributors'.
[800] See Oswell Blakeston, 'Retrospect 12: Soma', *Ambit,* no.20 (1964), pp. 23-26. Bhat funded experimental British literary projects to send back to friends living in India. Blakeston remembers, Bhat would offer free medical treatment to those in deprived London neighbourhoods, having moved to England to learn 'the latest medical techniques' to bring back to India, and wanted to do the same with 'the creative work he liked best in the English literary scene' (p. 23).
[801] Richardson wrote: 'Readers of *Close Up* are seekers of discriminating entertainment and should be interested to hear of the production of the fourth number of *Soma'.* See: Dorothy Richardson, 'Comment and Review: Periodicals', *Close Up,* 10.3 (September 1933), pp. 294-296 (p. 294).
[802] 'Design by Len Lye for Oswell Blakeston's book of poems, "Death While Swimming"', *Close Up,* 10.2 (June 1933), p. 137; Roger Burford, 'Book Reviews', *Close Up,* 10.2 (June 1933), pp. 205-207.
[803] *Seed* ran for two issues in 1933. For more information, see: Oswell Blakeston, 'Retrospect 9: Seed', *Ambit,* no. 16 (1963), pp. 18-21.
[804] 'Comment and Review', *Close Up,* 10.1 (March 1933), p. 90; 'Advertisement for *Seed', Close Up,* 10.1 (March 1933), p. 105; 'Advertisement for *Seed', Close Up,* 10.2 (June 1933), p. 222.
[805] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Oswell Blakeston to Bryher Thursday November 3rd 1932. Box 3, Folder 120.

on its back cover, and letters show Bryher's interest in the new magazine, with Blakeston writing: 'Supervisor, thank you so much for asking for more Seed copies: it is so good of you to be interested'.[806] As with many modernist projects, POOL's outputs and these independent projects were all part of a web of independent production, operating through lines of friendship, connection and Bryher's patronage.[807] Blakeston's creative activity demonstrates how these various independent modes of production were connected to and propelled by one another. Adverts and reviews appeared in *Close Up,* friends and collaborators worked on different projects that engaged with shared thematic currents, highlighting the productive slippages and crossovers that occurred in the POOL group's wider networks during the 1920s and 1930s, in which Blakeston played a significant part.

After *Close Up* ceased production, Blakeston continued to write film criticism and reviews, and published poetry, prose, popular fiction, film criticism, articles on art, cookbooks and travel guides, amounting to 15 fictional novels and 10 collections of poetry.[808] His poems appeared in *Caravel, Delta, The Literary Review, Programme, New Oxford Outlook, The Twentieth Century, Phoebus Calling, The New English Weekly, Life and Letters To-Day, The Westminster Magazine, New Vision, Ambit, Jeremy, Onion,* Nancy Cunard's edited anthology *Poems for France* (1944) and Helen Neville and Harry Roskolenko's collection *The Exiles' Anthology* (1940). Articles on art appeared in *Ambit, Arts Review, John O' London's Weekly, Time and Tide* and *What's On In London.* Blakeston and Burford's co-wrote articles and books together under the name 'Simon', which was a

[806] 'Advertisement for *Seed*', *Close Up,* 9.4 (December 1932); Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Oswell Blakeston to Bryher Jan 19th 1933. Box 3, Folder 121.

[807] There are many studies that look at modernist projects and communities. See *Modernist Group Dynamics: The Politics and Poetics of Friendship* and Wolfe for reflections on groups of friendships, modernist productions, and the circulation of ideas. For an exploration of communities of women in interwar Paris and their contributions to modernist projects like *The Little Review* and the publication of *Ulysses,* see Souhami; for an account of the friendships that Peggy Guggenheim fostered through stays at Hayford Hall in 1932 and 1933, and how this formed a specific lived modernist aesthetic, see Sandra M. Chait, *Hayford Hall: Hangovers, Erotics and Modernist Aesthetics* (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005); for a study of masculine intimacies and artistic collaboration, see Sarah Cole, *Modernism, Male Friendship, and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and Wayne Koestenbaun, *Double Talk: The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

[808] Blakeston's later fictional works are: *Jim's Gun* (1939), *Danger in Provence* (1946), *Priests, Peters and Pussens* (1947), *Boys in Their Ruin* (1949), *Pink Ribbon, as Told to the Police* (1950), *Hop Thief* (1959), *The Night's Moves* (1961), *The Queen's Mate* (1962), *Fingers* (1964), *For Crying Out Shroud* (1969), *Ever Singing Die, Oh! Die* (1970), and *Pass the Poison Separately* (1976). Blakeston's poetry was published across a number of different volumes: *Poems, a Single Word!* (1930), Oswell Blakeston *(1956), What the Dino-saur* (1969), *The Greatest Romantic Poem in the World* (1963), *How to Make Your Own Confetti* (1965), *The Furious Futures Dying* (1967), *Jeremy & Others* (1971), *Some Essential Information* (1975), *Journies End in Young Man's Meeting* (1979), the anthology *Proems* (1938), *Appointment with Seven* (1947), and *Puppet Dreams* (1976).

collaborative practice started in the later issues of *Close Up:* they published articles like 'The Poet As Specialist' for *New Oxford Outlook* and four crime thrillers.[809] Blakeston also published detective fiction under his own name, and wrote short horror and suspense stories that appeared in John Gawsworth's anthologies: *Crimes, Creeps and Thrills* (1935), *Masterpiece of Thrills* (1936) and *Thrills, Crimes and Mysteries* (1936). He also wrote four travel books, three cookbooks, four further books on film and photography, and two non-fiction books on animals.[810] Blakeston worked ceaselessly throughout his life to support himself and provide for his partner, Max Chapman. A worried letter from Herring to Bryher in 1948 suggests Blakeston's writing brought in most of the couple's funds:

> I think Max and others of O.B.'s circle love him and admire him for his principles and his moral strength (he really has got that). But they let him go out and buy the kippers, as well as sell his Mss[manuscripts], and then he has to come back and cook the kippers [that] he has bought by selling his Mss, and then write some more. And I think there is a moment when one says to hell with principles, lets do some washing up to help you. So I told O.B. not to get tired.[811]

Despite Herring's concerns, Blakeston and Chapman's relationship appears to have been characterised by a happy creative collaboration. David Buckman, who interviewed Chapman in 1994, described meeting Blakeston as a 'defining event in Max Chapman's life', when they were 'inseparable' until Blakeston's death in 1985.[812] Chapman contributed poems and illustrations to Blakeston's 1947 anthology *Appointment with Seven,* and travelled widely for Blakeston's travel books, where Chapman would provide the photographs.[813] The two lived between London and Cornwall, where Ian Massey situates Blakeston and Chapman in the queer artistic scene of St Ives. Indeed, Blakeston increasingly turned to painting in his later life, where both Blakeston and Chapman

[809] Blakeston and Burford's co-written articles for *Close Up* were 'Plots in Our Time' in December 1932 and 'Reality Isn't True' in March 1933. Their 'Simon novels' are: *Murder Among Friends* (1933), *Death on the Swim* (1934), *The Cat with the Moustache* (1935) and *The Mystery of the Hypnotic Room* (1949).
[810] Inspired by his travels with his partner Max Chapman, his travel books are: *Portuguese Panorama* (1955), *Isle of St. Helena* (1957), *Sun at Midnight* (1958) that recounts his trip to Finland, and *Thank You Now: an exploration of Ulster* (1960). His guides to film and photography, following on from POOL's *Through A Yellow Glass* are: *Cruising with a Camera* (1939, written with F. W. Frerk), *Phototips on cats and Dogs* (1938, co-written with Edwin Smith), his edited collection *Working for the Films* (1947), and *How to Script Amateur Films* (1949). He wrote the cookbooks: *Edwardian Glamour Cooking Without Tears* (1960), *A Surprise in Every Dinner* (1968) and *Cooking With Nuts* (1979). His zoological books are: *Working Cats* (1963) and *Zoo Keeps Who?* (1964).
[811] Bryher Papers. General Collection, BRBML, Letter from Robert Herring to Bryher, 24th October 1948. Box 20, Folder 760.
[812] Buckman, 'Obituary: Max Chapman'.
[813] Ibid.

presented their paintings in exhibitions.[814] For Blakeston, this amounted to almost 100 mixed shows, over 40 solo exhibitions, and one shared exhibition between him and Chapman, which was shown at the Middlesbrough Art Gallery in 1981, which was titled 'Lovers'.[815]

Locating Blakeston's Presence within Criticism on the POOL Group

Aside from a brief few paragraphs in Buckman's *Artists in Britain Since 1945*, there remains no full biography of Blakeston.[816] He is a difficult figure to categorise—Blakeston writes himself that he 'has struggled to avoid a label' throughout his career.[817] This is partly due to a ranging career, where his outputs are as diverse as they are prolific. An editorial introduction in *The Bookman* from Hugh Ross-Williamson acknowledges Blakeston's evasiveness:

> It is difficult to write anything about Oswell Blakeston, [...] Yesterday he was working in movies and founding a film society for the London proletarian, and to-day he is writing personally involved poems. He has composed a two movement sonatina for the organ, has designed book jackets, writes art criticism and (under a pseudonym) articles on comparative religion. [...] This list may give the reader some idea of the not inconsiderable achievement of a young artist still in his twenties.[818]

Blakeston's artistic practice resists classification. When Blakeston is mentioned, he is usually cited in relation to his film criticism, his work on *Close Up* and his collaboration with Francis Bruguière on *Light Rhythms.*[819] However, there is a growing interest in other elements of Blakeston's life. For example, Martin Stollery has explored Blakeston's travel writing between 1955-1960, identifying a radical style of queer tourism that advocated for ethical encounters of friendship.[820] Peter Noble credits Blakeston with informing his

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[814] Ian Massey, *Queer St Ives and Other Stories* (London: Ridinghouse, 2022), p. 18.
[815] Buckman, 'Oswell Blakeston', p. 151; Buckman, 'Obituary: Max Chapman'.
[816] Buckman; Ian Massey, 'Max Chapman and Oswell Blakeston: the Life of an Artistic Couple', *Art UK* (October 2016) < https://artuk.org/discover/stories/max-chapman-and-oswell-blakeston-the-life-of-an-artistic-couple> [accessed 14 February 2022]
[817] Austin, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Oswell Blakeston Collection 1927-1985, 'Letter from Oswell Blakeston to Paul Ferris, 14 March 1975'. Box 3, Folder 8.
[818] Ross-Williamson, p. 163.
[819] For examples that mention his involvement with *Close Up* or collaboration with Francis Bruguière on *Light Rhythms*, see Low, *The History of the British Film: 1918-1929,* p. 24-26; Marcus, *The Tenth Muse;* Donald, Marcus and Friedberg, *Close Up 1927-1933;* David Curtis, *A History of Artists' Film and Video in Britain* (London: BFI, 2007), pp. 20-23; Jan-Christopher Horak, 'The First American Film Avant-Garde 1919-1945', in *Lovers of Cinema: The First American Film Avant-Garde, 1919-1945,* ed. by Jan-Christopher Horak (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), pp. 14-67 (p. 44, p. 56-57).
[820] Martin Stollery, 'Oswell Blakeston's Queer Travels', article forthcoming. Many thanks to Martin for sharing an early draft.

biography of the Austrian-American director Erich von Stroheim; Nathalie Blondel, Gillian Hanscombe and Virginia L. Smyers cite Blakeston as an admirer, friend and advocate for the writer Mary Butts; Paul Ferris references Blakeston in reference to Dylan Thomas's homosexual encounters; Ian Massey has written about Blakeston and Chapman's paintings and shared artistic lives; and Inga Fraser has recently presented a talk at the Paul Mellon Centre exploring Blakeston's post-war visual practice.[821]

Similar issues surrounding Herring's critical position within POOL arise within studies that cite Blakeston. Troxell, Cosandey and Schlun see both Herring and Blakeston as 'de facto members' or '[a]dditional members' of POOL.[822] Most often, his roles as assistant editor and as a 'staple contributor' are highlighted.[823] However, as with Herring, recent work by Townsend and Nikolova has revealed Blakeston's crucial involvement in *Close Up*'s dialogue with popular culture.[824] Blakeston's role in both wider modernist and micromodernist networks have been explored, where Brown tracks the disillusioned cinéaste culture at Gaumont; Kane looks at the large, interconnected social networks that form *Seed, Life and Letters To-Day* and *Close Up;* and Tim Armstrong uses *Proems,* which Blakeston appeared in, to help define the localist or micromodernist movements of the 1930s, which are structured around local sites, occasions and trajectories.[825] This work gestures to the different aspects of Blakeston's lively career and his significant involvement in the POOL group, much of which is yet to be explored.

The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to analysing Blakeston's labelled POOL works and fictional texts produced during his productive engagement with *Close Up,* along with his involvement in the POOL group's network of intimacy and collaboration. The only

[821] Peter Noble, *Hollywood Scapegoat: The Biography of Erich Von Stroheim* (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1972); Nathalie Blondel, *Mary Butts: Scenes From The Life: A Biography* (New York: Kingston, 1998), p. 309, p. 336; Hanscombe and Smyers, p. 134, p. 271; Ferris, pp. 129-130; Massey, 'Max Chapman and Oswell Blakeston: the life of an artistic couple'; for information on Inga Fraser's talk, see: 'Liquid Crystal Concrete: Experimental Modes of Making', *Paul Mellon Centre* < https://www.paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk/whats-on/forthcoming/experimental-modes-making> [accessed 1 June 22]

[822] Troxell, 'Shock and Contemplation: "Close Up" and the Female Avant-Garde', p. 24; Schlun, p. 5; Cosandey, p. 58.

[823] Donald, Friedberg and Marcus, p. 25; Marcus, *The Tenth Muse,* pp. 318-321; Dusinberre, p. 68

[824] Townsend, 'A Deeper, Wider POOL: Reading *Close Up* Through the Archives of its Contributors'; Nikolova and Townsend, p. 182.

[825] Geoff Brown, 'Life Among the Rats: The *Cinéaste*-Writer in British Film Studios, 1926-1936', *Journal of British Cinema and Television,* 5.2 (2009), 242-261 (p. 242); Kane, 'The Little Magazine in Britain: Networks, communities, and Dialogues (1900-1945)', pp. 263-323; Tim Armstrong, 'Micromodernism: Towards a Modernism of Disconnection', in *Moving Modernisms: Motion, Technology, and Modernity,* ed. by David Bradshaw, Laura Marcus and Rebecca Roach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 27-42 (pp. 29-30).

study of Blakeston's fiction is Schlun's useful reading of *Extra Passenger,* which highlights its cinematic writing style and its depiction of the film industry as 'derisory', and its hopeful movement toward what film 'could and should be'.[826] Cinema's bleak and the beautiful aspects are often bound up together within Blakeston's fiction, which also imagines not just what film 'could and should' look like, but what broader relationship with a changing world might feel like.[827]

Life Inside the Studios: *Through A Yellow Glass* and *Extra Passenger*

Extra Passenger and *Through A Yellow Glass* both offer something quite unique to POOL. Although the group was fascinated by cinema and its possibilities to depict the world around them, Blakeston was the only significant member who was privy to the inner workings of a commercial film studio. Whereas Bryher, H.D., Macpherson and Herring all wrote about cinema, demanding filmmakers to 'get the medium developed so far as to be FIT for art', and disparaging the 'compromise' between the business manager and the artist that they saw in commercial British film, Blakeston witnessed the 'compromise' take place on set.[828] In *Extra Passenger,* Donald sees several different compromises occur when he starts work at Milky-Way as an 'assistant-assistant director', a job he only got as he failed to find success as a writer, being told it is 'the only art medium that pays'.[829] These compromises are typically characterised by 'sheer incapacity', where those in charge 'waste thousands' of pounds yet 'begrudge the extra pence which might make a sequence passable'.[830] They are scattered throughout *Through A Yellow Glass,* too, where the narrator of the curiously embodied and 'unofficial' guidebook states '[q]uite a number of people are wallowing in a far more wilful distortion' of what studio life is like.[831] These books are an integral part of POOL's production, providing members of the group and their wider readership with autobiographical insights into 'back-stage stuff about the studios'.[832]

In this sense, *Extra Passenger* and *Through A Yellow Glass* beat in the same vein as Blakeston's writing for *Close Up.* Cosandey describes *Through A Yellow Glass* as an

[826] Schlun, p. 255.
[827] Ibid.
[828] Macpherson, 'As Is', *Close Up* (July 1927), p. 6.
[829] Blakeston, *Extra Passenger,* p. 154, p. 129
[830] Ibid., p. 131.
[831] Blakeston, *Through A Yellow Glass,* p. 10.
[832] Blakeston, 'Retrospect 14: Close Up', p. 38.

'expanded form' of Blakeston's 'introductory articles'.[833] Indeed, *Through A Yellow Glass* was a direct manifestation of *Close Up,* as Blakeston writes in his preface: 'This book owes its conception to an article by Mr. Kenneth Macpherson in *Close Up.* I hope he will not be too disappointed'.[834] Although Blakeston does not provide the exact article that inspired his work, it was most likely Macpherson's expressed belief that 'the hope of the cinema lies with the amateur', which *Through A Yellow Glass* directly answers, by supplying the 'uninitiated' with extensive technical information in the form of an oddly embodied tour of a British film studio.[835]

An early extract of *Through A Yellow Glass* also appears in *Close Up*'s December 1927 issue, ahead of the book's publication the following year. This was a skeletal version of what would become Blakeston's chapter on "Lights", conveying the same playful tone and direct address and detailing various types of set lights and their uses.[836] It expands on the core themes within *Close Up*: its educational impulses and amateur ethos. Both Blakeston's early *Close Up* issue and *Through A Yellow Glass* stress the ideas of play and practice, where he invites the reader to 'Come, experiment', offering a 'preliminary exercise' for them to contemplate.[837] Complex technical information is bracketed within Blakeston's playful tone along with gentle encouragement, writing explicitly for the 'beginner'.[838] Blakeston sets out his intentions:

> I propose to show them, as graphically as I can, the inside of a studio. To conduct them round each of the departments and explain everything to them clearly and concisely. They will be able afterwards to talk with confidence, across the dinner-table. They will be able to thrill the uninitiated with awe-inspiring technicalities. [...] I dedicate this book to those excellent persons who are beginning to make films for themselves. It needs enterprise and courage. I hope I may be able to clear up for them many doubtful points.[839]

Blakeston expresses his explicit faith in amateur filmmakers whilst attempting to caution any 'deluded creatures' wishing to enter the commercial industry who might be 'misled by

[833] Cosandey, p. 49.
[834] Blakeston, *Through A Yellow Glass,* p. 7.
[835] Macpherson, 'As Is' (July 1927), p. 14.; Blakeston, *Through A Yellow Glass,* p. 9.
[836] Oswell Blakeston, 'From A Work In Progress: "Through A Blue Glass"', *Close Up,* 1.6 (December 1927), pp. 38-48.
[837] Blakeston, *Through A Yellow Glass,* p. 58, p. 62; Oswell Blakeston, 'From A Work In Progress: "Through A Blue Glass"', p. 43.
[838] Blakeston, *Through A Yellow Glass,* p. 9
[839] Ibid.

the word "studio"'.[840] There is a clear demarcation for Blakeston between film art and his contemporary commercial studio practice, which is 'run strictly on business lines'. [841]

Playful critiques of this studio practice are scattered throughout *Through A Yellow Glass* where, for example, the tour stumbles upon a negligent scenario editor who is found 'kicking a photo-play across the floor to make it look "read"', rather than just opening the book.[842] These quips are indicative of the wider issues that Blakeston experienced in commercial British film studios, where he writes in *Close Up* that '[m]ost British producing companies are in a state of chaos. There is no organization, no categorization, no efficiency'.[843]

Blakeston's narration furthers this critique. The narrator shares a steady stream of technical information, however there are small snags of unreliability that draw attention to the chaotic industry they represent. The narrator admits they are 'trusting to a not over-reliable memory' and a questionable sense of direction: 'I am in a quandary. I hardly know where to find the scenario department, it is so volatile!'[844] The narrator supplies outdated information. Following a protracted scene where make-up is carefully applied to the reader's face, they remark it 'may soon be a thing of the past' thanks to new 'panchromatic film and incandescent lighting' outdating the need for grease paint.[845] Instead of an omniscient narrator, the unreliable tour guide lightly satirises the disorganised system being depicted.

The chaos of commercial film practice is also distilled in *Extra Passenger.* Donald's desire to be an artist is sunk by The Milky-Way Company: where '[b]lindly Donald had persisted. So strongly he felt that there was no other life for him; the impossible or nothing'.[846] Schlun suggests that Blakeston's protagonist, Donald Firbank, may be a play on the Hollywood silent film actor Douglas Fairbanks.[847] Instead, I contend that Donald is a cipher for Blakeston's autobiographical experiences at The Gaumont Company, where he worked in the 1920s. Donald works under Basil Marrine, who embodies much of Blakeston's distaste with the industry. Basil's command on set is 'soft', he runs behind schedule and

[840] Ibid, p. 9, p. 10
[841] Ibid., p. 10
[842] Ibid., p. 39.
[843] Blakeston, 'British Solecisms', p. 21.
[844] Blakeston, *Through A Yellow Glass,* p. 18.
[845] Ibid., 17.
[846] Blakeston, *Extra Passenger,* p. 132.
[847] Schlun, p. 253.

ignores the flat camera-trolley tyres, the cameraman's drunkenness—'reeking of drink' and 'not in a fit condition to do work any more'—as the shoot 'can't afford to wait. Take it as it is'.[848] The book culminates in a near-death submarine accident on set. Basil sends Donald and an assistant, Joan, down to the bottom of the sea for a film sequence, and they become stuck. With Donald trapped underwater and possibly dead, the focalisation shifts to Basil, who oscillates between fear, guilt, remorse and spite, he is 'SOFT. He lived to coat himself with comfort as the soft flesh of the mollusc is protected by the shell. Forget about those under the sea!' [849] Abjectly aligned with a snail, Basil's careless approach to filmmaking and his coldblooded reaction demonstrates the faults that Blakeston sees in commercial cinema practice. The submarine sequences may have been inspired by Blakeston's experience working on *Sailors Don't Care*, a Gaumont film released in January 1928 about sinking ships that credits Basil Emmott as the cinematographer, who I suggest *Extra Passenger*'s Basil draws from, although there are no tales about crew members trapped underwater from the production.[850]

The submarine scene is representative of the sinking ship of the British film industry. Even though Basil had 'misgivings' about hiring the submarine from a 'private owner' whose 'crew was not very experienced'. The owner is 'a friend of Basil's; indeed the sequence had been written in, solely on this account'.[851] Donald and Joan, then, are trapped on the basis of an unnecessary and poorly organised whim. Donald and his hopes for the '[i]nfinite possibilities' for film are sent to the 'bottom of the sea', suffocating under the weight of a chaotic and careless industry.[852]

Blakeston's sunken submarine and *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*'s 'rotten system' speak to the same overarching concerns about cinema and its future.[853] Marcus suggests that the declining state of British film in the mid-1920s, recognised by the 1927 Cinematograph Act which was passed to rectify this, was partly due to the global dominance of the American film industry and their practice of blind and block booking films, where by 1926 only 5% of films shown in Britain were made in the country.[854] Blakeston derides this practice in

[848] Blakeston, *Extra Passenger,* p. 139, p. 142, p. 147, p. 145.
[849] Ibid. p. 203.
[850] *The British Film Catalogue: Fiction Film, 1895-1994*, 3rd edn, ed. by Denis Gifford, vol. 1 (New York: Routledge, 1973), p. 331.
[851] Blakeston, *Extra Passenger,* p. 194
[852] Ibid., p. 130, p. 198.
[853] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* p. 100.
[854] Marcus, *The Tenth Muse,* p. 239.

Through A Yellow Glass, explaining the 'evils of block booking' before playfully ending the chapter as if someone had swept in with an unseen booking: 'Oh! this block booking! But somebody seems to have got there before me!', mimicking the process on a textual level.[855] Blakeston also gestures to Hollywood's dominance in *Extra Passenger,* where the Milky-Way Company's astral association recall the star-system of Hollywood's Paramount Pictures logo. Donald's work is cast in the shadow of Hollywood's unseen presence: 'Blindly Donald had persisted. So strongly he felt that there was no other life for him; the impossible or nothing'.[856]

As with much of POOL's work, Blakeston's critique is undercut with optimism for what Donald feels are the 'infinite possibilities, of the screen'.[857] He does not die in the submarine, which allows for a tentative optimism that his dreams of film and its 'power to create, in dynamic and vital medium, to sweep crowds into ballet-like groups, to tell stories in dramatic rhythm, to create with the subtleties of light and space' might still be realised.[858] Blakeston's belief in the cinema's power to affect and move people is crucial to his concept of film art. These mirror Richardson's views on film expressed in *Close Up,* where 'sight alone is able to summon its companion faculties: given a sufficient level of concentration on the part of the spectator, a sufficient rousing of his collaborating creative consciousness'.[859] The embodied nature of cinema is a current that runs through work on POOL, where Abbie Garrington describes Richardson as the 'fairy godmother of the haptic' who anticipated contemporary theoretical attitudes to haptic film, where she sees both cinemagoing and reading as 'whole-body, haptically engaged act[s]'.[860] Blakeston's fascination with touch, visuality and sensation can be seen across his fiction, resonating with another of the POOL group's thematic interests.

Through A Yellow Glass begins with an intensely haptic episode. The book is often categorised as a survey of studio life, which obscures the more playful and experimental

[855] Blakeston, *Through A Yellow Glass,* p. 126.
[856] Blakeston, *Extra Passenger,* p. 132.
[857] Ibid., p. 131
[858] Ibid., p. 35.
[859] Dorothy Richardson, 'Continuous Performance: A Tear for Lycidas', *Close Up,* 7.3 (September 1930), pp. 196-202 (p. 199).
[860] Garrington, p. 142, p. 147.

aspects of the text.[861] Blakeston's core motivation is to 'show them [amateur filmmakers], as graphically as I can, the inside of the film studio'. The desire to show, rather than tell or explain, stresses the text's visual and embodied mode of perception. It recalls Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological way of engaging with the world:

> Phenomenological or existential philosophy is largely an expression of surprise at this inherence of the self in the world and in others, a description of this paradox and permeation, and an attempt to make us *see* the bond between subject and world, between subject and others, rather than to *explain* it[862]

The first chapter of *Through A Yellow Glass* proceeds through the tactile touch of the narrator, where the reader is taught how to apply studio make-up. Garrington defines the term haptic as encompassing the various experiences of:

> touch (the active or passive experience of the human skin, subcutaneous flesh, viscera, and related nerve-endings); kinaesthesis (the body's sense of its own movement); proprioception (the body's sense of its orientation in space); and the vestibular sense (that of balance, reliant upon the inner ear).[863]

Within the make-up room, Blakeston performs a haptic tour of the face, touching on all these elements. The passage unfolds through touch, where the narrator instructs: 'Pick up that pot of cold cream', 'smear it all over your face', and 'get up and admire your handiwork', which are all focused on orientating the body within the make-up room.[864] Tactile sensations overwhelm the writing, where the different textures of slippery grease, firm hands, thick cold cream and a rough towel are all instructed to be used, where the direct address reaches out the reader, as if to pull them in. The narrator moves with microscopic focus from feature to feature, performing a haptic tour of the face: first, 'pores of your skin' are examined to check they are 'now filled' thanks to the 'paints, powders, hare's feet, or nose paste'.[865] From the skin, the narrator moves to the teeth, the arch of the eyebrows, the 'perfect bow' of painted lips, the chin, hands, hairline, then back to the eyes: 'don't forget that practically everything depends on your eyes'.[866] The tactile caress and the physical closeness of the face-to-face examination creates an embodied gaze that

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[861] An advert for *Through A Yellow Glass* in *Close Up* describes it as an 'exhaustive survey of the whole field of cinematography' ('Advert for *Through A Yellow Glass*') and Donald, Marcus and Friedberg also describe the book as 'a survey of lighting and camera terminology and styles of cinematograph'. See *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism,* p. 315.

[862] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'The Film and the New Psychology', *Sense and Non-Sense,* trans. and ed. by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston, IL: North-Western University Press, 1964), p. 58.

[863] Garrington, p. 16.

[864] Blakeston, *Through A Yellow Glass,* p. 12, p. 15.

[865] Blakeston, *Through A Yellow Glass,* p. 12.

[866] Blakeston, *Through A Yellow Glass,* pp. 12-15.

establishes Blakeston's interest in the body and its relationship to visual spectacle, that resonates with Richardson's interest in cinemagoing and spectatorship.

Blakeston's attention to touch also covertly invites a queer gaze to operate within his POOL text. From the peculiar proximity of the make-up room, to the titular yellow glass, Blakeston weaves in a queer veiled code to invite alternate modes of seeing. The yellow glass is a studio tool that allows objects in the real world to appear as they would on screen, where the reader is instructed:

> Look through the yellow glass and you are transported to realms more grotesque than those behind the looking-glass. The little drudge can become the queen of beauty [...] This is no exaggeration, but a literal fact. You want some curtains to back the window in your street? You shall have them. Take a bit of sackcloth, and stencil on it an all-over pattern. [...] Take your yellow glass and look at your curtain. The imitation is perfect and the different shades of matroil look like a sheen of the material. The miracle is accomplished: Cinderella is no longer a fairytale but a cinematic fact.[867]

Blakeston stresses the transformative power of perception, whereby peering through a glass square initiates 'beauty', the 'grotesque' and the wonder of fairy-tale magic.[868] By mediating perspective, new meaning can be found in the quotidian. The evolution of *Through A Yellow Glass* witnessed a transformation of its own: from the blue glass described in *Close Up,* to a yellow one in the POOL book.[869] By intentionally shifting from blue to yellow, Blakeston alludes to the inherent queerness of *The Yellow Book,* Aubrey Beardsley's editorship and art. *The Yellow Book,* Holbrook Jackson writes in 1913, is 'associated with all that was *bizarre* and queer in art and life, with all that was outrageously modern'.[870] It also carried connotations of Oscar Wilde's trial, through Beardsley's connection to Wilde with *Salome,* which, as Sally Ledger writes, was highlighted by the newspaper coverage of the trial.[871] The yellow glass, then, functions covertly as a queer lens, which Blakeston offers the reader to peer through into the studio.

Despite the derisory depictions of British commercial practice, a commitment to cinema's power to affect its audience is revealed within Blakeston's POOL texts, alongside

[867] Ibid., p. 42.
[868] Ibid.
[869] Blakeston, 'From A Work In Progress: "Through A Blue Glass"'.
[870] Holbrook Jackson, quoted in Stanley Weintraub, 'The Yellow Book: A Reappraisal', *The Journal of General Education,* 16.2 (July 1964), 136-152 (p. 137).
[871] Sally Ledger, '"Wilde Women and The Yellow Book: The Sexual Politics of Aestheticism and Decadence', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920,* 50.1 (2007), 5-26 (p. 5).

queer veiled articulations that invite insight into other modes of desiring and being. The queer gaze is closely linked to notions of vision and perspective for Blakeston. As Donald maintains, cinema is the 'most dynamic art medium; it goes directly to the mind, it becomes the retina of the brain'.[872] To continue to explore Blakeston's interest in touch, vision, the queer gaze and the body, I now turn to 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)' in *Few Are Chosen* to see how the *Extra Passenger*'s 'retina of the brain' transforms into 'a thousand eye-hands'.[873]

Touching and Seeing in 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)'

Blakeston's short story collection advertises itself as 'Studies in Theatrical Lighting of Life's Theatres'. It provides short sketches of the different way light and sensation interact with the body in order to interrogate what one story presents as 'Existence, that monstrous jelly, surrounds me, you, him, alike'.[874] I focus on one short story from this collection, 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)' to explore how bodies engage with the 'monstrous jelly' of existence, where vision and touch are engaged to reveal queer desires, within a heterotopia of collective feeling. Blakeston's short story intersects with many POOL themes; where questions of identity are interrogated through a fascination with how touch and vision are spliced together.

'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)' follows Charlie as he joins a crowd watching a wrestling match. The crowd's collective gaze is described as '[m]ob eyes [that] become hands', where meaning is made through a combination of corporeal touch and vision.[875] Blakeston highlights the tactile nature of the scene:

> Hands that are eyes, sensuously lingering, feeling, pinching. Fine stripped bodies, fine naked bodies; a thousand eye-hands, hand-eyes, stretch forward to perform obscene rites. Face, arms, torso, buttocks, legs…[876]

The epistemological encounter takes place through collective touch, where vision is configured as curiously sensual. The repetition of 'eye-hands, hand-eyes' mimics the back-and-forth movement of a caress, enacted textually through Blakeston's wordplay, to mirror

[872] Blakeston, *Extra Passenger*, p. 130.
[873] Ibid.; Blakeston, 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)', in *Few Are Chosen: Studies in the Theatrical Lighting of Life's Theatre* (London: Eric Partridge, 1931), pp. 79-86, p. 81.
[874] Oswell Blakeston, 'Blind Lights (Justice)', *Few Are Chosen* (London: Eric Partridge, 1931), pp. 41-47 (p. 42).
[875] Blakeston, 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)', p. 81.
[876] Ibid.

the movement of the tactile gaze moving over the bodies of the wrestlers in the ring.[877] Blakeston's use of the hyphen to join the eyes and hands together demonstrates how intrinsically linked sight and touch are within the act of spectatorship. This mirrored repetition also succeeds in reorientating the senses. It subverts what Laura U. Marks describes as the 'sensual hierarchy', which typically prioritises sight, and instead gives precedence to touch and the affective aspects of embodied or 'proximal' senses.[878] The proximal senses—those that occur through closeness, those of touch, smell, taste and hearing—and how they inform perception are crucial to Blakeston's fiction. By focusing on these elements, further aspects of cinema's 'infinite possibilities' are exposed, where they complicate straightforward notions of identity and reimagine the bonds between self and world.[879]

Blakeston's 'eye-hands, hand-eyes' depend on the mutuality and materiality of perception.[880] It is the merging of tactility and vision that allows for the interaction between body and world. Jennifer M. Barker defines tactility as 'a mode of perception and expression wherein all parts of the body commit themselves to, or are drawn into a relationship with the world that is at once a mutual and intimate relation of contact'.[881] It is this intersubjective contact within Blakeston's writing that I am interested in here, which is a concern that can be felt throughout POOL's body of work. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological configuration of vision is helpful for understanding how Blakeston's hand-eyes might touch and see: in his essay 'The Eye and the Mind', he observes that the body is present

> between see-er and the visible, between touching and touched, between one eye and the other, between hand and hand a kind of crossover occurs, when the spark of the sensing/sensible is lit.[882]

[877] Ibid.
[878] Laura U. Marks, 'Thinking Multisensory Culture', *Paragraph*, 31.2 (July 2008), 123-137 (p. 123).
[879] Blakeston, *Extra Passenger*, p. 131.
[880] Blakeston, 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)', p. 81.
[881] Jennifer M. Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), p. 3.
[882] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Eye and Mind', in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, ed. by Michael B. Smith, trans. M. B. Smith (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993), pp. 121–49 (p. 125).

Ulrika Maude describes Merleau-Ponty's vision as 'a kind of caress', 'a complex intermingling of subject and world'.[883] This intermingling denotes a material reciprocity and a blurring of boundaries: what Merleau-Ponty calls a 'double sensation', occurring when a person's hand touches their other hand, where the subject is both touching and being touched. This experience cannot be felt at once: instead, they alternate between touched and touching in a reversible and fluid process that can be used to describe all relationships between seer and seen, toucher and touched, between body and world.[884] The distinctions of difference forgo the complete collapse of boundaries but also invites interplay and contact. Read within a phenomenological framework, Blakeston's *Few Are Chosen* holds many such moments of double sensation that centre somatic sensation.

Within the field of film studies, Marks, Barker and Vivian Sobchack have expanded conceptions of how tactile visuality constitutes a significant part of cinematic experiences.[885] Marks presents the term 'haptic visuality', which allows for discussion of 'the way vision itself can be tactile, as though one were touching a film with one's eyes'.[886] Barker looks at how touch operates both as skin-deep and also in the body's depths 'and everywhere in between', and Sobchack reminds us that the act of viewing is a transitive one; it always involves the 'address of the eye', situated within the world and transcends the body's location through the visual activity of looking.[887] Sobchack's notion of the 'lived body' outlines the phenomenological concept that 'insists on "the" objective body as always also lived subjectivity as "my" body, diacritically invested and active in making sense and meaning in and of the world'.[888] Blakeston's fiction plays with this complex reciprocal relationship between the embodied self and the world that exists beyond the borders of skin to explore how the self is constituted. Ontological engagements characterise much of

[883] Ulrika Maude, '"Material of a Strictly peculiar Order": Beckett, Merleau-Ponty and Perception', in *Beckett and Phenomenology,* ed. by Ulrika Maude and Matthew Feldman (New York: Continuum, 2009), pp. 77-94 (p. 77).
[884] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* trans. by Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962; reprint, 1994), p. 93.
[885] See Marks, 'Thinking Multisensory Culture'; Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Barker, *The Tactile Eye;* Jennifer M. Barker, 'Out of Sync, Out of Sight: Synaesthesia and the Film Spectacle', *Paragraph,* 31.2 (July 2008), 236-251; Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992).
[886] Marks, *The Skin of the Film,* p. x.
[887] Barker, *The Tactile Eye,* p. 2; Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience,* p. 24-25.
[888] Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 60.

POOL's work, from Macpherson's searching through the '[p]hlegmatism over-laid depths upon depths of sheer human myself, vast tracks of mind and spirit, unglimpsed hinterlands where perhaps the very key to identity lay hidden' in *Poolreflection*, to *Cactus Coast* and Lily's rootless sense of self: she is dislodged, 'out of her mind' and untethered to her body.[889]

Touch, as Garrington observes, is 'intimately connected to the constitution of the self, and it is so by virtue of this very intimacy, its operation on the carnal border between self and world'.[890] Garrington therefore argues that the haptic is a 'peculiarly modernist matter', identifying a marked 'orientation' towards touch and the tactile within modernist literature, and spurred by the technological and scientific advances of the early-twentieth century, including cinema.[891] This study similarly asks why Blakeston's sense of vision is so attuned to touch.

As well as overtly haptic instances like the 'hand-eyes', Blakeston's fiction carries a bodily weight, often focusing on sensory perception and feeling. *Few Are Chosen* was reviewed—rather unfavourably—by V. S. Pritchett in 1931, where he included the strange observation that Blakeston's language is representative of 'that painty, noisy, smelly, spicy and touchy kind of writing which has made Montparnasse the most boring circus on earth'.[892] Pritchett's sensory depiction was intended to dismiss the work as outdated, but his choice of language reveals the underlying sensory preoccupations within Blakeston's writing. The circus, used by Pritchett to denounce *Few Are Chosen* as a tired spectacle, also conjures notions of spectatorship, embodiment and the overwhelming sensory experience of a colourful fairground. Audiences surround a circus ring to watch the physicality of the acrobatics, contortion and clowning. Spectators may experience a range of involuntary bodily reactions: bursting laughter, gasps of shock, cheeks flushing with excitement, discomfort's clammy hands or—as Pritchett insinuates—a quiet yawn of boredom.

[889] Macpherson, *Poolreflection,* p. 163; Herring, *Cactus Coast*, p. 175.
[890] Garrington, p. 17.
[891] Ibid., pp. 17-19.
[892] V. S. Pritchett, 'Far From My Home', *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 130 (August 1931), 270-271 (p. 270). Montparnasse is the famous avant-garde Parisian district that saw surrealist and Dadaist art movements bloom in the 1920s, housing Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray, Giorgio De Chirico, Max Ernst and Salvador Dalí. See Sue Roe, *In Montparnasse: The Emergence of Surrealism in Paris from Duchamp to Dali* (London: Penguin, 2019).

Blakeston's writing is overpoweringly corporeal for Pritchett; it touches the eye ('painty'), ear ('noisy'), tongue ('spicy'), nose ('smelly') and skin ('touchy').[893]

Indeed, entire passages in 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)' are driven or derailed by sensory experiences. The 'painty, noisy, smelly, spicy and touchy' elements of Blakeston's writing are encapsulated in 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)' as Charlie sits down to watch the wrestling match.[894] The grinding sensation of peanut shells underfoot interrupts and transports Charlie away from the wrestling match and into unmediated corporeal memories:

> His feet grind peanut shells to powder; thousands are swept away once a fortnight, and not before!.... Scrunch. Gust of inexplicable greenness; pines scrunching. Elasticity of ground which can be fallen on; fingers can be threaded through moss, down into the cool earth. Skies, split up by overhead branches, blue scarves waved gaily; sky registered for a moment in falling. Idle toe tracing an ellipse in dirt and débris.... Sun, in London, means blistering pavements, blue skies, moisture under the arm-pits. Flaunted croci.... filthy floor-boards. Bright toe draws inwards from lines almost segment of a poem; laced hands hug limp knee towards body; a caress.[895]

Sensory memories overrun Charlie's body, diverting the narrative away from the "here and now" of the wrestling match in a whirl of 'inexplicable' times and spaces. Colours are felt as a 'gust' of synaesthesia, where bright blues and greens illuminate the passage. The sticky sensations of sweat, the onomatopoeic vibration of 'Scrunch', the feeling of dirt underneath the toes, and the 'caress' of the body curling up all contribute to Charlie's overwhelmingly haptic experience. Charlie is disorientated in this moment, which Blakeston mirrors within the movement of the passage, which jolts from low 'cool earth' up to the 'falling' skies overhead, instilling a sense of vertigo and uncertainty.[896] The explosion of sensations pulls Charlie back to specific times and places via the senses, paralleling Marcel Proust's famous burst of involuntary memory in *Swann's Way*, as the narrator sips a cup of tea he is overcome with a 'precious essence', asking: 'Whence did it come? What did it mean? How could I seize and apprehend it? ... And suddenly the memory revealed itself. [...] And all from my cup of tea'.[897] In 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)',

[893] Pritchett, 'Far From My Home', p. 270.
[894] Ibid.
[895] Blakeston, 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)', pp. 79-80.
[896] Ibid.
[897] Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*, vol. 1, ed. by William C. Carter (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 53.

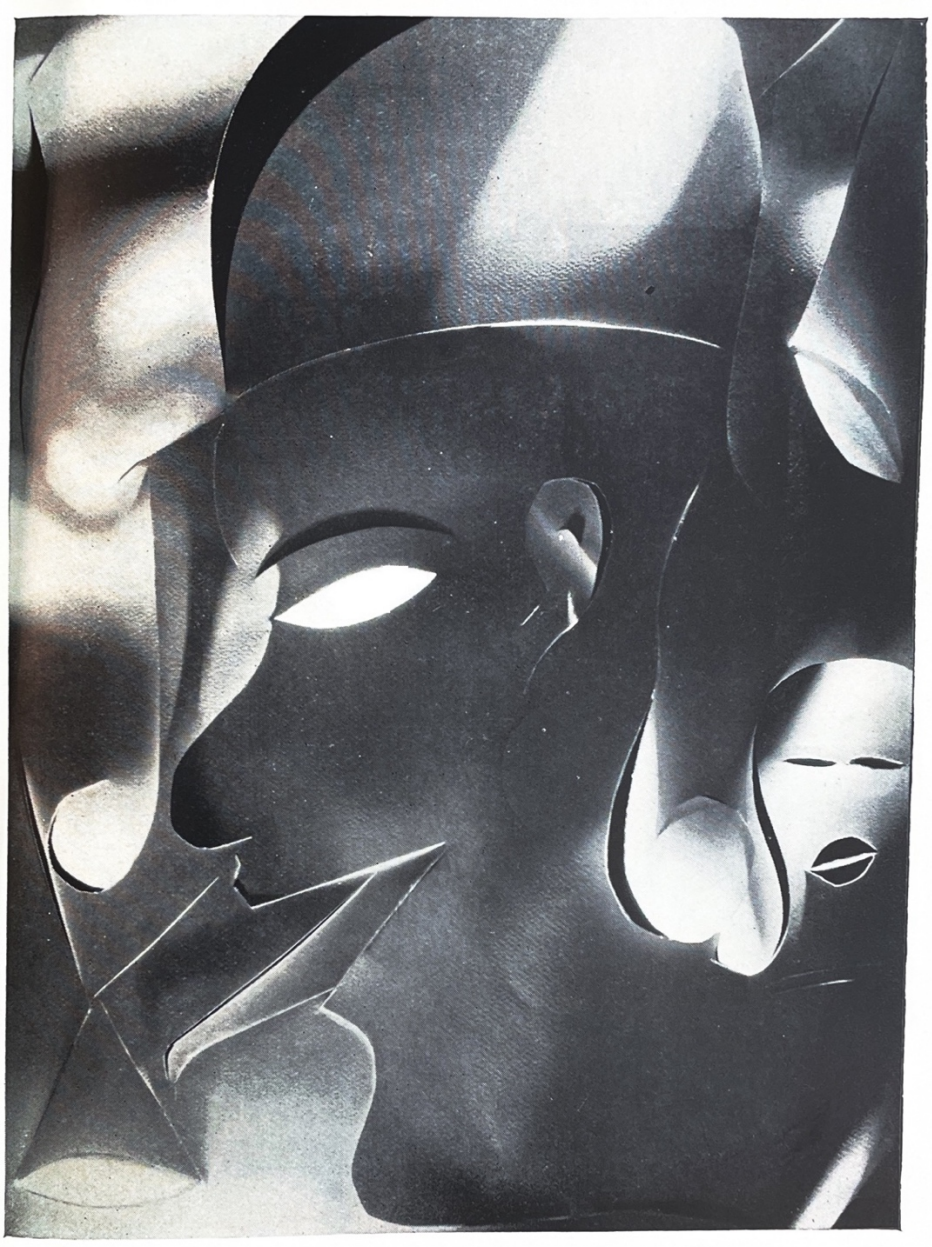
however, there is no conscious mediation of Charlie's bodily sensations or memories. They are presented as they are felt, in bursts, bringing the narrator not to a mindful revelation, but back to a bodily 'caress', further highlighting the embodied nature of Blakeston's prose.[898]

Few Are Chosen presents images from Francis Bruguière, which provide further visual stimulation and invite an intermedial dialogue between image and text. They are tactile images in themselves; created by photographing cut pieces of paper and manipulating light, shadow and multiple exposure to produce abstract curves and layers. They carry no title aside from a positional instruction for which page of the text they should face, which draws attention to the physicality of the book as a tactile object itself. Asking the image *to face* the text invokes a bodily orientation, as if they turn towards one another to look and—when the page turns—touch. I read Bruguière's images as part of the narrative, with the images responding in an inscriptive manner to Blakeston's writing. The images are uncanny; with shapes appearing oddly human, with curved lines appearing as faces, torsos and bodies.

In 'Blind Lights (Justice)', the amoral protagonist imagines forcing his 'unbelieving fingers' into the mouth of a boy sitting next to him in a courthouse, which he envisions as a 'mouth that is [also] a wound'.[899] Bruguière's image accompanying this sinister story (Fig. 37) contorts this vignette, where a small abstract face with a gaping mouth sits at the neck of a larger figure, who's mouth is also open with its sharp tongue extended towards the text on the opposite page. The image intensifies the grotesque and abject nature of the scene, angled towards the text as if about to encroach, mirroring the imagined actions of the protagonist. The image (Fig. 38) accompanying 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)' faces the page where the crowd's '[m]ob eyes become hands; pawing over the stripped bodies, feeling for the soft patches of flesh'. [900] Just as the 'hand-eyes' enact a tactile discovery, the image requires the same action from the reader.[901] The eyes search the photograph for pieces of Blakeston's narrative, 'feeling' for the shape of the 'stripped bodies' within the image, forging a tactile circulation between text, image and reader. The shapes in Bruguière's image are organic: hidden within the different layers of

[898] Blakeston, 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)', p. 80.
[899] Blakeston, 'Blind Lights (Justice)', p. 42.
[900] Blakeston, 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)', p. 80.
[901] Ibid., p. 81.

exposure are forms that might resemble two torsos with the curvature of the waist or arch of the back, leading to the spherical patterns in the middle of the image, which vaguely resemble the buttocks. There are two separate shapes towards the lower left-hand side, which are sliced into segments that could resemble fingers—hands reaching out to touch. The images engage and expand the narrative, offering texture and play, and asking the reader to feel and find meaning within the abstract photographs.



To face p. 42

Figure 37: Art by Francis Bruguière. Oswell Blakeston, *Few Are Chosen: Studies in the Theatrical Lighting of Life's Theatre* (London: Eric Partridge, 1930).

To face p. 80

Figure 38: Art by Francis Bruguière. Oswell Blakeston, *Few Are Chosen: Studies in the Theatrical Lighting of Life's Theatre* (London: Eric Partridge, 1930).

Both Blakeston and Bruguière play with light and shadow throughout *Few Are Chosen.* The book's subtitle announces itself as 'Studies in the Theatrical Lighting of Life's Theatres' and looks at the affective and embodied impact of different events, with a keen emphasis on the sort of light within the narrative.[902] From the glare of film studio lights in 'Arc Lights' where 'Connie, behind the lights, watched and listened, out of this or any other world', cast in shadows and alienated to such an extent she undergoes an existential crisis of being; to the cold lights in a corrupt courthouse in 'Blind Lights (Justice)', which are described as 'Swollen tips, on the dead fingers of the gas brackets, must glow, at night time, with the blue phosphorescence of a corpse', introducing a nightmarish quality to the story through haptic imagery; to the final story which consists of only three words: 'ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ LIGHTS OUT!', where the book cannot continue without the presence of light.[903] The book is dominated by light and how it illuminates different aspects of being human and being in the world.

There are many parallels between *Few Are Chosen* and Blakeston and Bruguière's filmic collaboration, *Light Rhythms.* The short abstract film plays with light, shadow and carved silhouettes in much the same way that the artwork in *Few Are Chosen* does. Blakeston's essay on *Light Rhythms* was published in *Close Up,* where he states that 'for the first time light is on its toes dancing' in film.[904] For Blakeston and Bruguière, light is embodied. It is inquisitive: 'light peeps from behind light', and 'flutters breathlessly across the screen'.[905] Blakeston discusses the film in notably tactile terms: 'Scenarios are felt not written, are drawn not written'.[906] The film and the breathless body of light is 'felt' by the viewer, invoking a somatic, affective response. The fascination with light and the body's capacity for perception are refracted through *Light Rhythms, Few Are Chosen,* and *Close Up.*

A queer touch operates in 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)', too. The short story centres the bodily experience of spectatorship in a crowded hall, exposing connections between haptics and vision that, in turn, allow Charlie's queer desires to emerge. Charlie sits on the edge of the '[c]ircus-wise' ring with the visceral promise of the

[902] Quoted in Pritchett, p. 271.
[903] Oswell Blakeston, 'Arc Lights', *Few Are Chosen* (London: Eric Partridge, 1931), pp. 3-8 (p. 6); Blakeston, 'Blind Lights (Justice), p. 41; Oswell Blakeston, 'The Light of Mars (conclusion)', *Few Are Chosen* (London: Eric Partridge, 1931), p. 117.
[904] Blakeston, 'Light Rhythms', p. 226. Four stills appear in *Close Up* in March 1930 alongside Blakeston's 'Light Rhythms' article, with a further two stills appearing in April 1930.
[905] Ibid.
[906] Ibid., p. 227.

'evening's gore', occupying a space which enables the male bodies to come into close contact with one another, and for Charlie to watch.[907] Blakeston's continuous attention on Charlie's bodily state heightens his sense of anticipation, where he experiences 'twanging nerves' and 'throbs' as he prepares to watch the match.[908] Roland Barthes describes wrestling not as a sport but as a 'spectacle'.[909] Barthes also aligns wrestling with cinemagoing, noting the importance of a participating audience in both experiences: 'the public spontaneously attunes itself to the spectacular nature of the contest, like the audience at the suburban cinema'.[910] Indeed, Blakeston centres haptic visuality within all acts of spectatorship, where the boundaries between spectator and spectacle are pulled into question.

As the match progresses in 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)', Charlie becomes part of the crowd. Various bodily reactions are described, where it is ambiguous as to whose they belong to. For example: 'Heaving chests, curses, orgiastic atmosphere' where '[e]lectric sparks race through arms and legs'.[911] Blakeston's depiction of hedonistic energy shows how feelings may circulate freely in a crowded audience, drawn together through watching. It is unclear as to whose chests are moving; whose arms and legs are pinpricked with excitement: Blakeston could be depicting the shared experience of the bodies in the crowd, these could be Charlie's internal cataloguing of his own body, or this might be the perspective of the fighters in the ring. Untethered to a subject via Blakeston's ambiguous focalisation, sensations circulate throughout the crowd in a current of '[e]lectric sparks'.[912] Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth's definition of affect provides a useful framework for interpreting this electric circulation. Affect 'arises in the midst of *in-between-ness:* in the capacities to act and be acted upon'; it is

> found in those intensities that pass body to body [...] in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, *and* in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves. Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces

[907] Blakeston, 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)', p. 76.
[908] Ibid., pp. 82-3.
[909] Roland Barthes, 'The World of Wrestling', *Culture and Society: Contemporary Debates,* ed. by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Steven Seldman, Steven Jay Seidman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 87-93 (p. 87).
[910] Ibid.
[911] Blakeston, 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)', p. 80, p. 82.
[912] Ibid., p. 82.

> insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension....[913]

It is this emergence of thought, movement and perception through affective forces that interests me within Blakeston's fiction and how they tend to arise from instances of haptic visuality, thus being able to consider his ideas around being and the impact of visual culture. In 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)', Blakeston writes that 'Charlie is AWARE that things are happening: a match falls to the ground; he sees, for the first time, some ash on his coat sleeve; a woman, in the darkness of the stalls, giggles'.[914] Blakeston centres the feeling of awareness—in capital letters no less—of sensations unfolding in the space around Charlie, overwhelming the narrative and resulting in disorientation as the fight ends. The sense of awareness stemming from a sensation that 'things are happening'—not through conscious knowing—is key to Blakeston's configuration of being.[915]

Bodies are shown to be open, porous and malleable within Blakeston's fiction. At the end of the match, Charlie sees something that prompts something akin to an out of body experience; something within him is drawn magnetically and involuntarily to the fighters in the ring, unfolding into the space between. Blakeston writes: 'Under hard light, slanting rain on bare bodies, tissues of flesh are broken down', uncovering '[n]erves of resined string throbbing a gripping theme. Charlie's little soul walks out, a giant, under the white flowers'.[916] Charlie's somatic senses, under the glare of the electric lights, allow his being to unfold into the space around him, having responded to something subterranean sensed within the fighter, underneath their skin. This is what Sara Ahmed calls the 'drama of contingency', the 'unfolding of bodies into worlds' and how we are profoundly touched by what comes near.[917] The extrapolation of Charlie's 'little soul' and the fighter's '[n]erves of resined string' shows how, through haptic visuality, core parts of one's being can be touched and moved into action.[918] The scene is transformative; the overhead lights look

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[913] Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, 'An Inventory of Shimmers', *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 1-25 (p. 1).
[914] Blakeston, 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)', p. 85.
[915] Ibid.
[916] Blakeston, 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)', p. 84.
[917] Sara Ahmed, 'Creating Disturbance: Feminism, Happiness and Affective Differences', *Working With Affect in Feminist Readings: Disturbing Differences*, ed. by Marianne Liljestrom and Susanna Paasonen (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 31-44 (p. 33).
[918] Blakeston, 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)', p. 84.

like surreal 'white flowers' with distortions of scale that takes Charlie's being from 'little' to 'giant'.[919] Skin does not act as a border between self and world; instead, Blakeston reveals a mutable intersubjectivity between the two.

Blakeston anticipates this instance of intermingling bodies and worlds, where at the beginning of the text, Charlie observes that the '[l]ast vestiges of respect must be stripped in the ring; bodies; layers pulled off consciousness'.[920] Enclosed within semicolons, the syntax renders each clause—the object being viewed, the body and the layers between—as reliant on one another, which is later enacted within the narrative. Through the power of vision, Blakeston challenges Cartesian notions of dualism—which view the mind and body as separate units, with the body being non-thinking and material—and embraces a phenomenological conception of being. Blakeston configures Charlie's 'little soul' as free floating and tied to his embodied line of vision and illuminated by the lights overhead, rather than routed within a rational, immaterial Kantian mind.[921] Charlie's experience follows Merleau-Ponty description of perception as 'the paradoxical phenomenon which renders being accessible to us' and the body as 'my point of view on the world'.[922] Indeed, it is only through being 'AWARE' that Charlie's experience of being—his embodied 'little soul' walking out—can be accessed.[923]

Within this moment, traditional grammar and form break away, where Blakeston leans into the proximal senses to depict Charlie's experience. The sound of the crowd and the lights overhead are not mediated by a narrator. Instead, they but intrude into the narrative:

> Roar…. Roar…. With each hit…. Roar, roar-roar…. Immense. White lights beat down piston blows. […] Electrocution must shock like this; overwhelming thrill of twanging nerves and dread of consequences.[924]

The roars on the page are relayed as Charlie would hear them: in onomatopoeic waves flanked with ellipses or joined with a hyphen to demarcate the duration of the sounds. Spotlights are not described as such and instead they are presented through haptic 'blows';

[919] Ibid.
[920] Ibid., p. 80.
[921] Ibid., p. 84.
[922] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 17, p. 70.
[923] Blakeston, 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)', p. 85, p. 84.
[924] Ibid., p. 82.

as auditory, industrial 'piston' beats. The resulting electric sensations travel from outside the body into 'twanging nerves', producing tension.[925]

It is through these channels of feelings that queer desires arise in Blakeston's writing. The act of watching allows Charlie to covertly engage with the male bodies in the ring. As part of the audience, Charlie watches the fighters with 'hand-eyes': 'behind bars of whiteness, chaining in the spectacle, drawn taut to ensure no movement of debasement is lost, no depth of the human spirit left unplumbed'.[926] The fighters are surrounded by ring ropes, fixed under the scrutiny of the crowd's collective gaze, who watch every move and leave nothing untouched. Claire Warden notes the 'peculiar paradox' of wrestling: 'it appears to be a fight between combatants but, in actuality, is more akin to ballroom dancing than boxing', where it offers ideas of hypermasculinity and queerness simultaneously.[927] Indeed, Charlie's vision encapsulates a simultaneous queer desire and bodily violence of the sport:

> pawing over the stripped bodies, feeling for the soft patches of flesh. Tongues become lashes. Downstairs, go for him downstairs. (So unexpectedly refined to substitute *downstairs* for blunter WOIDS.) Hands that are eyes, sensuously lingering, feeling, pinching. Fine stripped bodies, fine naked bodies; a thousand eye-hands, hand-eyes, stretch forward to perform obscene rites. Face, arms, torso, buttocks, legs....[928]

The crowd's embodied vision touches, feels and gropes for snatches of skin. It teeters on the edge of the erotic with the repetition of naked bodies, the desire for 'downstairs' and lists of body parts ending in a trailing ellipsis that fails itself to find 'blunter WOIDS'.[929] The duality that Warden describes is epitomised in Blakeston's description of a punch to the face, where blood running from the nose to the mouth is a 'kiss of blood'.[930] The slippage between sentimentality and violence is jarring. It is a loaded image, simultaneously encompassing the visual, tactile and emotional: it recalls the violence that caused the bleed, but reorientates the scene as romantic, locating the queer nature of the sport. Through Charlie's perception, the fighter's injury is imbued with different meaning and disrupts straightforward signification.

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[925] Ibid.
[926] Ibid., p. 80.
[927] Claire Warden, '"Queer Music-Hall Sport": All-In Wrestling and Modernist Fakery', *Modernism/modernity*, 27.1 (January 2020), 147-164 (pp. 157-158).
[928] Blakeston, 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)', p. 80.
[929] Ibid.
[930] Ibid., p. 81.

Charlie continues to watch the blood 'kiss the eyes till they can no longer focus'.[931] Blakeston prioritises the haptic over the visual in this instance, where the kiss overpowers the ability to see. The loss of focus could be brought on by the head contusion or loss of blood, but also gestures towards the swooning response to a kiss, coaxing the eyes shut furthering the queer intimacy within 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)'. Looking on at the bloody kisses that take place in the ring through the crowd's 'pawing' vision, the slip between touch and sight collapses the spatial and intersubjective bounds of private and public. A tactile reciprocity occurs through this exchange: Charlie experiences an onanistic sensation as he watches, of being 'gratified by the rub of silk pants round his legs. He works the portions up and down, through his trousers, stroking his own skin gently'.[932] Blakeston depicts queer subcultures of feeling through the multiple layers of contact and sexual sensation throughout the short story, that operate invisibly yet are experienced profoundly by Charlie. Thus, discursive desires are allowed to remain unseen—and thus unpoliced—but are able to be felt by opening up the fields of sensation through haptic visuality.

There is an anxiety surrounding these queer desires within 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)'. In the space of the collective crowd watching the match, these feelings can circulate freely without culpability. However, when the fight ends, uneasy affects begin to circulate. As Charlie exits the hall, the presence of a policeman is felt. This threat is perceived through haptic means:

> Sauntering around, Charlie sees faces of rovers; he is at home; compatriots. Lifted faces, recreased, when gold braid of official, or tread of a policeman, is sensed. [...] Charlie, to his confusion, is touched on the shoulder, officially'[933]

The comradery felt within the shared space of 'rovers' is disrupted by the 'sensed' presence of authority.[934] At this time in Britain, any homosexual act was punishable by a ten-year prison sentence under the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885. This threat hangs over the final pages of the story, just as the official hand 'officially' hovers over and touches Charlie's shoulder, before he leaves the hall to pursue other sexual liaisons elsewhere, a desire only expressed in the final like of the text where: '[s]adly, Charlie wonders if he ought to try the

[931] Ibid.
[932] Ibid., p. 82.
[933] Ibid., p. 85.
[934] Ibid.

public house over the road, or, if the taxi-driver would have already collected all the prospectives'.[935]

The public hall can be read, then, as a queer space that allows for queer desires to operate before it returns to a space under surveillance. In this sense, the fight can thus be read as a heterotopia; a space that opens up to accommodate a queer subculture and deviation from heteronormative scripts. Michel Foucault's theorises heterotopias as real, embedded sites that disrupt or distort other spaces. They 'function in relation to all the space that remains', 'unfold[ing] between two extreme poles', and must 'presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable'.[936] The heterotopia of the match invites those who feel the queer touch of the 'orgiastic atmosphere', challenging the assumed order while undetectable and impenetrable to the ominous 'tread of policeman', which is only 'sensed' once the fight has ended.[937]

Blakeston locates the central importance of sensory perception to being. Blakeston's conception of embodiment resonates strongly with phenomenologist ideas, where Charlie's story repeatedly centres touch to make sense of emotions and happenings. The POOL group's work consistently tries to make sense of the world through experiments with art. 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)' continues this practice, using Bruguière's art and the crowd's 'hand-eyes' to complicate the corporeal bodily borders.[938] These borders are traced throughout the POOL group's work to Peter's odd sensation in *Poolreflection,* where he feels '[s]ome consciousness-state in him was dislocated', to H.D.'s 'Mira-Mare', where her protagonist Alex visualises her mind like 'steel barred sluice gates' through which 'sensation poured, drowning', to Ricka's watery ontologic in *Cactus Coast*: identity in POOL's work is repeatedly questioned.[939] Having explored how queer desire and affect operate in wrestling matches, I now turn to *Magic Aftermath* and the cinema theatre.

[935] Ibid., p. 87.
[936] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias', *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité,* trans. by Kay Miskowiec (October 1984), pp. 1-9 (p. 7-8).
[937] Blakeston, 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)', p. 80, p. 85.
[938] Ibid., 80.
[939] Macpherson, *Poolreflection,* p. 162; H.D., 'Mira-Mare', p. 62.

'Cinema had a magic': Cinemagoing in *Magic Aftermath*

Torn between his love for two women, *Magic Aftermath's* unhappy protagonist Paul decides to call in at a cinema to pass the time before the pubs open. Sitting down, he remarks:

> Cinema, cinema. Why did one become so flippant about cinema? Cinema had a magic. The darkness of a séance. Concentration of crystal gazing. Hysteria. Whether he laughed or cried, it was all one.[940]

From this declaration of cinema's mystical hold, Paul undergoes a crisis of identity as he watches the film, resulting in an explosion of queer longing. Blakeston's experimental novella engages with issues of film art, magic and queer intimacies, resonating with themes felt throughout the POOL group's oeuvre, as I will explore through placing *Magic Aftermath* in dialogue with Herring, H.D. and Richardson. In the cinema theatre, Paul feels the film '[o]ozing magic….', which breaks its '[i]nitial spell of light pinned image' and forces Paul to confront his feeling when he realises his two lovers, Helen and Jane, have been projected onto the screen.[941] Fantasy, reality, memory and film merge together, where Paul's cinemagoing experience ruptures the narrative, leaving fractures in which queer memories from Paul's childhood resurface in the form of flower petals throughout the remainder of the text. The meaning of these queer petals is uncovered towards the end of the text: Paul realises that a stableboy with violets in his hair named 'Ted had been his first love'.[942] At one point, these queer petals take over Paul's vision entirely, as 'Petal falling on each eye-lid. Seeing the world through strained living tissue of flower skin'.[943] Cinemagoing is realised as a deeply mystical experience, demonstrating the possibilities of the medium for Blakeston and its potential to transform the spectator entirely.

As Blakeston's title suggests, the occult and its impact on the individual is at the heart of *Magic Aftermath*. Magic and cinema are inextricably bound up in Blakeston's work; the cinema theatre is where Paul undergoes a mystical or mental break in his reality. This serves as a catalyst for change, setting in motion the revelation that will alter Paul's perception of reality, time and selfhood. The film images that precede Paul's phantasmic vision are nonsensical, they '[l]ollop up the trollop lollop' with the '[l]ens of the projector

[940] Blakeston, *Magic Aftermath,* p. 30.
[941] Ibid., p. 31.
[942] Ibid., p. 37.
[943] Ibid., p. 35.

vomiting a sea of screen splatter'. As Paul remarks, '[t]he action on the screen never mattered', where Blakeston tracks the aftermath; the feelings that arise from the immersive act of cinemagoing, which is conceived as a magical 'sea' of sensation where the body resides and emerges from, transformed.[944]

Blakeston's interest in the actions inspired by a film rather than the actual 'action on screen' can be seen outside of his fiction, too.[945] In his retrospective account of his time with the POOL group, he briefly discusses the POOL film that he directed in 1929, *I Do Like To Be Beside The Seaside*. Whilst he makes no mention of the content, actors or scenarios the film depicts, he places considerable emphasis on the audience's reaction to its first screening, writing it 'was deemed a success because an indignant general picked up his seat and hurled it through the screen'.[946] Hugh Ross-Williamson expands on this extreme response, noting that the film 'caused several demonstrations in Parisian theatres' and resulted in audiences 'leaving the cinema in disgust!'[947] Blakeston's emphasis on the hostile reaction to the film is privileged over the content of his POOL satire. Whereas *Extra Passenger* and *Through A Yellow Glass* labour over the affective relations behind the screen in the commercial studio, *Magic Aftermath* explores what happens in the cinema theatre and how the image impacts the spectator.

Magic and cinema have a history. From the magic lantern technology that preceded the film projector, to the transformation of images as they move on screen, David Robinson's description of Georges Méliès's early films encapsulates the wonder of film:

> Nothing in his world is what is seems. In an instant, objects turn into people, butterflies metamorphose into chorus beauties, men become women, anyone may vanish in a puff of smoke. [948]

Robinson's sensational rendering provides some insight into how cinema was first perceived and experienced. It expanded reality, providing connections to new places. As Walter Benjamin writes, film 'burst this prison-world' of daily life with 'the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go travelling'.[949] However, Blakeston's configuration of cinema's magic

[944] Ibid., p. 30.
[945] Ibid.
[946] Blakeston, 'Retrospect 14: Close Up', p. 39.
[947] Ross-Williamson, p. 163.
[948] David Robinson, *Georges Méliès: Father of Film Fantasy* (London: British Film Institute, 1993), p. 55.
[949] Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1968), pp. 325-327.

differs from Robinson's, who foregrounds the film image's editing techniques as illusory, and Benjamin, who emphasises shock and fragmentation. In an article titled 'Some Thoughts on the Magic of Cinema' that Blakeston wrote for *The Sackbut,* he writes:

> To the initiated, Cinema was a kind of incantation; some far surer formula, for a very strange loveliness, than crystal gazing. To begin with, there was the ritual of sitting in the dark, of being hypnotized by the constant square of light. And, to go on with, there were the glorious light beams, sloping through the cigarette smoke of the auditorium, tangling and twisting in space before they fell on to the revealing screen. The grotesque images on the screen hardly mattered; it was *what the images suggested*.[950]

For Blakeston, the film's magic is held in the subject's interpretation of the images. This is contingent: the spectator must be 'initiated', hinging on an 'incantation' to cast streams of light in the air which seem to dance together before haphazardly falling onto the screen to be interpreted. Rather than editing techniques or tricks, the magic is located in the meeting of cinema and body and how the cinema's suggestion is created.

The embodied experience of the cinema theatre is central to Blakeston's 'ritual'.[951] Whether it is the interplay of smoke and light overhead, the smell of the cigarettes, or the sound of the audience, the feeling of being inside the theatre is crucial. In *Magic Aftermath,* the unmediated noise of Paul's fellow cinemagoers drops into the narrative in the same way that the titles appear on the screen before him:

> THE NEXT PICTURE WILL BE THE FEATURE FILM.
> "ooooooooOOOOOH!"
> Paul thought of all the nursemaid hands holding stalwart hands of escorts.[952]

These sounds and sights are presented to the reader as they are perceived by Paul, drawing attention to the shared space of the auditorium. Indeed, Norman Kind reminds us that 'silent cinema was never actually silent – or hardly ever.'[953] The crowd's noise itself recalls early cinema's fairground beginnings, emphasising the sensory phenomenon of the forthcoming film as if it were a firework display, magician's trick or stomach-lurching rollercoaster; as Barker adds, cinema's 'deep connection to the human body is borne out by the fact that the medium first emerged in the context of the amusement park, fairground,

[950] Oswell Blakeston, 'Some Thoughts on the Magic of Cinema', *The Sackbut,* 11.11 (July 1931), pp. 312-313 (p. 312).
[951] Ibid.
[952] Ibid.
[953] Norman Kind, 'The Sound of Silent', in *Silent Films,* ed. by Richard Abel (New Brunswick and New Jersey: Rutgers University press, 1996), pp. 31-44 (p. 31).

and penny arcade'.[954] Cinema's resonances with thrill and bodily shock are most visible in early cinema, where Tom Gunning identifies the 'cinema of attractions'.[955] Blakeston's fascination with the body's cinematic experience has the pull of fairground spectacles, with Donald's awe in *Extra Passenger* at cinema's capacity to 'sweep crowds into ballet-like groups,' and the 'thrill [for] the uninitiated' that *Through A Yellow Glass* promises.[956] Blakeston accesses cinema's abilities through the orientation of bodies in space, kinetic rhythm, moving lights and 'sweep[ing]' bodies in motion, as if on a carousal or in a dancing pavilion, drawing on the echoes of cinema's previous shared spaces and beginnings with public amusements.[957]

Light and the way it touches the body is a preoccupation without Blakeston's work on cinema: he draws attention to the 'glorious light beams, sloping through the cigarette smoke' in his article for *The Sackbut*; Charlie feels lights like 'piston blows' to the body in 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)'; *Light Rhythms* sees light 'dancing'; and a whole chapter is dedicated to the intricacies of light production in the studio, where the narrator confesses, '[p]ersonally, I think lighting is a matter of temperament' in *Through A Yellow Glass.*[958] In *Close Up*, Blakeston proclaims 'there is no end to this question' of light, where he laments the poor treatment of film rolls, which results in '[a]ll the atmosphere that has been so carefully created by the lighting lost'.[959] Blakeston's emphasis on the magic of cinema and the streams of 'tangling and twisting' light echoes Herring's article 'A New Cinema, Magic and the Avant-Garde', where he depicts light as 'Magic fingers writing on the wall'.[960] Herring continues: 'Its fingers twitch, they spread in blessing or they convulse in terror. They tap you lightly or they drag you in'.[961] Herring situates the body within the theatre, focusing on the orientation of the body in space: 'Look up', Herring

[954] Barker, *The Tactile Eye,* p. 132.
[955] Tom Gunning, 'Cinema of Attractions: Early Cinema, Its Spectators, and the Avant-Garde', *Wide Angle,* 8.3/4 (Autumn 1986), pp. 63-70 (p. 64).
[956] Blakeston, *Extra Passenger,* p. 35.
[957] Ibid. For more information on cinema's growth out of late-Victorian and Edwardian entertainment institutions like the music hall, variety shows, fairgrounds and touring bioscopes and spectacles, see Shail, *Cinema and Literary Modernism,* p. 16.
[958] Blakeston, 'Some Thoughts on the Magic of Cinema', p. 312; Blakeston, 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)', p 82; Blakeston, 'Light Rhythms', p. 226; Blakeston, *Through A Yellow Glass,* p. 54.
[959] Blakeston, 'Light Rhythms', p. 227; Oswell Blakeston, 'Murder in the Dark room', *Close Up,* 2.3 (March 1928), pp. 10-14 (p. 14).
[960] Blakeston, 'Some Thoughts on the Magic of Cinema', p. 312; Herring, 'A New Cinema, Magic and the Avant Garde', p. 51.
[961] Herring, 'A New Cinema, Magic and the Avant Garde', p. 51.

implores, '[t]here is the screen, and you know the projector is at the back of you. Overhead is the beam of light which links the two'.[962] The tactile touch of light as the 'fingers twitch' causes the body to be 'drag[ged]' into the projection, demanding a sense of immersion and affective exchange.[963] It is this magic of this light that touches and moves in swells and swirls, Herring argues, that needs to be 'realised' in cinema.[964] In *Magic Aftermath,* the light from the projector 'bumped [Paul] back into the squirrel cage run-around', much like Herring's haptic 'tap'.[965] Blakeston underlines the film's affective power through a bodily movement, which sends Paul spiralling in a 'run-around', trapped in a 'squirrel cage' of thought.[966] Herring expands on light's touch, where he imagines a process whereby the it enters the body which he describes as 'let[ting] the spirit of cinema on yourself':

> By moving your fingers before the beam, you interrupt them; by walking before it, your body absorbs them. You hold them, you can let them go. When the projector stops, they stop. Their life is suspended, and can be begun again at any point. They are always potentially there, ready to be let out,[967]

Cinema is absorbed, where knowledge or interpretation is depicted in physical terms, as 'hold[ing] them' within the body.[968] When the projector stops or the film ends, the magic of cinema continues. It rests, latent, both within the projector and the subject, having been absorbed and fused somewhere within the body so they are 'always potentially there, ready to be let out'.[969]

A fascination with light's power over the body can also be seen in H.D.'s writing, where she proclaims a *Close Up* that 'Light is our friend our god. Let us be worthy of it'.[970] Her poem 'Projector', which was published in *Close Up's* first issue, shows how, in the cinema:

> light reasserts
> his power
> reclaims the lost;
> in a new blaze of splendour
> calls the host
> to reassemble

[962] Ibid., p. 51.
[963] Ibid.
[964] Ibid., p. 47.
[965] Blakeston, *Magic Aftermath,* p. 31; Herring, 'A New Cinema, Magic and the Avant Garde', p. 51.
[966] Herring, 'A New Cinema, Magic and the Avant Garde', p. 51.
[967] Ibid., p. 52.
[968] Ibid.
[969] Ibid.
[970] H.D, 'Restraint', *Close Up*, I.2 (August 1927), pp. 30-39 (p. 35).

and to readjust
all severings
and differings of thought,[971]

Light realigns fractured pieces within the body, entering the spectator's mind to stir their thoughts. In *Magic Aftermath,* cinema also pre-empts a mental shift and 'differings of thought'.[972] After Paul's visit to the cinema, Blakeston writes: 'Automatically, Paul's mind folded back. The strange trick of his: the pleating of time'.[973] In both H.D. and Blakeston's texts, thoughts are felt as physical, moving parts within the body, as severed fragments and folds, shifting in stratigraphical layers when touched by light's 'power'.[974] These shifts cause both Paul and the speaker in 'Projector' to recall forgotten memories. In 'Projector', light 'reclaims the lost' and for Paul, it causes a repressed queer memory of his 'first love' to fold to the forefront of his mind.[975] Blakeston, Herring and H.D. all experiment with how cinema's light physically moves: it touches, folds and 'reassemble[s]' parts of the self.[976] Not only does light move, but it is also moving*:* it stirs emotions, thoughts, memories and incites motion and change.

Questions of cinemagoing, mysticism and film's capacity to enter the body and move viewers into different states can also be seen in Richardson's film writing. Jenelle Troxell draws parallels between Richardson's Quaker values and her ideas around cinemagoing, identifying an alternative 'contemplative mode of spectatorship': a 'state of active contemplation, through which spectators can harness a deeper level of experience'.[977] Richardson, Herring, H.D. and Blakeston all highlight the importance of the embodied experience of spectatorship, as opposed to the 'action on the screen'.[978] Indeed, when Bryher first asked Richardson to contribute to *Close Up,* Richardson warned her that 'I know I have some notes somewhere & will look them up. But I fancy they are simply about seeing movies, regardless of what is seen'.[979] Richardson's articles are interested in the social aspect of cinemagoing, to such an extent that Marcus writes '[f]rom her starting

[971] H.D., 'Projector', p. 47.
[972] Ibid.
[973] Blakeston, *Magic Aftermath,* p. 47.
[974] Ibid.
[975] H.D., 'Projector', p. 47; Blakeston, *Magic Aftermath,* p. 47, p. 37.
[976] H.D., 'Projector', p. 47.
[977] Troxell, 'Shock and "Perfect Contemplation": Dorothy Richardson's Mystical Cinematic Consciousness', p. 51, p. 58, p. 65.
[978] Blakeston, *Magic Aftermath,* p. 30.
[979] Dorothy Richardson, quoted in Fromm, p. 134.

point as a cultural and urban ethnographer, Richardson took up the subjective position of the front-rower, literally and discursively'.[980] From this vantage point, Richardson wrote about how film moved spectators, which can be encapsulated in her article 'Narcissus', where films

> are seen in full in their own moving reality of which the spectator is the motionless, observing centre. In this single, simple factor rests the whole power of the film: the reduction, or elevation of the observer to the condition that is essential to perfect contemplation.[981]

Although Richardson does not specifically highlight the significance of light here, there is a shared emphasis on how meaning is made through the embodied immersion and movement. The spectator is absorbed within the 'moving' film and this 'allows it to walk through us'—whether this is 'reduction' or 'elevation' that allows the film image inside the body.[982]

Blakeston also presents the complete amalgamation of body and cinema, where images from Paul's mind are projected onto the cinema screen. Alarmed, he watches as

> Helen, his wife, Jane, name and faces from a more past past. [...] Characters in the film became Helen, his wife, Jane. Heroine, villain, [...] What were Helen and Jane doing on the screen? Helen, of limb magic, clad in nipple tight silks. Jane, of mind magic, a waif on a barge. Immense close-ups of glycerine tear faces. Too true, too true.[983]

Merging with the costumes of the original film, Helen and Jane are cast as fictional characters. Blakeston blurs the line between fantasy and reality, drawing attention to the artificiality of his hallucination through 'glycerine tear faces' and the disbelieving repetition of their names, yet Paul still feels that the fantasy is 'too true'.[984] For H.D., too, cinema has the capacity to lodge within the body, project outwards and interact with the spectator. In her poem 'Projector II', the speaker 'greet[s]' the 'souls upon the screen':

> we raise a living thing
> we draw it to the screen
> of light on light on light;[985]

Light is layered as image and body pool together in 'pure ecstasy', before the final lines of the poem where they combine completely:

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[980] Marcus, *The Tenth Muse*, p. 358.
[981] Richardson, 'Continuous Performance: Narcissus', p. 185.
[982] Ibid.
[983] Blakeston, *Magic Aftermath*, p. 31.
[984] Ibid.
[985] H.D., 'Projector II', p. 43.

I call your spirit here,
I light you like a star.
I hail you as a child,
I claim you as a lover.[986]

Cinema's magical 'spirit'—its light, essence, or soul—is lovingly invited into the spectating body.[987] This shared fascination with how cinema affects the body persists throughout the pages of *Close Up* and the POOL group's writing, where H.D., Herring, Richardson and Blakeston all linger on the embodied experience of cinemagoing and affective absorption of the image. They write with varying degrees of mysticism and reverence about cinema, propelled by similar questions about film's power. However, they splinter off to pursue different possibilities about how cinema and bodies may meet, and how meaning is made. For Blakeston, as I will explore further, the moment of absorption is not a loving one as depicted by H.D., but is felt by Paul as a 'tragedy': it triggers an introspective turn, 'fold[ing] the mind back on itself in order for Paul to examine his sexuality.[988]

In his article 'Some More Thoughts on the Magic of Cinema', Blakeston explains that the magic of cinema contorts time and space, and the 'director (the film organizer does this by synthesis. He strips layer and layer off consciousness'.[989] An echo of this phrase is present in 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)' also, where Charlie watches the match, he feels 'layers pulled off consciousness'.[990] Paul experiences this psychological excavation, too. It demonstrates not only the affective power of vision, whether this is the spectacle of a wrestling match or a film being watched, but also further illustrates Blakeston's fluid configuration of identity. If time and space can be contorted, and layers of consciousness can be stripped away by external sensation, then Blakeston's notion of being is always in a state of becoming. Cinema's ability to enact this ontological change—what H.D. describes as 'reassembl[y]' of thought and being— through 'synthesis' is precisely what makes cinema so powerful.[991]

Paul's sense of reality is uprooted by cinema's '[o]zing magic'.[992] On leaving the theatre, Paul's previously cohesive sense of the world splinters:

[986] Ibid., p. 44.
[987] Ibid.
[988] Blakeston, *Magic Aftermath,* p. 31, p. 36.
[989] Blakeston, 'Some More Thoughts on the Magic of Cinema', p. 312.
[990] Blakeston, 'Flowers of White Light', p. 80.
[991] Blakeston, 'Some More Thoughts on the Magic of Cinema', p. 312; H.D., 'Projector', p. 47.
[992] Blakeston, *Magic Aftermath,* p. 31.

> The gold braid god, ruling outside the cinema, claiming to be able to do more with his puppets than god projector, had ordered corpulent rain. London knew that rain was suited to it.[993]

Paul's sense of the world is split between the cinema theatre and the rest of the world outside, with separate theological systems of logic and belief pitted against one another. The 'god projector' of the cinema's hold on Paul lingers, where his emotional upheaval persists even as he enters the reality of rainy London once the film is over.[994] It is in the "magic aftermath" that Paul's latent memories begin to emerge. Having decided he has made a 'false move' leaving Jane, he begins to run '[t]hrough London rain, running to Jane'. However, as he runs, the petals intrude into the narrative: 'Shaking down petals, with the stamp of his feet, in his own, empty haunted room. Petals, softly dark fallen'. The London rain of reality transform into '[s]haking down petals' in a cinematic twist, as if the 'god projector' has overruled the god 'ruling outside the cinema'.[995] The 'haunted' space recalls the mystical space of the cinema, and also introduces beginnings of Paul's suppressed memory of his 'first love'. The petals are revealed to represent a childhood memory, a 'moment of rapture' where Paul witnesses a bunch of flowers fall out from underneath the stableboy Ted's cap: 'To the roots of his hair, Ted had blushed. […] it had been so beautiful, Ted carrying violets in his hair…. He had been alive to things early'.[996] Paul then presents his own bouquet of flowers to Ted, who refuses them. The violets represent a formative romantic moment for Paul, of queer love and loss.

The queer petals from Paul's past infiltrate his present moment: as he tries to run through London to Jane, the petals overwhelm his vision:

> Falling petals, falling upwards, brush pollen metal glory along metal glory sheathed body. They ring outwards into sky in perfume spread ripples. So that all of sweetness is running into me, up through me on world boundary. Petals marked with arteries of silver filigree. Petals falling on each eyelid. Seeing the world through strained living tissue of flower skin.[997]

Paul's petal vision reshapes his perception and sensory experience of the world. Blakeston plays on the notion of a romantic rose-tinted view of the past, which contrasts the queer rejection the petals represent, as well as the sense of panic tied to his current situation with

[993] Blakeston, *Magic Aftermath*, p. 31.
[994] Ibid.
[995] Ibid. pp. 31-32.
[996] Ibid., p. 39, p. 37.
[997] Ibid., p. 35.

Jane. The third-person focalisation that the rest of the narrative follows shifts into first-person, which heightens the immediacy of the passage as Paul feels the 'sweetness is running into me, up through me on world boundary'. The petals blur the 'world boundary' between self and other, between past and present, between human and non-human as the 'sweetness' infiltrates Paul's body, fusing with his eyes until he sees 'the world through strained living tissue of flower skin'.[998] The newly formed retina of 'living tissue' subtly recalls Donald's contention in *Extra Passenger* of film as 'the retina of the brain'; which underlines the petals association with the magic of cinema.[999] The petals cloud Paul's mind, imbued with the queer memory of Ted, as he tries to make amends with Jane. Linear concepts of time are distorted, where he runs forward to Jane, yet looks back into the past through his petal vision to Ted. This is the 'pleating of time' that the magic of cinema prompts, whereby time and perception are rearranged in order for Paul's unrealised queer love to resurface.

Blakeston's use of violets throughout *Magic Aftermath* carries a further queer connotation. Violets are one of the flowers mentioned in Lord Alfred Douglas's poem 'Two Loves'. The poem was used in Wilde's trial, which imbues the violets with an inherent sense of public shame and queerness, with its famous last line: 'I am the love that dare not speak its name'.[1000] Paul's romantic crisis—torn between his affairs with Helen and Jane, and suddenly undercut with his queer realisation—engages with the question of how to reconcile this unspeakable queer love within himself. Colleen Lamos asserts that modernism 'was the moment when "the love that dare not speak its name" found its voice'.[1001] Indeed, the question of what this queer voice might sound like was at the heart of much of POOL's work, where their queer creative and life practices imagined new ways of being and being together. Blakeston's short sketch illustrates how multiple forms of love and desire can exist simultaneously across the 'pleating of time'.[1002] For Paul, this is a realisation accompanied by intense confusion and loss: 'What would happen next? God! God! Where would it all end? Ted had refused his flowers'.[1003] Blakeston's metatextual

[998] Ibid.
[999] Ibid.; Blakeston, *Extra Passenger,* p. 130.
[1000] Lord Alfred Douglas, 'Two Loves, *The Chameleon,* 1.1 (1984), pp. 26-28 (p. 28).
[1001] Colleen Lamos, 'Queer Conjunctions in Modernism', in *Gender In Modernism: New Geographies Complex Intersections* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), pp. 336-342 (p. 336)
[1002] Blakeston, *Magic Aftermath*, p. 47.
[1003] Ibid., p. 42.

question is left unanswered, with the ending unresolved. In its exploration of cinema, thought, time, magic, identity and sexuality, *Magic Aftermath* asks more questions than it answers. Its interrogation of cinema and light chimes with works from H.D., Herring and Richardson, while Blakeston's study of what the world might look like when glimpsed through the queer violet 'flower skin' resonates with the queer intimacies at the heart of POOL's creation.

Conclusion

Why are your hands not on the willow leaves
to feel the sharpness and the thin, soft flower?
To feel…
Love wrinkle at the touch like a soft bird

Bryher, 'The Pool'[1004]

Are you alive
I touch you.
You quiver like a sea-fish.
I cover you with my net.
What are you—banded one?

H.D., 'The Pool'[1005]

A stone, venom, set ripples.
Your lilies, growing,
would multiply ripples—

Herring, 'The Pool'[1006]

The full bloom of the moment unfolds form me
I stir my naked soles in the earth for deep sap
Another instant of silent strength and the gigantic flower
Will reach across the world
To mark your lips with dark pollen

Blakeston, *Death While Swimming*[1007]

Peter looked (Narcissus) into a pool and loved his watery image. Narcissus was the symbol of all human love, all human love was Narcissus struggling after the elusive beauty of pool reflection.

Macpherson, *Poolreflection*[1008]

I end by pooling together fragments of poems and prose from the POOL group's various streams and sources. H.D. and Bryher's pool poems were written long before the group banded together, whereas Macpherson's *Poolreflection* was a direct result of POOL's production, as their first official publication. Herring's 'The Pool' was written in 1931, where

[1004] Bryher, 'The Pool', *Arrow Music* (London: J. & E. Bumpus, 1922), p. 8
[1005] H.D., 'The Pool', *Collected Poems, 1912-1944* (New York: New Directions, 1986), p. 56. This poem was first published in April 1915 in *Poetry.*
[1006] Robert Herring, 'The Pool', *Westward Look, 1922-1945* (Glasgow: William MacLellan, 1945), pp. 22-23 (p. 23).
[1007] Oswell Blakeston, *Death While Swimming* (London: K. S. Bhat, 1932), p. 10.
[1008] Macpherson, *Poolreflection,* p. 23-24.

it captures some of the 'venom' that has infiltrated the group after their 'high-water mark' in 1930, and Blakeston's erotically charged long poem was published in 1932.[1009] They are disparate projects, written at different times (from 1915 to 1932), but share an interest in touch, perception, and interrogate different types of relationships. They revolve around ideas of pools, water, and ripples.

Bryher's poem is founded on an absent touch which the speaker desires but does not achieve, H.D.'s poem is transfixed by the connection between self and other, whereas dark water swirls in Herring's pool to signify a destructive relationship, Blakeston's flower blooms with sexual desire, and Macpherson looks at self-love through the mirrored image of the Narcissus myth. These shared fascinations with sex, love, desire, touch and relationships all inform their engagement with the POOL group, where they were connected under the banner during a time of technological, political and cultural upheaval, to interrogate queer ways of being in the world and how these practices could be represented through art.

In order to consider the connections and shared currents that these works possess, each figure's part in the POOL group has to be recognised for meaning to cohere across these disparate works. This thesis is concerned with connections and currents between people and works, which form through various intimate, personal and professional contexts. In mapping the connections between Herring, Blakeston, H.D., Bryher and Macpherson, I argue that their queer creative collaboration—what critics have termed the POOL group—is more diffuse than previously thought. Its streams run from multiple sources, coming together to form a changeable and unfixed network of contributors and works. In doing so, this thesis does not seek to displace or denature the roles that have already been mapped, and the crucial involvements of H.D., Bryher, Richardson and Macpherson. It exists in tandem with the existing scholarship on POOL, whilst arguing that it is necessary to consider Herring and Blakeston's roles within the group to understand what the POOL group was.

This expanded cast provides new insights into the complex intermedial encounters within the group's body of work. Herring and Blakeston's fiction contribute to the debate within POOL on cinema as an art form and as an industry through formal literary

[1009] Herring, 'The Pool', p. 23; H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, BRBML, Autobiographical Notes, Box 47, Folder 1181.

experimentation. This is ciphered through Evelyn, Adam, and the Director who 'thinks he's God Almighty' in *Adam and Evelyn at Kew* and the sinking submarine of British cinema production in *Extra Passenger.*[1010] Placing Herring and Blakeston's works in dialogue with the group's oeuvre crystallises POOL's queer modernist articulations, where Ricka and Howard are a 'beacon' of happiness in *Cactus Coast*; and queer desire is seen through tinted glass in *Through A Yellow Glass,* haptic 'eye-hands' in 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax', and Paul's petal vision in *Magic Aftermath.*[1011] As a project, POOL experimented with questions of ontology and art: how to be, how to be with others, and how to represent these existential ideas of intimacy and identity, through writing and film. Herring and Blakeston's works engage playfully with these notions, revealing further facets of POOL's queer modernist experimentation.

Expanding conceptions of the POOL group also asks us to consider how stories of modernism are told, and where non-canonical figures—like Herring and Blakeston—sit in the shifting field of new modernist studies. I locate Herring and Blakeston as significant figures within the queer and experimental network of personal and professional confluxes that constituted the POOL group. I have mapped Herring's biography, tracing his many connections with the POOL group's personal network of queer intimacies through archival analysis. His role in *Foothills* and *Borderlines,* and his influence within *Close Up,* all position him as a crucial part of POOL's activities. In presenting the first studies of his fiction, I have argued how *Adam and Evelyn at Kew* speaks directly to dialogues taking place within *Close Up,* where he animates these concerns in an experimental and playful manner to consider film's state and future, as it battles within a 'rotten system'.[1012] Looking away from cinema and towards the queer horizon in *Cactus Coast,* Herring's autobiographical experiment with time and space allows the queer affective terrain of Monte Carlo to be glimpsed. These creative collaborations established a long-lasting connection to parts of the POOL group that continued long after *Close Up*'s last issue.

My chapter on Blakeston provides a glimpse into the prolific life of queer artistic practice and experiment. Arguing for Blakeston's part in POOL, I have explored how his industry experience at The Gaumont Company informed and inspired POOL books, films

[1010] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* p. 100.
[1011] Blakeston, 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)', p. 81.
[1012] Herring, *Adam and Evelyn at Kew,* p. 100.

and *Close Up,* where his 'back-stage stuff' was used to make *Borderline*, *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside,* and formed much of *Close Up*'s content, too. Analysing his fiction reveals targeted critiques of commercial British film practice, providing an insight into the state of British commercial studio practices in the late 1920s. Alongside his exasperation with the 'chaos' of *Extra Passenger,* his captivation with cinema's transformative possibilities is seen in *Through A Yellow Glass*, *Magic Aftermath*, and the power of touch in 'Flowers of White Light (Plus Entertainment Tax)'.[1013]

In exploring Herring and Blakeston's prose between 1927 and 1934 to coincide with the POOL group's labelled period of activity, there is much room for further expansion. Both went on to produce work that demands further critical attention. Recent works by Townsend, Nikolova, Chadfield and Kane have looked to Herring's role in the connections between *Close Up* and *Life and Letters To-Day,* within the broader periodical culture of the 1930s, which prepares the ground for further critical study.[1014]

This thesis contributes to the growing interest in Herring, and hopes to inspire further study of his poetry and later works, *Harlequin Mercutio, Or, A Plague on Both Your Houses,* and *The Impecunious Captain or Love as Liv'd,* and how they continue the experimental and playful modernist techniques. Blakeston's life and work demand much more attention, too. His role in the Cornish queer artistic culture, his prolific career as a detective novelist, his post-war art, poetry, art criticism, film writing, travel writing and collaborative work with Burford are all rich areas for the study of queer modernist intermedial legacies that have received little or no critical attention to date.[1015]

In seeking to expand the POOL group, I also acknowledge the many other streams of production that informed its composition that remain unexplored. For example, a full biography and extended study of Macpherson's works is necessary to fully understand his creative role within the group, where much about his life remains unknown. I have also touched on the complex connections that exist between H.D.'s Dijon cycle and her engagement with POOL, where these short stories have received relatively little critical attention. This thesis offers a glimpse into the many 'expanding ripples' and 'concentric

[1013] Blakeston, 'Retrospect 14: Close Up', p. 38; Blakeston, 'British Solecisms', p. 21.
[1014] Nikolova and Townsend; Townsend, '*Close Up,* After *Close Up: Life and Letters To-Day* as a Modernist Film Journal'; Kane, 'The Little Magazine in Britain: Networks, Communities, and Dialogues (1900-1945)'.
[1015] Martin Stollery's forthcoming article explores the queer 'we' in Blakeston's *Portuguese Panorama* (1955); *Isle of St. Helena* (1957); *Sun at Midnight: Finland Holiday* (1958); *Thank You Now: An Exploration of Ulster* (1960). Ian Massey cites Blakeston in the preface of his recent work, *Queer St Ives and Other Stories,* p. 10.

circles' that constituted the group. It argues for the consideration of Herring and Blakeston as significant components of POOL and recovers their literary works, which represent a unique interaction between cinema, literature, and cultures of modernity.

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